



Mendip Hills AONB Unit  
Charterhouse  
Blagdon  
BS40 7XR

28<sup>th</sup> March 2011

John Meeker,  
Planning Policy Team Leader,  
Organisational Development Group,  
Mendip District Council,  
Cannards Grave Road,  
Shepton Mallet  
BA4 5BT.

Dear Mr. Meeker,

**Mendip Local Development Framework Core Strategy – Draft Plan for Consultation (Preferred Options Stage)**

The Mendip Hills AONB Unit welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above document. Our comments are as follows.

**Vision**

The AONB Unit welcomes the aspirations in the Vision for new development to be sensitive to its landscape setting and cultural heritage, that demand responsive rural transport services and sustainable links are to be developed and the sensitive landscapes and environments of the Mendip Hills and Somerset Levels will remain critical assets.

**Strategic Objectives of the Mendip Local Development Framework**

We support the strategic objectives particularly 20 to 23 relating to maintaining and enhancing the quality of the local environment and contributing to international climate change goals.

## **Spatial Strategy**

Para 4.13 – in relation to ‘exceptional development’, the statement that ‘any site should be well related to the built form of the community concerned and have regard to the surrounding landscape setting, as well as being compliant with national and local planning policies’, is supported.

## **6.0 Development Management Policies**

### **DP1: Local Identity and Distinctiveness**

The AONB Unit welcomes reference in the text (the box at para 6.16) to the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan. We also support the intention set out in para 6.17 to encourage community groups and other interests to undertake characterisation exercises (such as Village Design Statements, Design Guides and Context Studies) to define and improve awareness of local character and identity. There are currently a number of these types of documents relating to villages in the AONB and it is felt that further appropriately formulated information such as this for other settlements within the AONB will continue to assist the protection of the designated landscape.

### **Development Policy 1: Local Identity and Distinctiveness**

This policy is supported.

### **Development Policy 3:**

The AONB Unit supports this policy, in particular the requirement to avoid causing traffic or environmental problems or harm to the character of the locality.

## **The Water Environment**

We welcome the advice given in the draft Core Strategy in relation to the water environment, in particular with regard to Groundwater (para 6.47).

### **DP6: Affordable Housing: Rural Exception Sites**

We are comfortable with the proposed policy as it contains a safeguard aiming to protect the local landscape setting if such development is proposed in future within or near the Mendip Hills AONB i.e. part c) ‘the development is in scale and in keeping with the form and character of the settlement and local landscape setting’.

## **Assessment of Special Landscape Features, February 2011**

Q100a: Do you feel that the Special Landscape Features described above should continue to be protected as part of the Core Strategy?

Whilst the Special Landscape Features are all outside the Mendip Hills AONB, we would support proposals set out in the above paper to continue to protect

those Features in the Core Strategy where they have important significance in terms of views to the surrounding landscape from the designated AONB.

The AONB Unit hopes the above comments are helpful to the Council in preparing its Core Strategy and we look forward to further involvement in response to future consultations on the LDF.

Yours faithfully,

Jonathan Richards  
Planning Liaison Officer  
Mendip Hills AONB Unit  
Charterhouse  
Blagdon  
BS40 7XR

tel. 01761 463458

mob. 07775027393

email: [jrichards@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:jrichards@somerset.gov.uk)

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The Mendip Hills AONB Unit is the Voice of the Protected Landscape  
Naturally Beautiful, Nationally Protected

CC AONB Partnership Chair, Natural England, Parish Councils in Mendip District