

North Somerset Council
Development and Environment
Planning Policy Team
Somerset House
Oxford Street
Weston Super Mare
BS23 1TGH

12th October 2011

Dear Sir or Madam,

Consultation on Draft Weston Villages SPD.

Thank you for consulting the Mendip Hills AONB Unit regarding the above document. Our comments are as follows.

Site Context (paras 1.3 to 1.7)

We consider it essential that this section of the SPD refers to the landscape context and setting of the proposed villages and highlights the close proximity of the Mendip Hills AONB which must be taken into account in terms of the design, landscaping and green infrastructure provision when masterplanning the new development.

Chapter 2, Key Principles – Place Making

Bullet points referring to integration of heritage, landscape and biodiversity and green infrastructure (GI) provision are welcomed. However, we feel that in terms of GI links into the surrounding countryside should also be emphasised as well as links throughout the developments. Also the bullet referring to pedestrian and cycle links to facilities within the existing town should also look out to the surrounding countryside e.g. opportunities to enhance sustainable routes to the AONB.

It is also felt the SPD should under 'Place Making' make reference to the need to protect important views from the AONB, particularly from elevated areas, given the close proximity of the development to the designated landscape e.g. through careful design and landscaping principles.

Masterplan framework

The above principles should be reflected in the masterplan framework.

Light pollution.

The loss of 'dark skies' within the AONB as a result of light pollution is of great concern to the AONB Partnership Committee and is an issue addressed in the AONB Management Plan. We are, therefore, concerned about the potential impact of such large scale development near the edge of the AONB on dark skies. The SPD should highlight this issue and require future development to include low impact lighting.

Green Infrastructure.

We are pleased to note the requirement on p45 for GI to link through to the countryside.

Development Contributions

The future development of the Weston Villages will inevitably bring impacts and pressures on the AONB e.g. on views from the designated area, greater people 'traffic' using the AONB. We feel it is appropriate for the Council to require s106/CIL contributions from developers towards mitigating such impacts and we look forward to opportunities to discuss this at an appropriate time.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Richards
Planning Liaison Officer
Mendip Hills AONB Unit

cc AONB Partnership Chair, Banwell, Bleadon and Hutton Parish Councils,
Natural England.