

Isle of Wight AONB Partnership - Development Control & Planning Work Group
Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 04 August 2004,
10.30 am, Seaclose Offices, Newport

In Attendance

Tony Tutton	IW AONB Steering Committee Chairman
Denis Russell	IW AONB Steering Committee Vice-Chairman/Community & Parish Portfolio
David Court	IW AONB Steering Committee Coastal Portfolio
Vicky Basford	IW AONB Steering Committee Historic Environment Portfolio
Dennis Russell	Chairman CPRE
Marijke Ransom	AONB Planning & Information Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Administration Assistant

1) Apologies

Richard Grogan	IW AONB Steering Committee Nature Conservation Portfolio (Chair)
John Brownscombe	AONB Officer

2) Minutes of previous meeting & Matters Arising

MR advised that the AONB Unit had been informed that when the application for the Wind Farm at Wellow is received, the normal three week period in which to make our comments is to be extended to six weeks. MR also advised that the Local Planning Authority are appointing Halcrow Consultants to help them with the consultation and decision making process in relation to this major application. The AONB Unit will continue to liaise with the Countryside Agency who will also be submitting their comment.

Development Control – Recent Cases of note

MR reported with regard to the Radio masts at Stenbury Down, that more information has been submitted to demonstrate that there is a national need, and alternative sites have been investigated, consequently the Unit is unable to sustain its objection. However, the point that it does impact upon the landscape was still made.

Enforcement

A reply has now been received from the Head of Planning Services (AA) regarding previously highlighted enforcement issues, a copy of which was distributed to the meeting. The view of the meeting was that it was not specific cases that were of concern, but the general principle that was under discussion. This had not been addressed in AA's response.

VB suggested a member of the AONB Unit should attend Planning Meetings, but MR pointed out perhaps this was not appropriate, particularly as it was agreed by the DCPWG that Planning should not be represented at DCPWG meetings. It was, however, the view of the meeting that there should be a more regular liaison between the AONB Unit and Planning especially, as TT pointed out, the AONB Officer is line managed by the Policy Section of Planning Services. It was suggested perhaps this could be included in the Development Control Protocol (Item 3.3), and it was agreed that a covering letter to the draft amended protocol should be sent to AA as a response to his reply.

3) Development Control

3.1 Environmental Statement: Undercliff Stabilisation Works

Copies of the letter from the Countryside Agency were circulated to the meeting. Their concerns are similar to those of the AONB Unit i.e. life span of the works; future maintenance; lack of artist's impressions; impact on character and local views.

MR advised her drafted comments had been made on the Environmental Statement prior to receipt of the two planning applications. With regard to the draft, DC expressed concern that the important part of our comments could be diluted by the opening paragraph of the letter being devoted to details on the wording. The meeting felt the letter should contain the main thrust of the comments, with the wording changes perhaps being included as an Appendix.

MR displayed the two plans for re-routing the road; the first route involves demolishing Woodington, making the road further away from the cliff; the second leaves Woodington intact, with the road routed behind it much nearer to the base of the inland cliff. DR said it was difficult to make any decisions on the route of the road, without actually being able to see the area. VB pointed out if Woodington was demolished although not a historically important building as a matter of policy, the Council should arrange to take a photographic record of the property before demolition takes place. As the cliff is a very important part of the AONB, the meeting agreed the route involving the demolition of Woodington (Route B) making the road further away from the cliff would be the most appropriate. Prof DR also pointed out this route would involve less land being purchased from Timbers.

With regard to any removal of footpaths due to the engineering works, VB suggested that some mitigation might be obtained in order to re-open Cripple Path, and also to re-instate the coastal footpath from Binnel Bay to Puckaster.

The meeting felt that the decision as to which would be the better route A or B is highly technical, and the engineers would have to make the final decision about the route of the road, although we should express our concerns.

MR to revise comments on ES and prepare final AONB response to LPA on behalf of the Group.

3.2 Development Control Monitoring update

MR circulated a detailed assessment of development pressure within the AONB in 2003-04 as a result the analysis of the LPA Accolaid database. MR stated this is the first time we have been able to calculate how many planning applications that the AONB objected to were refused. The AONB Unit objected to 12% of all planning applications within the designated area, (equating to 1.6% of all applications in the Isle of Wight), and of those where we lodged objections, 60% were refused. Although it is difficult to see if our design/siting comments have been taken into account, we have a Masters student preparing a report detailing the influences of the AONB on planning decisions, and this should provide us with more of an insight. Where the Unit has objected, the figures show that Officers are more likely to refuse an application under delegated powers (70%) than when considered by the Development Control Committee (50%).

3.3 Development Control Protocol

MR reported this Protocol has been in place, continues to work well, but improvements have been made in the form of draft changes and additions, to incorporate Enforcement and Appeals Teams to be considered by the LPA.

It was generally felt that there should be more regular communication between Enforcement and the AONB Unit. DC suggested that there should be something similar to the weekly Press List. Prof DR said he recalled that some six months ago, a list was received from Enforcement providing details of extant appeals and how they were proceeding, but had seen nothing of this kind since. TT felt that what was required was a list of decisions, and DR pointed out there was no point in having procedures if they were not followed through. A covering letter accompanying the proposal amendments to the protocol (item 3.3) would be sent to AA.

4) Planning Policy

4.1 Proposed SPG on Equestrian Development

The meeting felt this issue had a very high impact, particularly due to the pressure for equestrian development in the AONB. DR commented that it needs the Enforcement Team to ensure this area is kept under tight control, as land use is changing and needs appropriate monitoring.

MR felt the document needs breaking up with pictures of good equestrian developments, and requested the assistance of the members of the Group in providing relevant illustrations/photographs.

4.2 Draft AONB response to SPG

a) Affordable Housing

DR felt that there was a desperate need for this type of housing, especially in rural areas. DR felt this was important, so locals can continue to live in their home villages. DC asked for the definition of affordable housing, and suggested that this be made clearer in the document. MR stated the housing needs survey identified a need for smaller units such as flats, maisonettes or cottages with one or two bedrooms.

MR to prepare final AONB response on behalf of the Group.

b) Design for Community Safety

Landscaping and design needs to be locally distinctive. Reference to light pollution has been well covered in the document.

MR to prepare final AONB response on behalf of the Group.

5) Any Other Business

It was proposed that a special meeting of the DCPWG be held on the morning of 17 September 2004, to discuss the proposed Wind Farm Development at Wellow, to be followed in the afternoon by a meeting of the Steering Committee. AONB Unit to scope relevant members.

Prof DR advised that the Audit Commission were proposing a Best Value Inspection of Planning Services, where they intended to make a selection of planning applications and follow them through from start to finish. He asked that the DCPWG be interviewed as a key stakeholder as part of the Review. AONB Unit to investigate.

MR reported that information had been received about Civic Trust Awards, for outstanding developments within AONB's. Possible nominations were discussed, however, entry costs, timescales and sustainability criteria were considered prohibitive. Potential for establishing more locally based AONB Design Awards was raised.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.

cdm
05 August 2004