

**North Hertfordshire Local Plan Examination
ED89 - Matter 19**

Note to the Inspector

February 5 2018

Note to Inspector on the progress of the Chilterns Conservation Board request for reviewing the boundary of the Chilterns AONB submitted to Natural England in October 2013.

The Chilterns AONB

1. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1965 and covers 324 square miles of countryside, stretching from the River Thames in southern Oxfordshire up through Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire to Hitchin in Hertfordshire. A previous review of the boundary was carried out resulting in the enlargement of the AONB in 1990.
2. The Chilterns AONB Conservation Board (CCB) is an independent body established by Parliamentary Order in July 2004. The Board's purposes are given in Section 87 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and are conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty; and increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the AONB. The CCB also has a statutory duty to publish a Management Plan for the Chilterns AONB.

The Application to Amend the Boundary of the AONB

3. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Natural England can make orders to designate AONBs or vary the boundaries of existing ones.
4. It is a matter for a Conservation Board to request Natural England to review the boundary of their AONB. The Chilterns Conservation Board submitted a proposal to amend the boundaries of the Chilterns AONB in October 2013 to Natural England. In making the application, the Conservation Board prepared and submitted a document entitled 'The Case for Reviewing the Boundary of the AONB' (attached at Appendix A). The Chilterns Conservation Board considered that the landscape to the south of the A505 within North Hertfordshire was of similar quality to the AONB designated landscape to the north of the A505 and the application therefore included a proposal that the AONB boundary be amended to take this into account. The Conservation Board also identified three other possible extension areas to the AONB - South Buckinghamshire, Thames Valley and Eastern Area. At the time this document was submitted Natural England was counselling against identifying a hard boundary for any possible extensions and were only looking for assurance that there was evidence to support a case for reviewing the boundary. The application followed Natural England's guidance and identified large areas of

search for potential inclusion within the AONB rather than specific hard boundaries.

5. There is also a desire to extend the Chilterns AONB within North Hertfordshire.
6. A report went to North Hertfordshire's Cabinet on 28th September 2010 in response to a national consultation by Natural England on their Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England. This consultation set in motion the potential for investigating changes to the Chilterns AONB boundary within North Hertfordshire by the District Council. Cabinet resolved to begin the process of promoting a review of the boundary of the Chilterns AONB boundary, in particular to secure the inclusion of Lilley Bottom within the AONB designation.
7. The Conservation Board's 2013 application covers a broad area of search, as shown on the plan (Map 3, Area 1 - North Herts attached to the application at Appendix A), and the application recognises at para 16 that a more in depth assessment would be needed to determine the most appropriate boundary should the Chilterns be selected by Natural England as an AONB for further boundary review work.
8. The landscape in North Hertfordshire which is the subject of the potential Chilterns AONB boundary review is within the setting of the existing AONB and is therefore covered by the Position Statement produced by the Chilterns Conservation Board entitled Development Affecting the Setting of the Chilterns AONB (document attached at Appendix B).
9. Currently there is an identified housing need within the Luton HMA, a small part of which falls within North Hertfordshire. North Hertfordshire District Council, under the duty to co-operate with Luton Borough Council (ED18 SoCG), has agreed to contribute 1,950 homes towards Luton Borough Council's unmet need and 200 homes towards NHDC's unmet need at the proposed site allocations EL1, EL2 and EL3, East of Luton. These proposed site allocations are adjacent to the eastern boundary of Luton, located to the south of the A505 within the proposed AONB boundary review application area.

The Progress of the Application

10. Since the submission of the application in 2013 to extend the Chilterns AONB boundary North Herts are not aware of any progress having been made on the application by Natural England (NE).
11. In an email on 15th January 2016 to Lucy Murfett, Planning officer at Chilterns Conservation Board, John Butterfield, Natural England's Landscape Access and Geodiversity Team, explained that NE were already dealing with a programme of AONB boundary changes which would fully occupy their resources until 2018/19 at the earliest. At that time, they had 13 suggested new National Park/AONB (or boundary variation) cases awaiting initial assessment and wouldn't be able to undertake any of these until their existing work was at or nearing completion. They said that they would not be in a

position to carry out initial assessments (which involves indicating which cases stand a chance of satisfying statutory designation criteria) until resources become available following completion of their current work programme. They would advise if any changes to their current plans arose.

12. Natural England's current projects to amend AONB boundaries are:
 - a) Suffolk Coast and Heath AONB - There is no information on when the application was submitted but on 4th December 2013 Natural England's Board agreed to start a formal process to consider the request. The process is still on-going.
 - b) Surrey Hills AONB - November 2013, the Surrey Hills AONB Board formally submitted a request that Natural England (NE) to consider a modification to the AONB boundary. On February 2014, the Natural England Board agreed to consider the evidence. The process is still on-going.
13. Apart from the two applications referred to above Natural England do not appear to be dealing with any others at this stage.
14. The formal review process for seeking a modification includes an assessment by Natural England to determine if the candidate area submitted meets the statutory criteria of an AONB.
15. To change an existing boundary Natural England must issue a variation order and consult each local authority affected by the proposed order (or variation order); then publish the proposals in The Gazette and the local newspapers of each affected local authority; consider all representations made against the proposals and make any necessary modifications; then finally submit the order to the Secretary of State for Defra, including any unresolved representations or objections. The Secretary of State for Defra can confirm, refuse, modify or vary any order made by Natural England to vary the boundary of an AONB.
16. As the application by Suffolk Coast and Heath AONB has shown, the process to modify the boundary could take at least 4 years once Natural England agree to consider an application.
17. The variation to the Chilterns AONB boundary can only be achieved through Natural England's statutory process which at the moment is unable to provide any indication as to when the application, submitted in 2013, may be initially assessed. An initial assessment may conclude that Natural England do not wish to start a formal process to consider the evidence.
18. An extension to the Chilterns AONB may or may not happen in the future. The area of an extension, should it be brought forward by Natural England, is unknown.
19. In light of the above it is considered that no weight can be given to the fact that an application has been made to extend the Chilterns AONB boundary south of

the A505 in considering the soundness of the allocations of land for housing east of Luton.

Appendices

Appendix A: The Case for Reviewing the Boundary of the AONB

Appendix B: Development Affecting the Setting of the Chilterns AONB

Appendix A: The Case for Reviewing the Boundary of the AONB



The Case for Reviewing the Boundary of the AONB





AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

The Case for Reviewing the Boundary of the Chilterns AONB

Summary

1. The core of the Chiltern Hills is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It covers only half of the area commonly accepted to be The Chilterns. That part of the Chilterns not currently designated lies on the dip slope of the Chilterns escarpment which falls south eastwards to the Thames Valley and the Colne Valley, a tributary of the Thames. The Chiltern Hills National Character Area (110) covers most of the wider Chilterns, the area also covered by The Chiltern Society.
2. A review of the AONB boundary provides a welcome opportunity to reconsider whether more of the Chiltern Hills should be designated as AONB.
3. The Chilterns Conservation Board requests that Natural England consider reviewing the boundary of the Chilterns AONB in four areas covering a total of 331 sq.kms (Map 1);
 - North Hertfordshire - an area to the south of Hitchin and east of Luton. (Area1- 92 sq.kms)
 - South Buckinghamshire - the area between the River Thames, Slough and Chalfont Common (Area 2 – 81 sq.kms)
 - Thames Valley – the area bordered to the north by the Thames and between Cookham (north of Maidenhead) and Caversham (north of Reading) (Area 3 – 78 sq.kms)
 - Eastern Area – the area between Chesham, Amersham, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead (Area 4 – 80 sq.kms)
4. It is the view of the Conservation Board and relevant partners that these areas are worthy of consideration for designation as part of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as they meet the criteria for designation, including the primary justifications of landscape quality. They also are important as they: link local towns and surrounding countryside; provide extensive opportunities for recreation and environmental education, and contain significant numbers of designated sites and areas of environmental and cultural heritage.

5. In selecting areas to be, potentially, considered for designation as AONB the Board and its partners are confident they meet the criteria given in the guidance issued by Natural England in March 2011, in particular that weight must be given to:
 - Landscape Quality
 - Scenic Quality
 - Relative wildness
 - Relative tranquillity
 - Natural heritage features
 - Cultural heritage
6. The Board is aware that recreational opportunities are not a reason for designation of an AONB. However, the Conservation Board does have a statutory purpose to promote enjoyment and understanding of its special qualities. The reality is that the importance and popularity of the Chilterns for recreation is considerable. It is already one of the most visited protected landscapes in Europe with 55 million visits per annum. All four of the proposed areas are in themselves important for their recreational opportunities and are an integral part of the wider access networks and appeal of the Chiltern Hills. For example, both the Chiltern Way and Chiltern Cycleway link the AONB and the proposed areas.
7. It is proposing these four areas the requirements set out in the letter from Natural England of 20th June 2013 have been given considerable weight.
 - Ecological connectivity
 - Climate Change
 - Public Engagement with nature
 - Public benefits from a healthy natural environment.

Landscape Character

8. Areas 1, 3 and 4 fall within the Chilterns National Character Area and Area 2 lies in the Thames Valley NCA. All four exhibit the typical landscape character of the Chiltern Hills - a chalk escarpment facing north-west with a dip slope to the south east running into the Thames Valley. The four areas proposed for possible inclusion in the AONB fall in the transition zone of dip slope to the Thames Valley (including the River Colne). This is an area where the boundary is currently convoluted and long thought to have excluded areas that should have been included at the time of the last boundary review in 1984-1990.
9. It is notable that they are all encompassed by the area covered by The Chiltern Society.
10. Area 2, in South Bucks, although not in NCA 110, is the original ancient designation of Chiltern Hundred and culturally is very much part of the

Chilterns including the renowned Burnham Beeches National Nature Reserve. It represents the transition between the Chilterns escarpment and the Thames Valley.

11. The Thames is currently the boundary for a considerable part of the AONB but only includes one side of the river and the river valley. Inclusion of Area 3 will ensure that a more comprehensive landscape approach can be countenanced.

Evidence Base

12. The Board, and its partners, have based the case on the evidence provided by the following data sets:
 - Natural Character Area Profiles
 - Landscape Character Assessments for; Buckinghamshire; Hertfordshire; Wokingham Borough; and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
 - Geology and soils maps
 - Historic Landscape Characterisation
 - Woodland including Ancient Woodland
 - Common land
 - SSSIs, NNRs and SACs
 - Registered Parks and Gardens
 - Conservation Areas
 - Listed Buildings (Grade I and Grade II*)
 - Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 - National Trust Property
 - Public Rights of Way, National Trails and promoted routes
 - Open Access Land
 - Priority Habitats
13. To support the four proposed areas the Board and its partners have compiled the same supporting evidence base for each.
14. The Board is conscious that, whilst all 4 areas exhibit, strongly, various typical characteristics of the Chilterns, they are also distinct in many ways. Whilst the Board requests that the merits of including all four areas as a group are taken into account, it wishes them to be considered on their individual merits too.

The Boundary

15. The Board notes the advice in page 10, of the Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or AONB - March 2011, where Natural England states that, "It is not necessary to identify a precise 'hard' boundary for an area in relation to which the technical criteria are considered at the initial stage." This accords with our own view of the process as it would be both impractical and undesirable to do so at this formative stage.
16. Accordingly, the Board has deliberately not identified a precise boundary for each area. Whilst a potential AONB extension has been identified with a possible boundary, usually in line with the boundary of the landscape character area units, a more in depth assessment is needed to determine the most appropriate boundary should the Chilterns be selected as an AONB for further boundary review work.

Consultation and Support

17. The Board has also faced a dilemma on the extent to which it consults at this formative stage to identify support for a review. From past experience of sensitive geographical issues, a lesson has been not to consult too widely too early until all the evidence has been compiled and there is a solid case to be argued that is capable of withstanding interrogation. To consult too widely too early, inevitably raises either expectation or fear. The review of the boundary can be expected to exercise such emotions with camps developing both for and against, the latter generally from landowners and developers.
18. Those bodies consulted to date, both formally and informally, primarily the local authorities have been supportive in principle. They too need to be party to a much more in depth examination of the precise boundary, not least as there are few obvious and well defined natural features to use - such is the nature of an escarpment dip slope.
19. The Conservation Board has assessed all areas which it wishes to be considered for designation as AONB. This includes the councillors from relevant local authorities who have been appointed to the Board by those councils. This doesn't apply to Area 4 (Thames Valley) as nearly all of it lies within Wokingham Borough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead which do not currently appoint to the Conservation Board.

Full length boundary Review and de-designation

20. This submission is based on four relatively large areas which could, potentially, be designated as AONB. There are a number of much smaller areas that the Board would like to be considered. It is not clear for the purposes of the current exercise if it is appropriate to also put them forward.
21. Two small areas the Board request should be considered for possible designation as AONB are Totternhoe Knolls to the west of Dunstable in Bedfordshire (Central Bedfordshire). This is an area of approx. 100 hectares

immediately adjacent to the AONB which contains common land, a Scheduled Ancient monument (Norman motte) and medieval chalk quarry which is now a county wildlife trust reserve.

OS Map Sheet 165: Aylesbury & Leighton Buzzard
Grid Reference SP986218

<http://www.chilternsaonb.org/explore-enjoy/interactive-map.html#705>

22. A second area is Chorleywood Common near Chorleywood in Hertfordshire (Three Rivers District) which extends to 76 hectares immediately adjacent to the AONB. It supports rare lowland heath.

<http://www.chilternsaonb.org/explore-enjoy/interactive-map.html#367>

OS Map 172
Grid Reference TQ033964

23. Both of these areas were inexplicably left out of the last boundary review. They contain a wealth of wildlife and historical sites with excellent public access. They provide ideal places for quiet recreation and environmental education. Totternhoe Knolls is owned by the National Trust, Central Bedfordshire Council and the Bedfordshire, Wildlife Trust. Chorleywood Common is owned by Chorleywood Parish Council.
24. In view of the difficulties experienced when the Chilterns boundary was last revised (1984-1990) the Board would not wish the full existing boundary to be reviewed. Currently the Board's aspiration is simply to request that Natural England consider the possibility of including four adjacent areas for designation as AONB. Neither is it the Conservation Board's wish that there is any consideration of de-designating existing parts of the AONB.

Benefits of Designation

25. The location of the Chilterns in the south east, only a few miles from London inevitably means the AONB is popular as a place to live and to visit with all the attendant pressures of traffic and development. It is also a place where the wider landscape is a composite of small and large land holdings often with relatively small fragmented land management units and landscape features. This is typified by the woodland cover which, at 21%, makes the Chilterns one of the most wooded parts of England, and yet the typical woodland is less than 50 hectares in extent with a large number less than 10 hectares.
26. Similarly the agricultural land is generally Grade 3, which is not particularly productive and thus there is a mixture of arable and pastoral farming, changing as the agricultural economic climate fluctuates. The result is that farms are generally small with many hobby farmers - 61% of farm holdings are less than 50 hectares and only a small number exceed 300 hectares. There are still a number of larger estates with a traditional approach to land management (farming, forestry, shooting etc.) but they are not large by

comparison with other parts of the country. Only a small number exceed 2,000 hectares.

27. There are over 2,000 hectares of common land providing a valuable and special resource for wildlife, the historic environment, environmental education and recreation, but are scattered across 200 sites.
28. The aspiration to manage on a landscape scale needs a relatively high input because of the fragmented nature of ownership and the landscape and habitat mosaic.
29. The desire to maintain the landscape character and special qualities enjoyed by so many visitors requires a robust and clear stance on development and the design of buildings. One effect of the AONB designation is to deflect development into surrounding areas. This is both eroding the quality of those areas and the setting of the AONB itself.
30. Designation as AONB will confer on the proposed areas a much better prospect of managing on a landscape scale and by ensuring development is more appropriate in terms of scale, setting and design will conserve and enhance the landscape of the proposed areas and the existing AONB.

Area 1 – North Hertfordshire

Total Area – 92km²

Currently the southern boundary of the AONB follows the A505, a dual carriageway which runs north eastwards in a more or less straight line from Luton to Hitchin. This road does not follow any natural feature and must be considered an arbitrary boundary. The natural landform and landscape character runs across the line of the road from north to south following the dip slope of the Chiltern escarpment towards the River Colne, a tributary of the Thames.

Despite the A505 being a major road it sits down in the landscape and does not unduly affect longer views. The area put forward for consideration lies to the south of this road. There is no discernible difference in the landscape on either side of the road. This is borne out by a series of considerations including the: geology; soils; landscape character, and Historic Landscape Characterisation.

The area falls between the growing towns of Luton and Hitchin and forms part of the setting of both. All of the proposed area lies within Hertfordshire; in fact all of it lies within North Hertfordshire district.

Landscape Quality

A relatively large area is owned by three estates which have maintained, what could be called, a traditional approach to estate management. In addition to extensive areas of mixed farmland there is a good network of field boundaries and woodland. Shooting for game birds remains a high priority for each landowner. There are relatively large areas of land in stewardship including HLS.

The extent of the area proposed for consideration as AONB is based on the boundary of the landscape character units.

Scenic Quality

This is one of the most unspoilt parts of Hertfordshire and, whilst adjacent to Hitchin and Luton, there are no large towns or villages within the area under consideration. It is typified by a well-managed area of lowland mixed farming and woodland and a network of ancient lanes. Running through the heart of the area is the Mimram Valley, which in the southern part of the area includes the River Mimram (chalk stream flow is erratic and often doesn't flow the full length of the valley) . This is a typical chalk stream and has working watercress beds at Whitwell.

Many of the villages and houses display architectural features and styles showing their origin as estate holdings.

Relative Wildness

This has been a well-managed area for centuries largely due to the dominance by traditionally managed estates, including the Bowes-Lyon family (the Queen's mother's family). There is a notable absence of discordant features and activity

giving a sense of getting away from it into an area of farmland still relatively rich in wildlife .It has a timeless quality which is rare in this part of the county.

Relative Tranquillity

In the busy south east and east of England all such assessments are based on relative perception. Compared to surrounding areas this is a haven of peace and tranquillity. It has no large settlements or busy roads. There is an extensive network footpaths, bridleways, cycleways and promoted routes allowing those who are seeking the quiet enjoyment of the countryside plenty of opportunities.

Luton airport lies to the west of the area and this inevitably disturbs that sense of tranquillity. That affects all of the existing AONB as it lies under the flight paths and holding stacks for Luton and Heathrow airports.

Cultural Heritage

The area is notable for a number of extensive registered parks and gardens. Close to the boundary of the proposed area is the Grade 1 Luton Hoo mansion and its Capability Brown landscape.

Support

Support for consideration of the area as AONB is provided by a cabinet resolution (28/09/2010) of North Herts DC; Cllr Richard Thake, Herts CC; Cllr Ian Reay appointed to the Conservation Board by Herts CC and Liz Hamilton, chairman of the CPRE Hertfordshire.

Area 2 - South Bucks

Total Area - 81 sq km

Landscape Character

1. To the north of the M40, the AONB boundary currently skirts the northern edge of Beaconsfield and then follows minor roads to the East as far as Chorleywood. The existing boundary cuts across the transition zone between the Chilterns dipslope and Thames Valley.
2. The majority of the proposed area lies within the Thames Valley NCA, with a small area to the north being within the Chilterns NCA.
3. The proposed area shares much of the landscape character of adjacent areas currently within the AONB.
4. Most of the area proposed is described in the Bucks Landscape Character Assessment as mixed use terrace/ wooded terrace – undulating terrace landforms formed on river terrace deposits, forming a transition zone between the Chilterns dipslope and the Thames Valley landscapes.
5. Inclusion of the rural northern stretch of the Lower Misbourne Valley (East of Gerrards Cross) would provide opportunity to enhance ecological connectivity along the river valley, linking to the Upper Misbourne Valley within the AONB to the north. The River Alderbourne is another important chalk stream of Chilterns character which would be included.
6. The area to the north of the M40 (Bulstrode/ Seer Green/ Chalfonts) is a classic 'dipslope' landscape which links the area to the south of the M40 to the existing AONB.
7. Agriculture and woodland are the predominant land uses, along with high level of recreational land use – particularly along the urban edge (e.g. horseculture, golf courses) – together with Country Parks (Black Park and Langley Park).

Landscape quality

8. There are significant areas of high quality, well managed landscape with the inevitable pockets where management is less evident and quality has suffered as a result. All such statements are relative. This area retains a remarkable extent of important designated sites including ancient woodlands, lowland heath, registered parks and gardens and common land.
9. The landscape quality varies across the area, however significant areas of high quality landscape remain. Inevitably the M40, as a major transport corridor has a significant impact in places on the landscape quality and intactness. However, away from the M40 corridor the high level of woodland cover helps to limit the extent of the impacts and create more intimate views.

Some areas of high historic and landscape value - for example around Jordans - are fragmented and would benefit from more co-ordinated management.

Relative wildness

10. The area is bisected by the M40 and close by the M25 to the east, with Slough to the south. Nonetheless there remain tracts of semi-natural habitat and woodland and scenic beauty where it is possible to get a sense of relative wildness, all the more important for being adjacent to busy urban areas.

Relative tranquillity

11. The M40 corridor and proximity of the M25 inevitably have an impact on levels of tranquillity in parts of the area. Away from the transport corridors there are however more tranquil areas, enhanced by the highly wooded nature of the landscape.

Geology

12. The underlying bedrock is primarily white chalk or sedimentary bedrock deposits (Lambeth Group) – this is the same underlying geology as most of the AONB. To the south around Stoke Poges/ Slough the area extends onto London Clay.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

13. The proposed area would extend the AONB to take in the historic area known as the Chilterns Hundreds. References to the Chilterns Hundreds can be found as far back as the mid-13th century when the term was used to refer to the three hundreds of Desborough, Burnham and Stoke.¹
14. Particular features - common land, wood pasture, historic woodlands, designed parkland.

Historic sites

15. The area has a significant number of historic sites, notably 9 historic parks and gardens including Cliveden (grade 1) and Bulstrode Park Camp - the largest British encampment in Bucks.

Woodland: - including ancient woodland

16. The Chilterns is one of the most heavily wooded areas of the country, with a particularly high proportion (56%) of the woodland in the AONB being ancient. The proposed extension is a continuation of this well-wooded ancient

¹ 'The three hundreds of Chiltern: Introduction and map', A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 3 (1925), pp. 32-34

landscape, with over 4,700 hectares of woodland (58% of the area) of which 39% is ancient. Important areas of woodland include Burnham Beeches and Stoke Wood.

Biodiversity - SSSIs/ SACs/ priority habitat

17. The area has a high concentration of good quality priority habitat including particular lowland mixed deciduous woodland, lowland beech and yew woodland, and lowland heathland. There are also a number of traditional orchard sites to the north of the M40 between Beaconsfield and Chalfont St Giles. Statutory sites include Burnham Beeches (SAC), Stoke Common (SSSI), Black Park (SSSI) and Littleworth Common (SSSI).
18. Chalk river habitat is also an important feature along the Misbourne and Alderbourne valleys.
19. These are classic Chilterns habitats and opportunities to enhance ecological connectivity would be increased by their inclusion within the AONB.

Support

20. Support for consideration of this area as AONB has been provided by Alan Goodrum, the Chief Executive of the Council, Cllr Alan Walters, appointed by South Bucks DC to the Conservation Board and the local MP, Rt.Hon Dominic Grieve MP

Area 3 - Thames Valley

Total Area - 78 km²

Landscape Character

1. This area lies wholly within the Thames Valley NVCA, immediately to the south of the Chilterns NCA .
2. This area lies to the south of the River Thames. The river itself doesn't provide a boundary to the Chilterns which it may seem to do at first sight. The chalk and clay cap with flints is typical of the Chilterns and extends some way south of the Thames. It supports land uses and a landscape that demonstrates all the typical characteristics of the Chilterns, which has been borne out by the more detailed landscape character assessments. An examination of the geology and soils maps shows that the River Thames doesn't flow to the south of the Chilterns escarpment but incises it
3. The Berkshire LCA (identifies a number of discrete areas that are in keeping with the Chiltern AONB character – all of which are within the Chilterns NCA. These include:
 - Open chalk lowland
- this “forms the southern edge of the chalk dip slope of the Chilterns”
 - Elevated wooded chalk slopes - “...mirroring the nearby landscape of the Chilterns
 - “...Chiltern Hills, of which this landscape type could be considered an outlier..”
4. Long expansive views across the Thames Valley highlight the strong landscape character of both sides- that lying within the designated AONB to the north and the area to the south of the river

Landscape Quality

5. The Berkshire LCA identifies a “very distinctive landscape with an overall strong landscape character” (18.27). The condition is described as ‘good’ though landscape integrity is subject to threats similar to those of the rest of the Chilterns (design and siting of rural buildings, new woodland, hedgerow decline and recreational pressures).
6. Landscape strategy calls for conservation (restoration) and enhancement.

Scenic Quality

7. The combination of steep, wooded chalk slopes rising from the Thames floodplain gives rise to high scenic value highlighted in the popular National Trust owned Winter Hill which affords views across the Thames to Marlow and into the heart of the AONB. In the opposite direction, views south from

Cookham Dean take in the wooded escarpment of Cliveden Estate, Windsor Castle and beyond.

Relative Tranquillity

8. Despite being in the busy south east, beneath the Heathrow flight path, with the A4 and M4 to the south and the A404 Marlow by-pass to the east, this area enjoys surprising zones of tranquillity. Possibly the contrast between these busy transport corridors serves to emphasise the tranquillity found by entering areas such as the Wargrave Marshes adjacent to the Thames, the numerous mature woodland or by using the historic rights of way that cross the chalk plateau slope.
9. As a result, the area is popular for recreational use by residents and visitors from the surrounding urban areas.

Geology

10. Chalk geology dominates- the same Seahaven and Newhaven Chalk Formations as underlie the existing AONB.
 - Thames cuts through chalk escarpment – vagaries of the last ice age resulted in this area being cut off from the main part of the Chilterns.
 - Steep slopes to Thames Valley
 - Dry valleys

Historic Landscape Character and Cultural Heritage

11. Particular features include
 - common land, wood pasture, historic woodlands, designed parkland.
12. The Thames provided an important transport and trade route with riverside settlements developing as a result (include Cookham, Bourne End, Marlow, Wargrave and Sonning). Henley, at one time, was the highest navigable port with trade then passing over the Chilterns to rejoin the Thames at Wallingford. Similarly the Thames provided the route to London for the Chiltern firewood, furniture and fruit trades.
13. Many settlements have been important throughout early Church history - Bisham Abbey, Hurley Priory, while Reading, to the west, grew up around Reading Abbey.
14. Pinkneys Green is a large NT owned common (2 km²) to the east of the area bordering Maidenhead.
15. Buildings – many of the villages have characteristic brick and flint buildings. The clay with flints deposits on the dip slope running down through the A4

supported an active brick and tile industry that existed well into the 20th century (e.g. Knowl Hill and Kiln Green).

16. Historic Parks – widely spread across the area include Park Place, Yeldall Manor and Hall Place (now home to Burchett's Green agricultural college).
17. Other cultural connections include the Hennerton Backwater north of Wargrave (featured in Jerome's 'Three Men in a boat'), the hamlet of Dunsden Green (Wilfred Owen).

Natural Heritage

18. SSSIs include Bisham Woods (also part of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC) and Cock Marsh.
19. The area contains significant priority habitats including:
 - Deciduous woodland;
 - Traditional orchards;
 - Lowland calcareous grassland;
 - Lowland fen;
 - Flood plain grazing meadow;
 - Quality semi-improved grassland.

Woodland

20. Important areas of ancient woodland include Remenham Woods and Bisham Woods SSSI As one of the 9 sites which together form the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, Bisham Woods is the only site currently outside the AONB boundary.

Area 4 – Eastern Area

Total Area – 80km²

Landscape quality

1. Currently the boundary of the AONB runs to the north and west of Berkhamsted and then around the towns of Amersham, Chesham, Little Chalfont and Chorleywood. The area between Chesham and Chorleywood follows much of the valley of the River Chess.
2. Much of the gently sloping plateau that forms the dip slope from Chesham and Berkhamsted towards the M25 is not included in the current boundary. The proposed area forms much of the setting for Berkhamsted, Chesham, Hemel Hempstead, Chorleywood and Rickmansworth and includes as part of the proposed boundary the Rivers Gade and Bulbourne and Grand Union Canal as they flow from north west to south east towards the River Colne. The northern and eastern banks of the rivers and their associated valley sides are generally built up throughout the area.
3. The extent of the area proposed for consideration as AONB is generally based on the boundary of the local landscape character units.

Scenic Quality

4. There is no discernible difference in the landscape between the current boundary and the proposed area. This is borne out in particular by the geology and soils with most of the area forming part of the Chilterns NCA. It lies within Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, principally covering parts of Dacorum BC, Three Rivers DC and Chiltern DC.
5. Many of the villages and houses display materials use and architectural features and styles very similar to those found in the AONB.

Relative wildness

6. The area is relatively well settled, though does include some areas of mixed farmland, woodland, a good network of field boundaries and significant amounts of common land. There are no truly remote parts of the area though there are many places where a sense of isolation does occur and this is helped by there generally being a lack of discordant features.

Relative tranquillity

7. Despite the area being bounded by main roads and a number of towns and large villages, and being interspersed with other smaller settlements there remains a sense of peace and quiet in much of the area because there are no main settlements and roads within the area itself. With some of the more minor routes it is possible to feel isolated with the advantage that the

tranquillity of the area is not affected. The area is also criss-crossed by numerous rights of way including part of the Chilterns Cycleway.

Natural heritage features

8. The area has many sites which contain priority habitats, including extensive areas of deciduous woodland (much of it Ancient Woodland), semi-improved grassland and traditional orchards.

Cultural heritage

9. Though the area does not exhibit extensive numbers or areas of cultural importance, it still has a significant area of common land on a great number of sites, as well as important numbers of scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens.

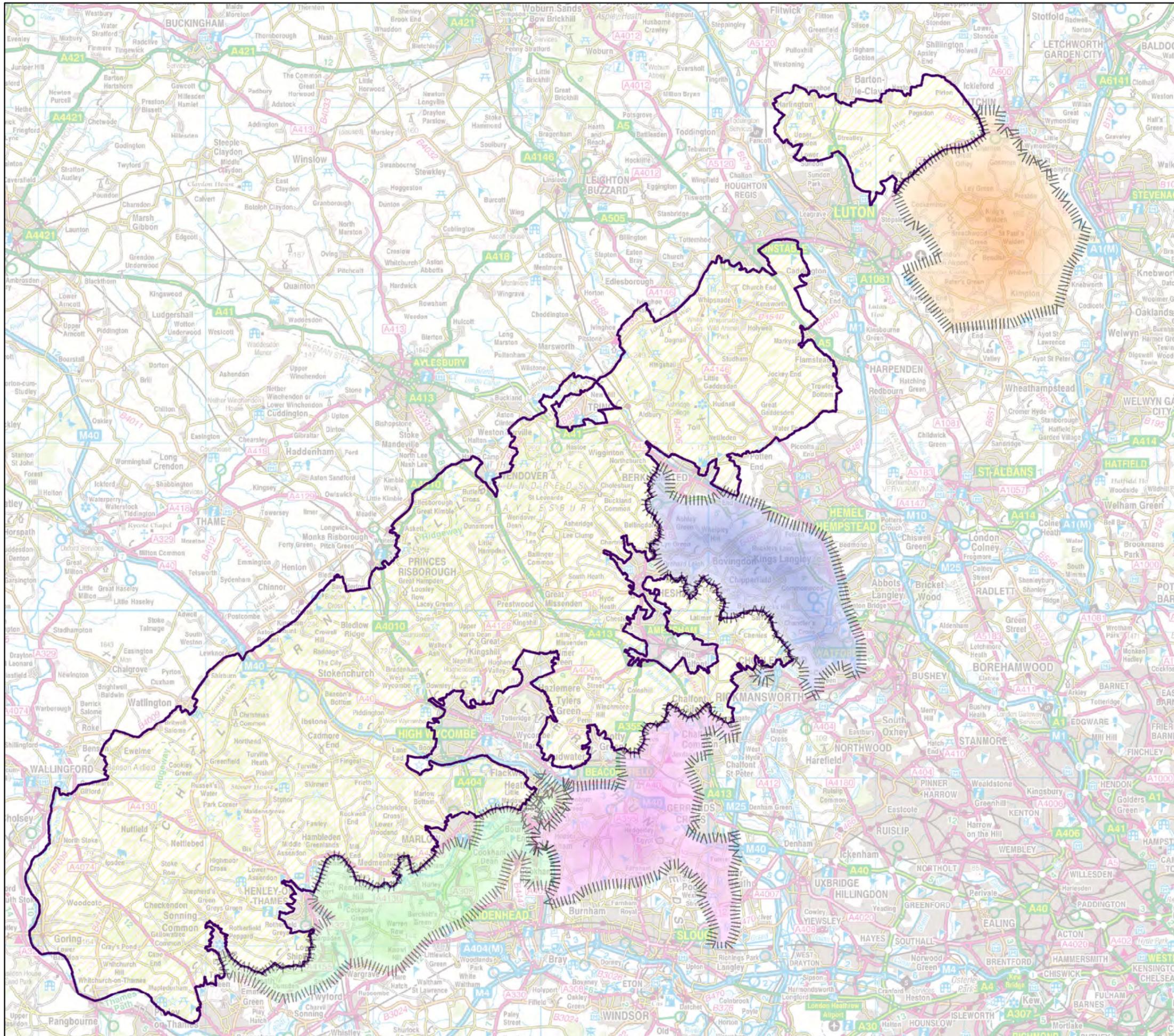
Support

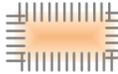
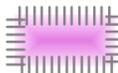
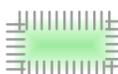
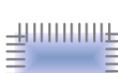
10. Cllr Ian Reay appointed to the Conservation Board by Herts CC; and the CPRE Hertfordshire

Appendix 1

Schedule of Maps

1. Chilterns AONB + proposed extensions
2. National Character Areas for Chilterns and Thames Valley
3. Area 1 – North Hertfordshire
4. Area 2 – South Buckinghamshire
5. Area 3 – Thames Valley
6. Area 4 – East Chilterns
7. Geology- Chilterns
8. Geology- Area 1
9. Superficial Geology – Area 1
10. Geology – Area 2
11. Superficial Geology- Area 2
12. Geology – Area 3
13. Superficial Geology – Area 3
14. Geology – Area 4
15. Superficial Geology- Area 4
16. Landscape Character Assessment- Area 1
17. Landscape Character Assessment – Area 2
18. Landscape Character Assessment- Area 3
19. Landscape Character Assessment – Area 4
20. Nature Conservation- SSSI/NNR/SAC
21. Priority Habitats – Area 1
22. Priority Habitats – Area 2
23. Priority Habitats – Area 3
24. Priority Habitats – Area 4
25. Woodland
26. Ancient Woodland
27. Water Catchments
28. Historic Environment; SAMS/Registered Parks and Gardens
29. Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas – Area 1
30. Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas – Area 2
31. Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas – Area 3
32. Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas – Area 4
33. Access- National Trails and CRoW Open Access Land
34. Access – Public Rights of Way – Area 1
35. Access – Public Rights of Way – Area 2
36. Access – Public Rights of Way – Area 3
37. Access – Public Rights of Way – Area 4

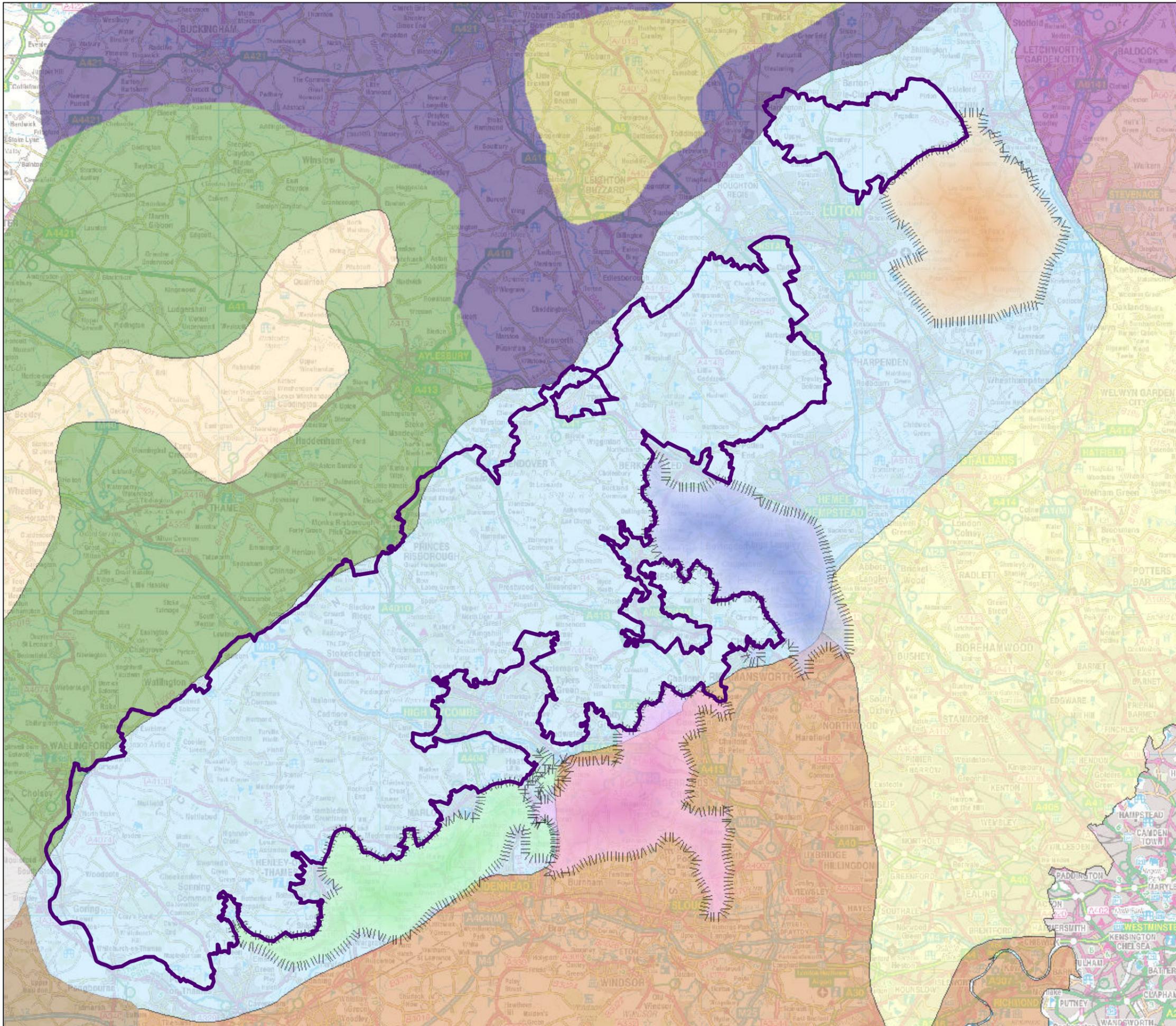


-  Area 1: North Hertfordshire
-  Area 2: South Buckinghamshire
-  Area 3: Thames Valley
-  Area 4: Eastern Area
-  Chiltern AONB

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Potential Chiltern AONB Boundary Variations

Drawing 1: All Areas



National Character Areas

-  Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge
-  Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
-  Berkshire and Marlborough Downs
-  Chilterns
-  East Anglian Chalk
-  Midvale Ridge
-  Northern Thames Basin
-  South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland
-  Thames Basin Heaths
-  Thames Valley
-  Upper Thames Clay Vales
-  Area 1: North Hertfordshire
-  Area 2: South Buckinghamshire
-  Area 3: Thames Valley
-  Area 4: Eastern Area
-  Chilterns AONB Boundary

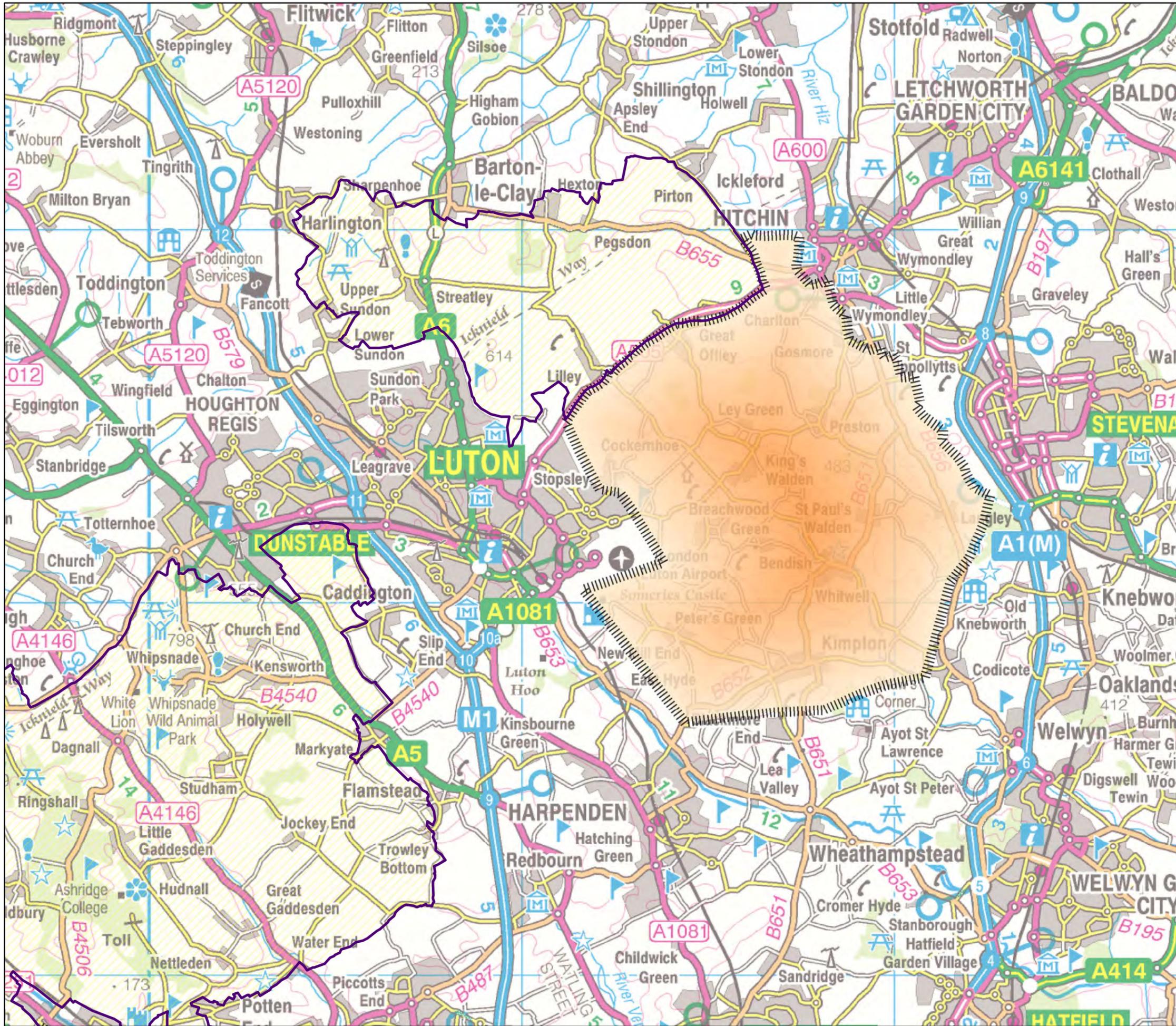
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Potential Chiltern AONB Boundary Variations

Drawing 2: National Character Areas

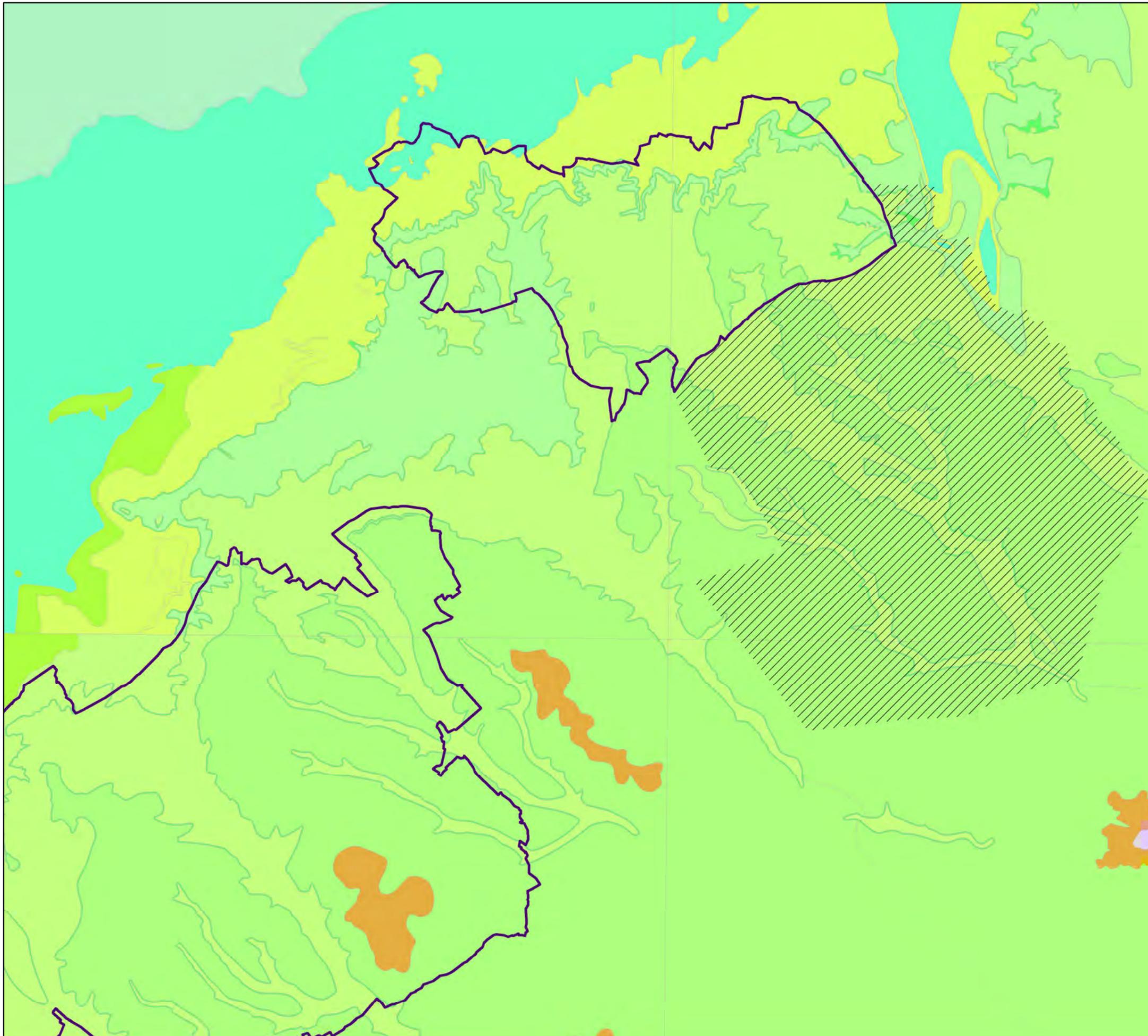
Legend

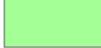
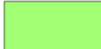
-  Chilterns AONB
-  Area 1: North Hertfordshire



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Potential Chiltern AONB Boundary Variations



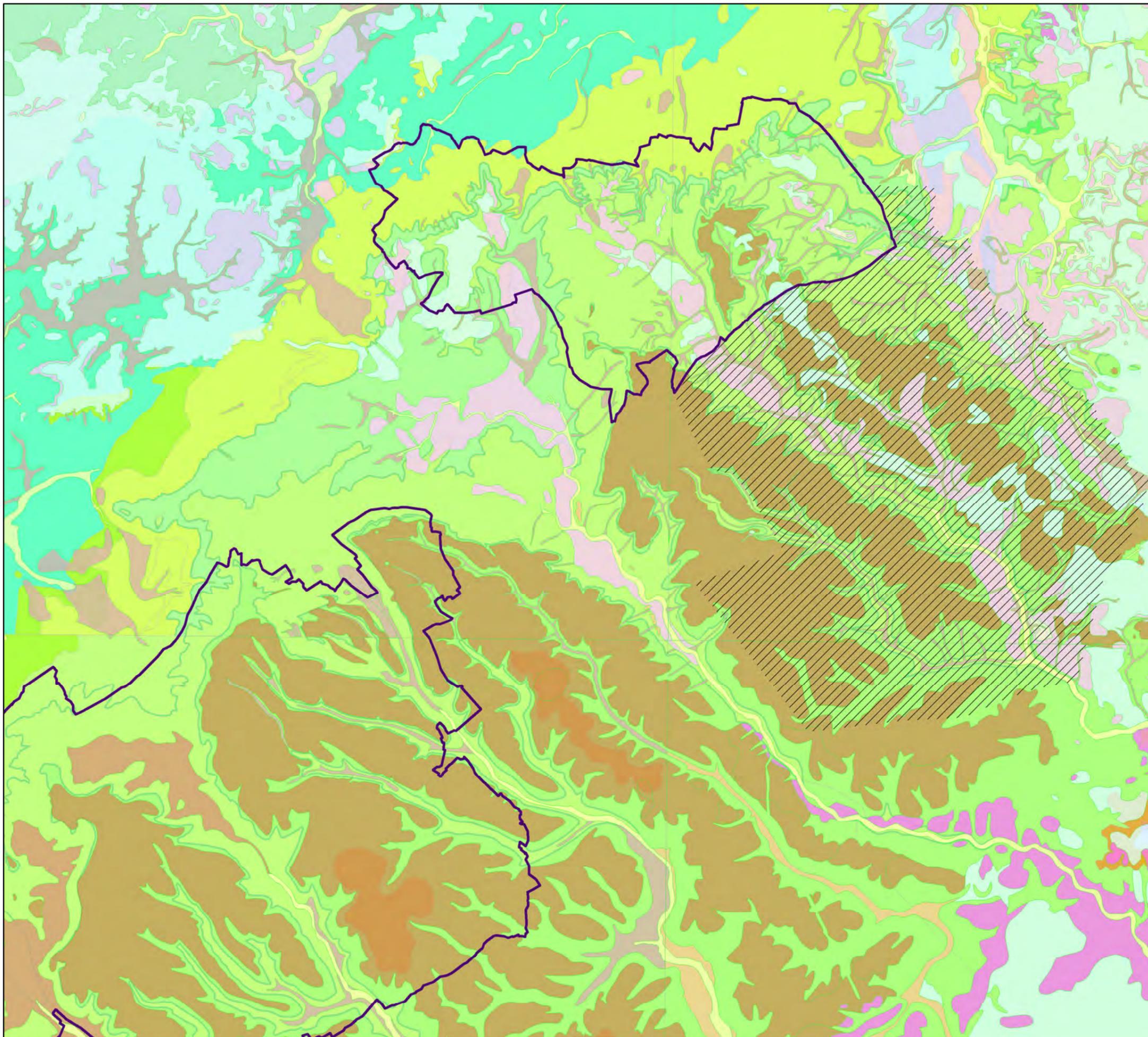
-  Gault Formation
-  Upper Greensand Formation
-  West Melbury Marly Chalk Formations
-  Zig Zag Chalk Formations
-  Holywell Nodular and New Pit Chalk Formation
-  Lewes Nodular and Seaford Chalk Formation
-  Lambeth Group
-  London Clay Formation
-  Area 1: North Hertfordshire
-  Chilterns AONB Boundary

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Potential Chilterns AONB boundary variations

Drawing 8: Geology - bedrock



- Gault Formation
- Upper Greensand Formation
- West Melbury Marly Chalk Formations
- Zig Zag Chalk Formations
- Holywell Nodular and New Pit Chalk Formation
- Lewes Nodular and Seaford Chalk Formation
- Lambeth Group
- London Clay Formation
- Area 1: North Hertfordshire
- Chilterns AONB Boundary

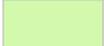
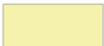
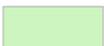
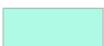
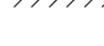
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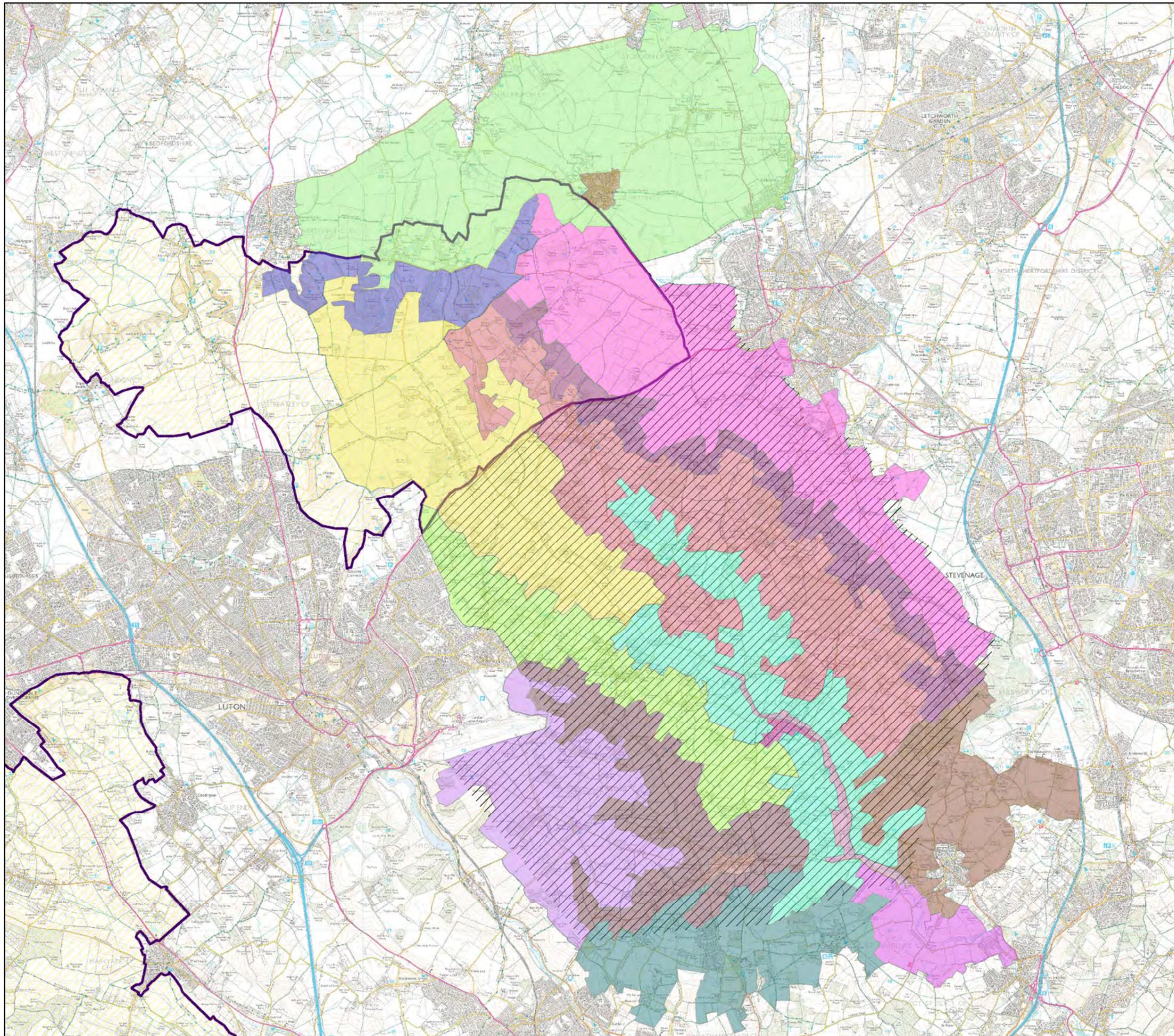
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Potential Chilterns AONB boundary variations

Drawing 9: Geology - superficial

North Herts LCA 2005

-  Blackmore End Plateau
-  Breachwood Green Ridge
-  Codicote Bottom Arable Valley
-  Codicote Plateau
-  Kimpton
-  Kimpton and Whiteway Bottom
-  Langlely Scarp
-  Langlely Valley
-  Lilley Bottom
-  North Chilterns Scarp
-  Offley St Paul's Walden
-  Peters Green Plateau
-  Pirton
-  Pirton Lowlands
-  River Mimram (Subarea)
-  Whitwell
-  Whitwell Valley
-  Area 1: North Hertfordshire
-  Chiltern AONB



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Potential Chiltern AONB Boundary Variations

Drawing 16: Area 1 and Landscape Character Areas

Appendix B: Development Affecting the Setting of the Chilterns AONB



Chilterns Conservation Board – Position Statement



View from Coombe Hill (© Chris Smith)

Development affecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB

Introduction

1. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the finest landscapes in England and Wales are conserved and enhanced. In policy terms they have the same planning status as National Parks.
2. The Chilterns Conservation Board is the body set up by Parliament to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB and increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB. The Board also has a duty to have regard to the social and economic wellbeing of those who live and work in the Chilterns AONB.

Purpose of this Position Statement

3. This Position Statement is intended to provide guidance to local planning authorities, landowners, developers and other interested parties in connection with the need to consider the impacts on the AONB of development and land management¹ proposals which lie outside it but within its 'setting'.
4. The Board considers that, although it does not have a defined geographical boundary, the setting of the Chilterns AONB is the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design could be considered to have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the Chilterns AONB.
5. This Statement expands upon issues raised in the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019: A Framework for Action², in particular: the third bullet point of the Vision; Key Issue 24 and Policies L4, L5 and L7 in the landscape chapter; Policies B1 and B2 in the biodiversity chapter; Key Issues 3, 5 and 8 and Policies HE3, HE4, HE5 and HE7 in the historic environment chapter, and paragraph 2 in the introduction, Key Issues 2 and 8 and Policies D8, D9, D12 and D13 in the development chapter³.

Vision: The setting of the Chilterns is valued and protected by ensuring development adjacent to the AONB also respects its national importance.

Policy L4: The distinctive character of buildings, rural settlements and their landscape setting should be conserved and enhanced.

Policy L5: Developments which detract from the Chilterns' special character should be resisted.

¹ "Development" includes transport and other infrastructure as well as proposals requiring planning applications. "Land management" includes tree planting, energy crops, and drainage schemes.

² Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019: A Framework for Action, Chilterns Conservation Board (2014) see: http://www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation/management_plan.html

³ This version of the statement is Revision 1 December 2014 – the policy extracts and other information reflect the adopted version of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 (March 2014), the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) and National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014)

Policy L7: The quality of the setting of the AONB should be conserved by ensuring the impact of adjacent development is sympathetic to the character of the Chilterns.

Policy B1: Delivery of Biodiversity 2020 Strategy outcomes within the AONB and its setting should be supported.

Policy B2: Action to conserve and enhance the condition of priority habitats and protected sites (statutory and non-statutory) within the AONB and its setting should be supported.

Policy HE3: Development, other land use changes and management practices which would harm the significance of nationally important designated and undesignated sites, and locally important historic assets and their settings will be resisted.

Policy HE4: The conservation of the historic environment (including the setting of important sites and features) should be based on best practice.

Policy HE5: The design and location of all development should be sympathetic to the character of the historic environment, including the setting of historic assets.

Policy HE7: The stewardship of the wider historic environment and individual sites and features (including their setting) should be supported by a high level of understanding of the character and management needs.

Policy D8: The retention or creation, and long term maintenance, of green infrastructure should be sought when development is proposed in, or adjacent to the AONB.

Policy D9: Full account should be taken of the likely impacts of developments on the setting of the AONB.

Policy D12: Developments should be sought that represent the highest environmental and design standards whilst complementing the character of the AONB.

Policy D13: The use of renewable energy (particularly wood fuel, solar, hydropower and ground source heat pumps) should be encouraged in appropriate locations.

6. Views out of the AONB and into its surrounding areas can be very significant. Development proposals that affect views into and out of the AONB need to be carefully assessed, particularly in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance, to ensure that they conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape character of the AONB.

7. The need to consider the impact of proposals within the setting of the AONB is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance, relevant legislation and planning policies and in guidance from Natural England and English Heritage. Those pieces of policy and guidance that are considered to be relevant are detailed in Appendix A.
8. The setting of AONBs has been considered by Inspectors in various planning appeals. Extracts from relevant appeals are detailed in Appendix B.
9. The special qualities of the Chilterns AONB are identified in the AONB Management Plan and are briefly set out in Appendix C.
10. This Statement is intended to be used to secure appropriate policies on this issue in Core Strategies and Local Plans and other policy documents which relate to the Chilterns AONB and assist in the decision making process with respect to proposals for development or land management outside the AONB.
11. The need to consider the potential impact of developments within the setting of the AONB on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB itself are explicitly referred to in a number of adopted development plans in relation to the Chilterns AONB. Whilst some developments may have adverse impacts, circumstances can be envisaged where other developments or changes in land use (for example tree planting outside the AONB) could enhance the AONB by mitigating or removing unsightly existing structures which may adversely impact upon the AONB. In addition, other strategies such as Green Infrastructure plans, Biodiversity Opportunity mapping and landscape character assessments, may also provide advice about enhancement.
12. **The Board will seek to ensure that the importance of considering the impact of development and land management proposals outside the Chilterns AONB on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB is made clear in all Core Strategies and Local Plan documents and in policies in other relevant documents.**
13. **The Board will expect local authorities, in accordance with their duties under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to be mindful of both the possible positive and negative impacts of a development within the setting of the AONB on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB when determining planning applications. When significant impacts are likely the Board would like its views to be sought.**
14. The setting of the Chilterns AONB does not have a geographical border. The location, scale, materials or design of a proposed development or land management activity will determine whether it affects the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. A very large development may have an impact even if some considerable distance from the AONB boundary. However, the distance away from the AONB will be a material factor in forming a decision on any proposals, in that the further away a development is from the AONB boundary the more the impact is likely to be reduced.

15. Examples of adverse impacts will include:

- Blocking or interference of views out of the AONB particularly from public viewpoints or rights of way;
- Blocking or interference of views of the AONB from public viewpoints or rights of way outside the AONB;
- Breaking the skyline, particularly when this is associated with developments that have a vertical emphasis and/or movement (viaducts, chimneys, plumes or rotors for example);
- The visual intrusion caused by the introduction of new transport corridors, in particular roads and railways;
- Loss of tranquillity through the introduction of lighting, noise, or traffic movement;
- Introduction of significant or abrupt changes to landscape character particularly where they are originally of a similar character to the AONB;
- Change of use of land that is of sufficient scale to cause harm to landscape character;
- Loss of biodiversity, particularly in connection with those habitats or species of importance in the AONB;
- Loss of features of historic interest, particularly if these are contiguous with the AONB;
- Reduction in public access and detrimental impacts on the character and appearance of rural roads and lanes, and
- Increase in air or water pollution.

16. Adverse impacts might not be visual. The special qualities of the Chilterns AONB include tranquillity. A development which is noisy may well impact adversely on tranquillity even if not visible from the AONB.

17. The Board will monitor, comment and report on relevant planning applications and decisions relating to development within the setting of the Chilterns AONB which may impact on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.



Chilterns Conservation Board Planning Committee site visit, Ivinghoe Beacon (© Chris Smith)

Avoiding Harm to the Setting of the Chilterns AONB

18. The best way of minimizing adverse impacts on the setting of the AONB is through avoidance in the first place, so that schemes bring about the conservation or enhancement of the setting of the AONB. In relation to development within or affecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB, the Chilterns Conservation Board supports the following:

- Measures to consider the impact on the setting of the AONB, including where required through Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, ecological surveys or historical assessments;
- Care being taken over the design, orientation, site layout, height, bulk and scale of structures and buildings through the preparation of a design and access statement;
- Consideration not just of the site but also the landscape and land uses around and beyond it;
- Careful consideration of colours, materials and the reflectiveness of surfaces;
- Restraint and care over the installation and use of street lighting, floodlighting and other external lighting to prevent harm to the dark night skies of the AONB and its setting;
- The grouping of new structures and buildings close to existing structures and buildings to avoid new expanses of development that are visible and out of context (though any likely detrimental impact on historic buildings or groupings will need special consideration to avoid insensitive development), and
- Comprehensive mitigation measures, for example including landscaping and open space that incorporates only native species (where possible contributing to BAP targets and the provision of Green Infrastructure), and noise reduction (though landscaping in certain contexts can be damaging to historic features, deposits, landscape or character so will require careful consideration).

19. It is considered that many issues in relation to new development within the setting of the Chilterns AONB can be resolved through careful design, appropriate materials, location and layout and mitigation measures from landscaping to the use of minimal, well-directed and full cut-off street (and other external) lighting.

20. The Board is willing to enter into pre-application consultations to ensure full attention is given to these factors and to assist in the process at the earliest opportunity.

NOTES

The Chilterns Conservation Board has the statutory duty⁴ to pursue the following two purposes:

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB; and
- b) to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these roles, the Board shall seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

This is one of a series of position statements published by the Board which help to expand on the Board's policies within the Chilterns AONB Management Plan or explain the Board's approach to new and emerging issues (renewable energy for example). Further information and advice is contained in the following: The Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and the associated supplementary technical notes on local building materials, the Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Highways in the Chilterns and The Making of the Chilterns Landscape. All of these can be found on the Board's website.

The Board is comprised of members nominated by the local authorities, elected parish council appointees and individuals appointed by the Secretary of State. The Board, formed in December 2004, is the only organisation that looks after the AONB as a whole.

The Chilterns AONB was designated in 1965 and extended in area in 1990. It is one of 38 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across England and Wales. It occupies 833 square kilometres and is a landscape of equal importance to National Parks such as Snowdonia and the Lake District.

For further information contact:

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Chinnor, Oxfordshire OX39 4HA
Tel: 01844 355507 cwhite@chilternsaonb.org

⁴ Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Policy guidance on the consideration of development proposals within the setting of protected landscapes

National legislation and guidance

1. Section 85 of the **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities requiring them to have regard to the statutory purpose of AONBs when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to, or affecting land within these areas.
2. Guidance on how the implication of this duty and how it may be discharged was issued by Defra in 2005⁵. This includes the statement *“Additionally, it may sometimes be the case that the activities of certain authorities operating outside the boundaries of these areas may have an impact within them. In such cases, relevant authorities will also be expected to have regard to the purposes of these areas”*. The Guidance includes a list of relevant authorities, although this is not definitive.
3. **Natural England** has published more detailed guidance in 2010⁶, including case studies. It includes a case study from the Northumberland National Park regarding *“Working to ensure policies include the impact on National Parks from development beyond their boundaries”*.
4. Policy 113 of the **National Planning Policy Framework** states that *“local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks”*.
5. Paragraph: 012 of the renewable and low carbon energy section of the **National Planning Practice Guidance** (Reference ID: 5-012-20140306) states, in connection with active solar technologies, that “where a planning application is required, factors to bear in mind include: ... the effect on a protected area such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or other designated areas”.
6. This concept of the significance of setting has to be recognised with respect to protected landscapes (AONBs and National Parks). **Natural England’s published spatial planning position**⁷ considers, in Position 5, the protection and enhancement of protected landscapes: *“Spatial planning policies and decisions should ensure the highest levels of protection and enhancement for England’s protected landscapes, habitats, sites and species”*. The explanatory text states

⁵ Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. Defra (2005)

⁶ “England’s statutory designations: A practical guide to your duty of regard” Natural England NE243 (2010)

⁷ Natural England’s Spatial Planning Position (2009), see: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/PlanningPosition_tcm6-16604.pdf

“Natural England interprets the protection and enhancement of all sites, habitats and landscapes widely. This includes safeguarding their character, qualities and features, including where appropriate, their settings”.

7. Natural England has published ‘**Making Space for Renewable Energy – Natural England’s approach to assessing on-shore wind energy development**’.⁸ This includes the statement *“Natural England regards the setting of protected landscapes as being potentially influential on the conservation of the special qualities of the National Park or AONB concerned”.*

8. This guidance continues *“Spatial plans should include policies that take into account the sensitivity of the setting of protected landscapes”, and “The potential for developments to dominate the setting of protected landscapes requires careful consideration”.*

9. The **Overarching Energy National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-1** includes⁹ the following statement (paragraph 5.9.12):

“The duty to have regard to the purposes of nationally designated areas also applies when considering applications for projects outside the boundaries of these areas which may have impacts within them. The aim should be to avoid compromising the purposes of designation and such projects should be designed sensitively given the various siting, operational, and other relevant constraints.”

10. The concept of ‘setting’ is set out in the legislation¹⁰ and national policy¹¹ relating to designated heritage assets. Setting is defined in Annex 2 of the **National Planning Policy Framework** as *“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral”.*

11. Helpful guidance on the consideration of the setting of heritage assets is given in the ‘**Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide**’ published by English Heritage in March 2010¹². Setting is said to be *“the surroundings in which an asset is experienced. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not”* (paragraph 113). The guidance goes on to say that *“For the purposes of spatial planning, any development of change capable of affecting the significance of a heritage asset or peoples experience of it can be considered as falling within its setting”* (paragraph 118), and *“Transport proposals can affect the setting of heritage assets”* (paragraph 124).

⁸ http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/NEBPU1805Annex2_tcm6-15152.pdf

⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/37046/1938-overarching-nps-for-energy-en1.pdf

¹⁰ Sections 16 and 66, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

¹¹ NPPF Section 12 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

¹² http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/Historic_Environment_Planning_Practice_Guide.pdf?1269365073

12. A 'Heritage asset' is defined in Annex 2 of the **National Planning Policy Framework** as "A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)". In view of the number, scale, quality and distribution of designated and undesignated historic features in the Chilterns AONB, the Board considers that significant parts of the AONB can be considered as heritage assets under this definition.

13. Local Planning

14. The Board considers policy CS17 (Environmental Assets) in the **Wycombe Development Framework Core Strategy**¹³ is an example of good practice. The policy includes the text:

"The Council will conserve and improve the environmental assets of the District by requiring:

1. The conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting".

15. The Board also considers that the first part of policy CS22 (Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) in the **Core Strategy for Chiltern District**¹⁴ is another example of good practice. The policy includes the text:

"The principles to be followed in the Chilterns AONB are that:

a) all proposals must conserve and enhance the special landscape character, heritage, distinctiveness of the Chilterns AONB

b) all proposals must protect the setting of the AONB and safeguard views into and out of the area".

¹³ <http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/council-services/planning-and-building/planning-policy/core-strategy.aspx>

¹⁴ <http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/corestrategy/site/index.php>

Appeal decisions

1. Consideration was given to the impacts on the setting and enjoyment of the **Chilterns AONB** in a joint appeal against the refusal of applications for the redevelopment of a football ground in Marlow for housing development and the creation of a **new football ground** at an alternative site near Little Marlow (see APP/K0425/A/09/2111436, 2010). In dismissing the appeal the Inspector wrote:

“The Chilterns AONB lies to the north on the opposite side of the road to the appeal site and the proposal would not have a direct impact on any of the key characteristics of the AONB landscape. However, the valley floor landscape plays a role in the setting of the AONB. It forms the middle ground of the public view point from Winter Hill on the south side of the river. Whilst it was suggested that the proposal was not on the ‘principal viewline’ across the valley, the Winter Hill view point provides a very wide panorama that is experienced by turning the head to appreciate its breadth. I do not, therefore, consider that there is a ‘principal viewline’. Although the facilities would be sited on lower land to the east of the site close to an existing hedgerow and tree belt they would, in my view, add to the built form in the valley and reinforce the urban fringe character further reducing the integrity of the landscape to the detriment of the open rural character of fields and lakes”.

“The pitches would be mostly used in the winter when floodlights would be needed in the evenings. At night from Winter Hill the sharp line of the lights on the A404 and Marlow beyond contrast with the almost complete darkness of the AONB on the far side of the valley. Whilst there are some lights towards the skyline they are towards the left side of the view where the road climbs the hill. There are sporadic lights on the valley floor but in my view the floodlit training area and the lighting associated with the car park and access would have a dramatic detrimental impact on the night view from Winter Hill”.

“In longer views from the AONB looking south the proposed facilities would be seen in the distance in the valley bottom and would again have a slight detrimental impact by reinforcing the encroachment of urban forms into the predominantly rural open landscape. The same effect, but with greater impact, would be seen at closer quarters by those passing along the A4155. The widened access would have a more urban appearance and the facilities would be seen through the existing boundary trees”.

2. The potential for development to impact on the setting of the **Dorset AONB**, and hence being a material matter in the consideration of the acceptability of a development, has been affirmed by the Planning Inspectorate in connection with an appeal against the refusal of permission for the creation of a new **static caravan community** of 30 bases and a reduction of 30 bases elsewhere on the park (see APP/P1235/A/06/2012807, 2007). The Inspector

wrote:

“I consider that the area immediately abutting an AONB will be relevant where the appreciation of the natural beauty of the designated area may be affected by what lies outside it. In my view, this is analogous to development outside of a Green Belt, where Planning Policy Guidance Green Belts (PPG2) advises, at paragraph 3.15, that the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development conspicuous from the Green Belt which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in Green Belts, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design. I therefore agree with the Council that the effect on the AONB is a material consideration”.

3. Further consideration was given to the issue of setting of the **Dorset AONB** by the Inspector in appeal ref APP/P1235/A/08/2072794, 2008 where he stated, with respect to a proposal for the **change of use of land from existing touring caravan site to site for 45 static holiday caravans**, that:

“However, given that the Secretary of State has now published the Proposed Changes to the Draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), I attach significant weight to RSS Policy ENV3, which requires particular care to be taken to ensure that no development is permitted outside AONBs which would damage their natural beauty, special character and special qualities – in other words to their setting”.

4. Detailed consideration of the adverse impacts of the construction and operation of **a four 100m turbine wind farm** for electricity generation on the special qualities of **Exmoor National Park** was given by the Inspector in appeal ref APP/Y1138/A/08/2084526, 2008:

“I turn now to views south from Exmoor, and the setting on the National Park. Although it was suggested that the evidence presented in opposition to the proposal was tantamount to the creation of a buffer zone to the south of Exmoor, I accept that this is not the case. The special qualities of Exmoor include the description of ‘a landscape that provides inspiration and enjoyment to visitors and residents alike’. In my judgment part of the enjoyment stems from the appreciation of Exmoor in its rural setting, and the land to the south is a significant element in that. The National Park clearly has a setting framed by the land to the south, and proposals must be considered individually or cumulatively in respect of the setting. The definition of setting is difficult to pin down in many instances. For a particular building it might involve hard boundaries such as walls, but for a landscape it involves concepts such as topography, land use, character, vegetation and more”.

“So the effect on the character and appearance of the area, and the setting of Exmoor, can be summarised thus. The visual experience will vary from location to location, and will be of a major and substantial intrusion in places. There would be serious harm to landscape character. But from some places there would be levels of visibility and intrusion which

would not, in my judgment, be so harmful as to weigh against the proposal. I consider that the skyline views and movement of blades would, notwithstanding the separation from Exmoor, impinge upon the appreciation of the special qualities of Exmoor to a material degree”.

5. An Inspector, in dismissing appeal ref: APP/H1840/A/06/2023564, addressed the issue of the proposed development of a **haulage depot and storage buildings** outside the AONB that impacted adversely on views out from the **Cotswolds AONB**:

“From the elevated vantage point of the Cotswold Way [within the AONB] the greater density of the development would be readily apparent, as although the site forms part of a vast panorama, it would be towards the front of that view”.

6. And towards the Cotswolds AONB:

“From lower viewpoints ... the breach of the AONB skyline would not be mitigated”.

APPENDIX C

Special qualities of the Chilterns AONB¹⁵

- The steep chalk escarpment
- Open, flower-rich, chalk downland
- Large tracts of beech woodland
- Areas of common land
- Locally distinctive flint and brick architecture
- A rich historic environment with many grand houses, designed landscapes, ancient routes, hill forts and chalk figures
- Extensive public rights of way network, including the Ridgeway and the Thames Path National Trails, and other accessible sites which receive 55 million leisure visits a year
- Natural features such as chalk rivers and streams which are a globally scarce habitat supporting a range of specialised wildlife including the water vole
- Tranquillity
- Arable and livestock farms managed with consideration for biodiversity, particularly farmland birds and other wildlife

¹⁵ As detailed in the vision for the Chilterns AONB and introduction to the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019: A Framework For Action