



Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty

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Claire Courtois
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Sent via planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk

22 April 2020

Dear Claire,

North Somerset Local Plan 2023-2038 Pre-Commencement Document (Reg 18) consultation.

With reference to North Somerset Local Plan Pre-commencement Document (Regulation 18 consultation), herewith comments from the Mendip Hills AONB.

The nationally protected landscape of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 198 square kilometres from Bleadon in the west to Chewton Mendip in the east. The AONB partly lies within the North Somerset to the south-west of the wider Bristol area and south-east of Weston-Super-Mare. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are some of the UK's most cherished and outstanding landscapes.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 confirmed the significance of the AONBs and Section 85 places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function in relation to, or affecting land within as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Potential development proposals outside of the boundaries of AONBs that may have an impact within the designated area, are also covered by the 'duty of regard'.

The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership produced the Mendip Hills AONB management Plan 2019-2024 as required by the CRow Act on behalf of the joint local authorities and the Plan has been adopted by North Somerset Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Mendip District Council. The Management Plan under paragraph 1.4 sets out a Statement of Significance on the special qualities of the Mendip Hills AONB that create the Mendip Hills sense of place and identity and these include views from the Mendip Hills AONB, settlements of Mendip stone largely confined to the spring line, retaining dark skies and a sense of tranquillity.

As set out in Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) profile for the Mendip Hills (141), the area is 'renowned for its tranquillity and inspirational qualities...' The NCA further recognises that 'Light pollution from development threatens the extent of the recognised dark skies and out-of-character development is a continuing risk to the essential nature of the area.' Within the NCA Statement of Environmental Opportunity under SEO1 it sets out 'Safeguard inward and outward views and to the distinctive hill line and conserve and enhance the special qualities, tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness of the area'.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) under paragraph 172 sets out that 'great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

Specific comments relating to the Pre-commencement Document (Reg18) Consultation are attached document entitled *Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Comments – North Somerset Local Plan 2023-2038 Regulation 18 Consultation* for your consideration.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Mendip Hills AONB Unit.

We would wish to participate in future consultations concerning the North Somerset Local Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Chubb-Whittle
AONB Landscape Planning Officer

Cc Cllr Nigel Taylor, AONB Partnership Committee Chair; Natural England, Mendip Hills AONB Parish Representative, The Mendip Society, The National Trust.

The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership promotes and coordinates the conservation and enhancement of the Mendip Hills AONB