

**From:** Page, Lucy  
**Sent:** 12 June 2015 14:35  
**To:** Sue Adams  
**Subject:** RE: Kingsclere NP

Dear Sue

Thank you for your email including the information received from Andrew at Basingstoke regarding the Neighbourhood Plan process. My comments to you purely related to the two sites which you asked me to look at and I have no information on alternative sites which you may also be considering.

The primary purpose of AONB status is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. When carrying out that duty, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of the local communities. In particular, sustainable forms of social and economic development, that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment, should be promoted.

Duty of regard

Statutory duties in relation to AONBs are provided for in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Specifically, they state that, *'in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in these areas, relevant authorities (public bodies etc) "shall have regard" to their purposes'*. This would include parish, town and district authorities.

The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 provides essential guidance given the location of Kingsclere on the edge of the North Wessex Downs AONB. This sets out that,

*"The North Wessex Downs Partnership's approach to the provision of new housing is contained within its Housing Position Statement. This sets out that in general, strategic levels of new housing within the area should be avoided except in exceptional circumstances, in line with the recommendations of the NPPF. Land of lesser environmental value outside the designated area should be the first choice. Only where necessary to meet appropriate local needs will new housing be supported. This should be within existing settlements, preferably on suitable previously developed sites. Good design and siting of all new developments in the North Wessex Downs is essential. They should reflect the local landscape character and architecture and make use of local materials".*

If your Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites, you will need to demonstrate that you have considered the sensitivity of the landscape to the proposed allocations, and any adverse visual impacts they may have (e.g. on sensitive views to/ from nationally-protected landscapes or heritage assets, including their settings). Any sensitive views should be mapped and recorded within the evidence base. Assessment of landscape and visual impacts requires a systematic and robust approach, as outlined in best-practice guidance from the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

As Andrew has set out there is a lot of guidance and information available on the best way to approach the site selection process. As I mentioned on the phone to you following my site visit, of the two sites shown to me it would appear that site A would have less of a visual impact on the AONB than site B. This opinion however does not override the need for those preparing the Kingsclere Neighbourhood Plan to consider alternative sites within the settlement boundary which would meet the housing need. Only if none of the alternative sites are assessed as being suitable and sufficient justification has been provided that additional housing is required to meet local needs, would the AONB unit consider supporting such a scheme for housing development within the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Kind regards

Lucy

Mrs Lucy Page

Planning Advisor

**North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Units 3 and 4

Denford Manor

Lower Denford

Hungerford

Berks RG17 0UN

[www.northwessexdowns.org.uk](http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk)

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