

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER POLICY

The landscape of Three Rivers is a complex mix of rural and urban areas, woodlands, wildlife habitats, farmland, water features and other land forms. Wildlife habitats such as meadows, woodlands, hedgerows, orchards and wetlands are valued components of the landscape and have their own special management requirements.

Three Rivers incorporates 546 hectares of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), an area of national landscape importance, generally made up of a mosaic of woodland, copses, enclosed pastures, arable fields, wooded and open heath and scattered farms and villages, overlying rolling hills and valleys. The parts of the AONB within the District consist largely of chalk stream, river, valley and adjacent hillsides and woods.

As there will be increasing pressure for development across the District, it is important that all landscape, including the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is conserved and enhanced. The preferred policy approach ensures that the design of development proposals is sensitive enough to ensure that schemes make a positive contribution to the landscape.

Policy xx Landscape Character

1) Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Planning permission will be granted for development within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) provided that it:

- a) conserves and enhances the special qualities, distinctive character and natural features which contribute to the natural beauty of the AONB
- b) has regards to the AONB Management Plan
- c) has regards to the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and technical notes by being of high-quality design which respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns and its traditional built character, and reinforces the sense of place and local character and
- d) avoids adverse impacts from individual proposals and any cumulative effects, unless these can be satisfactorily mitigated.

There is a presumption against major development in the AONB unless it can be demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances and the development is in the public interest. Whether a development constitutes a 'major development' will be assessed on a site-by-site basis taking account of the nature and scale of the proposal and its relation to the local context and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes of the AONB designation.

2) Landscape Regions

In all landscape regions, the Council will require proposals to make a positive contribution to the surrounding landscape. Proposals that would unacceptably harm the character of the landscape in terms of siting, scale, design or external

appearance will be refused planning permission. The Council will support proposals that:

- a) Lead to the removal or a reduction in the impact of existing structures and land uses that are detrimental to the visual quality of the landscape
 - b) Enhance public access and recreation opportunities without detriment to the landscape or wildlife
 - c) Contribute to the delivery of Green Infrastructure
 - d) Contribute to the measures identified in the Hertfordshire Landscape Strategy to strengthen, reinforce, safeguard, manage, improve, restore and reconstruct landscapes.
- 3) When considering proposals for development which may affect the management of an area or particular feature of the landscape, details of management proposals to protect and enhance the contribution of the site to the wider landscape will be required.

Reasoned Justification

New development should conserve and enhance the special character and natural beauty of the AONB. Proposals should also protect the setting of the AONB and safeguard views into and out of the area. The areas of the District within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are shown on the proposals map.

Hertfordshire County Council's Landscape Character Assessment identifies three landscape regions in Three Rivers (shown on the proposals map)

- The Chilterns Landscape Region (including parts of the Chilterns AONB)
- The Central River Valleys Landscape Region
- The South Hertfordshire Plateau

These landscape regions contain a variety of landscape character areas for which assessments have been produced identifying key characteristics and influences. A Landscape Strategy has been produced which includes suggestions for managing future change. Further details can be obtained

from: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/landscape/landscape-character-assessment.aspx>

The Council will seek to ensure that development complements the surrounding local landscape of Three Rivers as identified in the current Local Character Assessments, through siting, layout, design, appearance and landscaping of development. When preparing applications consideration should be given to:

- The development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change
- The pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies, walls and other features
- The topography of the area.

Applicants are encouraged to refer to the Landscape Character Assessments for information in relation to these matters and the Council's Trees and Landscape Strategy.

For developments in or near to the Chilterns AONB, the Council will have regard to the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and Supplementary Technical Notes on Chilterns building materials (flint, brick and roofing materials) as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. These provide further information on acceptable design in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the issues facing the area and the management actions required. These are available from:

<https://www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/planning-development/buildings-design-guidance.html>