

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

12 March 2019

External Board/Outside Body

External Board/Outside Body	Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Councillor(s) represented on the Outside Body/External Board	Patrik Garten
Report Author	Patrik Garten & Nick Johannsen (AONB Unit)
Date of External Board/Outside Body Meeting Attended	Next JAC meeting will be 13/06/19. This report provides an update relating to Maidstone relevant (in bold) projects, currently in progress

Purpose of the External Board/Outside Body:

Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

The Kent Downs relies on many stakeholders who have a role in managing the landscape, supporting local business and communities and enabling quiet recreation. The Joint Advisory Committee plays a pivotal role in helping realise the strategic vision for the Kent Downs AONB and oversee the Management Plan.

Its purpose is to provide advice to its members with statutory responsibilities for the effective management of the Kent Downs AONB. An Executive of representatives from the JAC, with some outside advisors, advises the work of the Kent Downs AONB Unit.

The Kent Downs AONB Unit is employed by Kent County Council and works on behalf of the JAC to carry out the preparation and review of the Management Plan, to advocate its policies and work in partnership to deliver a range of actions described in the Action Plan.

Funding partners & Members

Defra, Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council, Gravesham Borough Council, London Borough of Bromley, Medway Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Swale Borough Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Country Land and Business Association, Environment Agency, Kent Association of Local Councils, Action with Communities in Rural Kent, National Farmers Union, English Heritage

Update:

Summary since our last report (Jan 2019)

- The Kent Downs AONB Unit has been requested to provide support for Maidstone's ambition to secure a part of the Greensand Ridge as AONB, this has been agreed with the Unit's Chairman and a letter of support will be sent to the Council shortly.
- The Kent Downs AONB Unit has submitted an objection to the planning application at Binbury Park; in the Unit's view the applicants fail to justify application against both National and Local policy.

The application site lies within the Kent Downs AONB, a nationally protected landscape afforded the same protection as our National Parks. The site is rural in nature comprising predominantly open countryside made up of arable fields and woodland that lies outside of any recognised settlement. The scale of the development together with its inappropriate location, and the poor relationship to existing settlement pattern would result in a significant detrimental change to landscape character as well as harming visual amenity, removing the current sense of openness and failing to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. The AONB Unit is of the view that the impact to the AONB could not be satisfactorily mitigated by landscaping or other methods.

In their view the proposal conflicts with the revised NPPF, in particular paragraph 172 which provides that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs and that major development should not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances and where public interest can be demonstrated; it is the view of the Kent Downs AONB Unit that the stringent tests set out at paragraph 172 of the NPPF have not been met. The NPPF also clearly states that the scale and extent of development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be limited.

- The AONB Unit continues to develop a funding bid to Interreg to work with Visit Kent to secure 4m Euro investment in rural tourism in Kent and in particular the Kent Downs AONB and North Downs Way
- The Unit has submitted proposals to Defra to develop new Environmental Land Management Schemes which will benefit the landscapes and communities of Kent and the Kent Downs.
- The Unit continues to promote Ash to Ash the significant new sculpture located in White Horse Wood (MBC area) and which is attracting new visitors.
- The Unit continues to provide advice and support to Maidstone Officers and Members on planning matters that affect the Kent Downs.

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If Members would like to know more about the Kent Downs AONB Unit or the work of the Joint Advisory Committee they are very welcome to get in touch directly with Nick Johannsen, the Director. Nick.johannsen@kentdowns.org.uk
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