



Bryniau Clwyd a Dyffryn Dyfrdwy Clwydian Range and Dee Valley

Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Summary of AONB Planning Applications 2022-23

The following is a summary of Planning Applications received by the AONB Planning officer from the three local Authorities and other third parties.

All responses to consultations are undertaken in accordance with the revised scheme of delegation for the handling of planning and development related proposals, in conjunction with the AONB Partnership Landscape Character and Built Environment working Group. In the absence of any formal consultation on policy matters, relevant legislative changes and major development proposals, the working Group did not meet during the previous 12 months. However, meetings are anticipated this year due to consultation on the Denbighshire LDP Deposit Version and the determination of some major planning applications which have been held in abeyance because of issues relating to phosphorous and the impact upon the designated River Dee SAC.

Planning Consultations

The built environment is one of the special qualities of the AONB and contributes to the character and appearance of the area. There is pressure for new development in and around the AONB as an attractive place to live, work and visit, but particular care is required to ensure inappropriate development is resisted and new development is of the highest standard and respects the landscape quality. A key role of the Joint Committee and Partnership is to advise on development policies and proposals affecting the AONB.

The overall number of consultations referred to the AONB in 2022/23 was 251 which is a significant reduction on the 345 received during 2021/22. However, last year's figure was comparatively high when compared with recent years. Most consultations were applications referred by the three Local Planning Authorities. As expected, and in line with previous years the majority **221 (88%) were from Denbighshire**, followed by **Flintshire 25 (10%)** and **Wrexham 5 (2%)**. Other consultations comprised of an insignificant number of planning appeals (2) and a National Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) outside the designated area.

The planning consultations cover a broad range of interests as detailed below:

Category	Proportion of Applications
Householder applications	41%
Residential, including conversions	21%
Tourism related development	16%
Agriculture/Forestry	10%
Energy related applications	2%
Other, minerals, signs, telecommunications	10%
Total	100%

Pre-Application Consultations

Despite the marginal reduction in consultations on planning applications there has been an 11% increase in the number of pre-application consultations during the previous 12 months. This has involved meetings with applicants/developers to improve the quality of development schemes prior to formal submission. It represents good practice and allows the Joint Committee to have a greater influence on improving design etc at an earlier stage of the planning process. This trend is very much encouraged as it fosters good working relationships with LPA's and key stakeholders in promoting better quality outcomes and an improvement in the appearance of new development, most notably housing schemes within and adjoining the AONB.

Discharge of Planning Conditions

There has also been an increase in the number of consultations relating to discharge of conditions. This is helpful as it allows the Joint Committee to comment on the details, but more importantly ensures we remain involved, and can influence matters we have raised or requested as conditions as part of our initial consultation response.

Both the increase in pre-application consultations and discharge of conditions are positive and improve our engagement in the planning process. It allows the Joint committee to have a greater say on the decision-making process and measures are in place to ensure this trend continues.

AONB Responses

The majority of decided planning applications **(83%) were granted permission**, which is comparable with the approval rate in previous years. Only **(12%) were refused**, and 5% were withdrawn by the applicant prior to determination. This would include a recent housing scheme at Graigfechan which is an example of our intervention in the planning process. The Developers are now working up a significantly amended scheme following on-going negotiations with the LPA and ourselves to improve the site layout and design.

As in previous years, the AONB raised no objections to the majority of applications, but often suggested amendments to siting, design, materials, or additional landscaping to help improve the quality of the development and to ensure it conserves and enhances the character and appearance of the AONB. However, the number of outright objections lodged to development proposals increased by over 15% in relation to the previous year.

Despite this, an analysis of LPA decisions would indicate that there was an increase in the number of cases where the LPA's accepted our response. This is higher than in previous years with only a limited number of cases when LPA's have disagreed with our response. Where this has occurred, it has been due to a difference in the interpretation of policy or a subjective opinion in respect of the impact upon the AONB. Generally, there is greater alignment and consistency between response and decision and the evidence would indicate that our responses are fully considered and influencing the final decision. Quite often this has resulted in an amended scheme or a refusal and subsequent re-submission of a new application.

Appeals and Enforcement

The number of appeals referred to the AONB are down on previous years. One notable outstanding appeal is at Aberduna Farm which remain pending. A similar reduction in the number of Enforcement Cases referred to the LPA enforcement teams for investigation.