



**KENT DOWNS AONB RESPONSE TO
LTC EXA WRITTEN QUESTIONS 2
Interested party Ref no: 20035310**

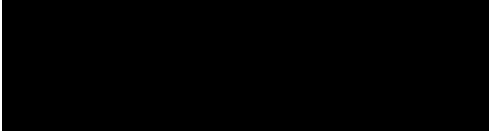
Q11.4.1 Retention of construction compound as a car park: AONB considerations

It is suggested that the intention is for part of the construction compound in this location (Work No. CA2) to be repurposed as a car park. • Is an additional car park in this location necessary? • Should this facility be viewed as necessary, can its location be justified in AONB terms? To the extent that additional visitors to this part of the AONB potentially could have negative implications from overuse on particular trees/paths, but additional parking provision may encourage additional visitor use and pressure; • Can the Applicant signpost where the introduction of a new permanent car park is assessed within the submitted documentation and the AONB effects, if any, that are attributed to it? • Is further mitigation required to be provided, or can it be demonstrated that it is accommodated within existing proposals? How is this secured? (To - Applicant Natural England Kent Downs AONB Unit Kent County Council Gravesham Borough Council Shorne Parish Council).

The site of the construction compound/car park lies immediately adjacent to the AONB, the boundary in this location is formed by Thong Lane. The AONB Unit has no objection in principle to the re-purposing of the construction as a car park in this location; its provision could enable easier access into the wider AONB to the east and south where there is an extensive range of land that is publicly accessible and therefore should allow for a sufficient dispersal of visitors so as not to adversely impact on the AONB. Enabling improved access to the AONB to allow quiet countryside recreation is a wider aim of the AONB Management Plan. In order to ensure dispersed activity and avoid further concentrated use of Shorne Woods, the car park and associated works, such as signage, information panels and path provision, should be informed by a Visitor Management Plan for the wider area.

However, in view of the site's highly sensitive and rural location, it is crucial that any permanent car park area is compatible with AONB purposes. At present, the car park is presented as a large, formal area of hardstanding, unbroken by any soft vegetation and with a regular edge to all sides, which would fail to conserve or enhance the AONB. The AONB Unit considers a smaller, more informal parking area that adopts the design principles for countryside car parks set out in the Kent Downs AONB [Landscape Design Handbook](#), (page

17) such as avoiding large car park areas, breaking up parking areas with tree planting, using materials appropriate to the local character such as ragstone/tar and chip, would be more appropriate. We are also concerned that wider more formal facilities that have been suggested such as cycle hub and kiosks would be inappropriate in this rural location, away from existing infrastructure.



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31 October 2023