



**Department for
Communities and
Local Government**

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Government**

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Thank you for your letter of 5 October 2014 to the Secretary of State about development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. I have been asked to reply, and I apologise for the delay in doing so.

There has been no change to our policy on the protection of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which remains as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, published in March 2012. However, we felt that it would be useful to draw the attention of local authorities and others to the full wording of paragraph 14 of the Framework, including its footnote which mentions Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt and other land with protective designations.

Accordingly on 6 October we issued additional guidance to help local authorities allocate land appropriately in their Local Plans. This was text under the heading 'Housing and economic land availability assessment - Methodology – Stage 5: Final evidence base', inserted into the existing Planning Practice Guidance, and accessible at <http://tinyurl.com/ke44yxn>. The guidance underlines the importance of the Green Belt protections set out in the Framework, and addresses the question whether housing and economic needs override planning constraints. It reminds local authorities that, in planning to meet their objectively assessed local housing and other development needs, they should take account of constraints such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which indicate development should be restricted.

This Department is not able to comment on how a particular local authority should interpret and apply the Framework to local circumstances. However, after public consultation locally, draft Local Plans are still submitted for formal examination by a planning inspector to ensure that they are sound.

Yours sincerely,


ALAN C SCOTT
Planning policy adviser