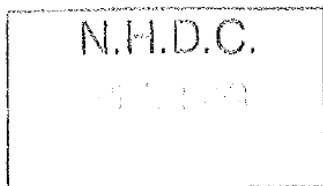


Rt Hon Dame Cheryl Gillan DBE MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

David Scholes
Chief Executive
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3JF

22 March 2018

Dear Mr Scholes.

I understand the Chilterns AONB forms part of your local authority and I am writing to seek your opinion and hopefully your support to explore the opportunity of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty becoming a National Park.

As you may be aware, in 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' the Government has committed to reviewing National Parks and AONBs fit for the 21st century, including whether more may be needed.

There are no National Parks between the Peak District and South Downs or the Brecon Beacons and the Broads. I believe the Chilterns AONB is an ideal candidate for National Park status, for its nationally-important concentrations of chalk grassland, over 11,000 hectares of ancient woodland, chalk streams, red kites and plenty of historical and archaeological value. Such a designation would create a new National Park Authority, which would be solely responsible for local planning within its area.

The Chilterns AONB is on the London Tube line, and facing unprecedented levels of infrastructure development to meet the housing crisis, High Speed Rail and from the East West and North now the proposed 'Arc' of development between Oxford and Cambridge. To the south it is being threatened by development spreading from Slough. It is the nearest designated protected landscapes to a very large urban conurbation, namely London and therefore very vulnerable and valuable.

Under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, it is Natural England's statutory duty to consider which areas in England meet the criteria for designation of a National Park. I have this week written to James Cross, Chief Executive at Natural England for his advice on what the process would be and what considerations he may have already undertaken for this designation proposal. I have also spoken to Sue Holden of the Chilterns Conservation Board, who is very supportive.

I strongly believe the Chilterns AONB should be considered as a candidate. I would be most grateful if you could lend me your support or let me know why you would oppose such a move to protect our local area.

Yr sincerely
Cheryl Gillan

Tel: 020 7219 4061
Email: gillanc@parliament.uk
Website: www.cherylhillan.co.uk