1. The inclusion of the model policy is not in itself going to make the whole Core Strategy NPPF compliant. The model policy is really referring to “decision-taking” and makes no reference to the section on “plan making” which also exists within paragraph 14 of the NPPF. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF does not intend to implement a “presumption in favour of sustainable development” in all locations. It actually states that “Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:” and the second consideration given states that “specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted” at which point footnote 9 is referred to. Footnote 9 states “For example, those policies relating to sites protected… and/or designated as SSSIs; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty…” Therefore, there needs to be a stage before this model policy where there is an understanding and identification within the Core Strategy where development might be “restricted”.

2. Within the Core Planning Principles (paragraph 17) of the NPPF one of the principles states that planning should “contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this framework..” The need to “conserve and enhance” is a cross reference of the text from Section 82 of the CRoW Act 2000 in relation to AONB designations. The NPPF also vitally highlights the need for Councils to differentiate between land of the highest environmental quality and that not and to allocate development accordingly to areas of lesser environmental value. This is an important principle that needs consideration as part of the Core Strategy allocations process and again can not in itself be confined to a model policy on development proposals.

3. There are of course specific policies in the NPPF that do indicate that development should be restricted with AONBs. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that “Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.” The NPPF continues at paragraph 116 stating that “Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.” Although considerations are given to when exceptions may be given for planning applications, there is no
indication or support given to the need for major development to be actually allocated within designated areas.

4. In conclusion, the model policy is a helpful summary of some of the key points of the NPPF in the decision taking process. However, the NPPF also confirms various principles for the plan making process, including identifying where development may be restricted, the location of allocations to land of lesser environmental value, and that great weight should be given to conserving AONBs. A Core Strategy to be sound therefore would also need to demonstrate these NPPF plan making principles have been incorporated within the Plan.