

4.4.2016

RE: 16/00274/FUL Erection of three detached dwellings and associated works. Fortitude Birdlip Hill Witcombe Gloucester Gloucestershire.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board notes that this amended application is now for 3 dwellings as compared to the previous application for 4 dwellings. However, the loss of one dwelling does not make this scheme any more acceptable or compliant with policy and therefore the Board wishes to maintain its objection. The Council should also consider Footnote 9 in relation to Paragraph 14 of the NPPF that confirms the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not automatically apply in AONBs because of the restrictions applied by other policies of the Framework (see below). Further to this development can only be "sustainable development" if of course it fulfils all three dimensions (Paragraph 7 of the NPPF) which include contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural environment which this scheme fails to achieve. The Board therefore maintains its objection for the following reasons as stated before:

The site is outside and away from any settlement within the open countryside of the nationally protected Cotswolds AONB. There is a legal duty under Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 for the Local Authority to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the AONB which has the highest status of landscape and scenic beauty protection and is afforded "great weight" under Paragraph 115 of the NPPF.

The starting point for Para.55 of the NPPF is "To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities." Accordingly Local Planning Authorities are advised to specifically avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are exceptional circumstances. The AONB Board see no exceptional circumstances in this case that meet with the tests of Para.55 of the NPPF and that would overcome and take preference above the protections afforded to the AONB and to protection of the countryside generally from random housing development. New permanent residential dwellings with gardens, parking, lighting and all the trappings of residential development, would result in a clear change in character from a rural scene to a group of houses in the countryside (a greater overall and lasting impact and change of character as compared to log cabins for holiday use).

Both the CRoW Act and Para.55 seeks an element of landscape enhancement, however building new houses in the countryside, no matter how well concealed, will result in negative impact particularly in relation to an AONB. The future occupiers of the site would also likely to be car reliant as the site is away from any settlement and so this development also fails the tests of "sustainable development" at Paras. 6 and 7 of the NPPF and would lead to a precedent for other such developments across the open countryside of this nationally protected landscape.