

26.5.2016

16/00417/OUT Residential development of up to 76 dwellings with the creation of a new access to Southam Road (B4632), together with an emergency, pedestrian and cycle link to Mill Lane, associated landscaping, and public open space | Land Rear Of Dormans Mill Lane Prestbury Cheltenham Gloucestershire.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board raise an **objection** to this proposal on the basis of the impact from the scheme on the setting of the nationally protected AONB.

The application site is outside but adjoins the boundary of the Cotswolds AONB and is therefore considered to be within its setting. At paragraph 113 the NPPF states that *“Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged.”* Further to this the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG 2014) also confirms in relation to the Section 85 duty that *“The duty is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty boundaries, but which might have an impact on the setting of, and implementation of, the statutory purposes of these protected areas.”*

The Cotswolds Conservation Board have initially assessed this proposal in respect of land viewed in conjunction with the AONB from the AONB in relation to Paragraph 115 of the NPPF. The site is highly visible at present from within the AONB from numerous well used and publically accessible viewpoints from example from the Cleeve Common escarpment and Prestbury Hill Reserve. The application site actually forms a continuation of the quality of the wider landscape into the settlement edge and its Special Landscape Area designation and proximity to the Conservation Area is noted.

Following the pre-application stages a 10m wide landscape buffer has been provided along the eastern edge of the development (Queenwood Grove) and other landscaping is being provided or retained. However, due to the elevated and extensive views into the site, landscape mitigation in this case will only have limited benefit. Existing views of an open valued landscape, leading up to the edge of the existing settlement, will be replaced by 76 dwellings and associated street lighting, new roads and associated works. The open character of the site makes an important contribution in restricting the encroachment of the town into the countryside. The development would neither protect nor enhance an area of land whose features are characteristic of the landforms on the edge of the Cotswolds landscape and whose proximity to it contributes to the setting of the AONB.

In respect of views back to the AONB from outside the AONB other landscape policies are relevant. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by “protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.” In this case therefore, in addition to the setting harm to the AONB, there would be harm to the character and appearance of the local area through the loss of a valued landscape (recognised through the Special Landscape Area designation). The site occupies the only remaining area where the eastward historic relationship of the village to the scarp, with the various lanes and paths leading through largely intact hedged fields is still clearly legible. This site is therefore also of local visual and landscape value in the interrelationship between the wider surrounding landscape of the Cotswolds AONB and the Prestbury Conservation Area.