

**19/00526/SCREEN – EIA Screening Opinion request – Proposed residential development of up to 250 dwellings – Oakley Farm, Cheltenham**

**Cotswolds Conservation Board response (via email), 21st March 2019**

I am aware that a request has been made by Pegasus Group, on behalf of the applicant, Robert Hitchins Limited, for Cheltenham Borough Council to provide an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion for the proposed development of 250 dwellings at Oakley Farm, on the eastern edge of Cheltenham, within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

As you can see below, I sent an email to your Director of Planning, Tracey Crews, regarding the possibility of development on this site, on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018. In the email, I expressed the concerns of the Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') regarding the possible development. As far as I am aware, I did not receive a response to that email.

Based on the points that I raised in my email of 20<sup>th</sup> December, the Board strongly urges you to specify that an EIA is required for the proposed development, which would set a highly unwelcome precedent.

As indicated in my email of 20<sup>th</sup> December, the Board also strongly urges you, as the local planning authority, to:

- advise the applicant that it would be highly unlikely for a housing development on this site to be granted planning permission;
- discourage the applicant from applying for planning permission;
- ask the applicant to halt any further preparatory work on the site.

I would very much appreciate receiving your response to the points raised in both this email and my email of 20<sup>th</sup> December.

Many thanks.

Kind regards,

John Mills  
Planning & Landscape Officer  
Cotswolds Conservation Board

**ANNEX. Email sent to Cheltenham Borough Council on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**Subject:** Housing development at Oakley Farm Pastures

I am emailing you to express the concerns of the Cotswolds Conservation Board regarding the proposed housing development at Oakley Farm Pastures, which is in the Cotswolds AONB on the eastern edge of Cheltenham, as outlined below.

**I would greatly appreciate it if you would let me know:**

- **the information that you have about this proposed development;**
- **your current thinking (as the local planning authority) about this proposed development; and**
- **your proposed course of action regarding this proposed development.**

**I strongly urge you, as the local planning authority, to:**

- **advise the developer that it would be highly unlikely for a housing development on this site to be granted planning permission;**
- **discourage the developer from applying for planning permission;**
- **ask the developer to halt any further preparatory work on the site.**

I understand that the land at this location has been purchased by a local firm, Robert Hitchins Ltd, and that they are developing plans for a major housing development for the site, with a view to submitting a planning application in the near future. I also understand that some tree felling has already taken place on this site, presumably as part of the preparation for this proposed housing development.

It is highly likely that the Board would strongly object to any such development on this site. In this urban fringe location, in the highly sensitive setting of the Cotswold escarpment, it is vitally important to ensure that the urban area is not permitted to encroach into the AONB (regardless of the extent of housing development adjacent to the site, outside the AONB boundary). This type of development would set a highly unwelcome precedent by allowing this to happen. Cheltenham Borough Council's own assessment of the landscape character, sensitivity and capacity of the AONB identified this site (7.1. Oakley Farm Pastures) as being highly sensitive and having a major overall landscape constraint and low overall capacity. The site is not allocated as a housing development in the draft Cheltenham Borough Local Plan, which has been submitted for examination.

A housing development on this site would clearly constitute major development in the context of paragraph 172 of the NPPF and should, therefore, not be permitted, unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances apply and that it would be in the public interest.

I look forward to receiving your response to my queries and recommendations, shown in bold, above.

Many thanks.

Kind regards,

John Mills  
Planning & Landscape Officer  
Cotswolds Conservation Board