

Joan Desmond
West Oxfordshire District Council
Elmfield
Witney
OX28 1PB



By email only to: joan.desmond@westoxon.gov.uk

10 November 2021

Dear Joan,

APPLICATION NO: 21/03159/FUL

DESCRIPTION: Conversion of existing building to create a cafe/restaurant together with associated landscaping works and provision of parking.

LOCATION: Diddly Squat Farm Shop, Chipping Norton Road, Chadlington, Oxfordshire, OX7 3PE.

The above planning application, which is for a development that would be located within the Cotswolds National Landscape¹, has been brought to the attention of the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

In reaching its planning decision, the local planning authority (LPA) has a statutory duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.² The Board recommends that, in fulfilling this 'duty of regard', the LPA should: (i) ensure that planning decisions are consistent with relevant national and local planning policy and guidance; and (ii) take into account the following Board publications:

- Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2018-2023 ([link](#));
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to Landscape Character Type (LCT) 9 (High Wold Dip Slope), which the site is located within, and LCT 7 (High Wold) and LCT 16 (Broad Floodplain Valley) from which the café / restaurant could potentially be seen, particularly at night-time (see below for further details);
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to LCT 9 ([link](#)), including Sections 9.2, 9.14 and 9.15, and LCT 7 ([link](#)) and LCT 16 ([link](#));
- Cotswolds AONB Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change ([link](#));
- Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statements ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to:
 - Dark Skies and Artificial Light Position Statement ([link](#)) and its appendices ([link 1](#), [link 2](#), [link 3](#))
 - Tranquillity Position Statement ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to 4.5 Traffic and vehicle movements, 4.6 Visitor numbers, and 5.1 Parking.

Lighting

A key consideration should be the potential impact of the light that would be emitted through the extensive area of glazing on the south elevation of the café / restaurant during non-daylight hours. This lighting would introduce a 'lit element' into what would otherwise be a relatively dark night-time

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The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), managed and looked after by the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

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Brendan McCarthy
Vice Chair:
Rebecca Charley

landscape. This lighting / lit element would potentially be seen from the south side of the Evenlode Valley (for example, by people using the B4437) and beyond.

The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy & Guidelines for LCT 9 (Section 9.2) identifies *'the introduction of lit elements to characteristically dark landscapes'* as a potential (adverse) implication for isolated development such as this. The guidelines seek to *'conserve areas of dark skies'*, with these dark skies being one of the *'special qualities'* of the Cotswolds National Landscape. This is particularly important in an area with relatively low levels of light pollution such as this (as indicated in Appendix 1 of the Board's Tranquillity Position Statement, referred to above).

As such, the introduction of lit elements would not be compatible with this guidance or, by extension, with the policies of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan, for example, Policies CE5 (Dark Skies) and CE10 (Development & Transport – Principles).

Without prejudice, if the local authority is minded to grant planning permission, we recommend that planning conditions should be imposed which seek to mitigate this adverse impact. For example, the planning conditions should:

- require the roller shutters on the south-facing glazing to be closed during hours of darkness;
- require external lighting to be avoided / minimised, particularly on the south side of the café / restaurant; and
- set a 'curfew' by which time all lighting on the site should be turned off (for example, 11pm to 7am)

Traffic

The severe traffic congestion that has occurred during the opening hours of the adjacent Diddly Squat farm shop has been well publicised. This level of traffic is not appropriate in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), such as the Cotswolds National Landscape, especially given that one of the *'special qualities'* of the area is its relative tranquillity (as outlined in the Board's Tranquillity Position Statement, referred to above).

The provision of an on-site café / restaurant could potentially exacerbate this issue by providing an additional reason for people to visit the site.

Without prejudice, if the local authority is minded to grant planning permissions, we recommend that planning conditions should be imposed which seek to mitigate this adverse impact. For example, the café / restaurant should only be open to customers who have pre-booked (prior to arriving at the site).

If you have any queries regarding these comments please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



John Mills

Planning & Landscape Lead

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NOTES:

- 1) Cotswolds National Landscape is the new name for the Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The new name takes forward one of the proposals of the Government-commissioned 'Landscapes Review' to rename AONBs as 'National Landscapes'. This change reflects the national importance of AONBs and the fact that they are safeguarded, in the national interest, for nature, people, business and culture.
- 2) Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85
- 3) The documents referred to in our response can be located on the Cotswolds National Landscape website under the following sections
 - a. Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2018-2023
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/management-plan
 - b. Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/lca
 - c. Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/lsg
 - d. Cotswolds AONB Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/ldlc
 - e. Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statements
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/ps1
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/ps2