

**Planning application Ref:** 14/02576/FUL

**Proposal:** Erection of a primary health care centre (Use Class D1), ancillary pharmacy and ten residential units (Use Class C3), together with associated infrastructure, parking and landscaping.

**Location:** Land Parcel Stow Fair Site Between Mangersbury Road And A436, Mangersbury Road, Stow-On-The-Wold, Gloucestershire

## **Response of the Cotswolds Conservation Board**

The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') was established by Parliament in 2004.

The Board has two statutory purposes<sup>1</sup>:

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB; and
- b) To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these roles, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

1. The site lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and therefore paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) applies.

*115. 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 conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.*

2. In granting consent on appeal ref: APP/F1610/A/11/2165778 for residential development at Tetbury in the Cotswolds AONB it was stated:

*"The Secretary of State agrees that the primary concern about the impact on the AONB is the loss of fields to housing development (IR14.53). Despite the visual improvements that would result from the landscaping proposals, and to some extent moderate the impact of the new buildings, he agrees that the **loss of open fields must inevitably have a detrimental effect on the landscape and environment**" [Board emboldening].*

3. In 2000 the Council published a Landscape Assessment of Land around Cotswold settlements, otherwise known as the "White report". The Council has repeatedly referred to this assessment in allocating development within the Cotswolds AONB. There is no reference to this key document in the applicant's LVIA.
4. With respect to Stow on the Wold paragraph 18.9 of this report sets out the "key relationships" between the town and the surrounding landscape. A positive relationship identified is "the green wedge separating the town from Mangersbury allows a relationship between the older town and the landscape".
5. Paragraph 18.13 of the Stow on the Wold section identifies "areas where development is not suitable". These include "Between Stow and Mangersbury

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<sup>1</sup> Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

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because of the setting of the conservation area.” The proposed development lies within this area.

6. The Board concurs with this view. The green wedge forms an important function in defining the relationship between the town and countryside. The boundaries of the area are well defined.
7. The introduction of built development will harm this important relationship. The Board considers that the LVIA has underplayed the significant harm which development of this area will cause to the setting of the town within the AONB.
8. The Board therefore objects in principle to built development on this site.
9. The Board notes that the proposed primary health care building would deliver significant public social benefits. If the Council is satisfied that no other suitable site is available for this facility, including the recently approved development north of Tesco's, it may come to the view that this outweighs demonstrable harm to the AONB. If this is the case then the Board would expect significant mitigation measures to be incorporated to reduce visual intrusion and harm to tranquillity.
10. The Board is not convinced that the same case can be made for the market housing element of the proposal. The Board notes that the LVIA submitted by the applicant is in respect of an outline planning application and therefore is of limited value with respect to the full application currently submitted.

## **Summary**

11. The Board **objects** to this proposal on the following grounds:

**The Board considers the proposals fail to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cotswolds AONB as required by paragraph 115 of the NPPF. However, the primary health care element of the scheme may be in the public interest, subject to no other site being available.**