

Planning Application S.14/0525/FUL

Erection of 48 dwellings (including 15 affordable dwellings), with landscaping and associated infrastructure.

Land at Woodside Lane, Kings Stanley, Gloucestershire

Comments of the Cotswolds Conservation Board

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

The Board has two statutory purposes¹:

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (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.

2. The Board notes that the site lies adjacent to the boundary of the Cotswolds AONB.
3. National Planning Practice Guidance published in March 2014 confirmed that local planning authorities have a duty to consider if development proposals that are situated outside National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty boundaries might have an impact on the setting of, and implementation of, the statutory purposes of these protected areas.
4. Views across the site show clearly that the proposed development would interfere significantly with views of the Cotswolds AONB. This impact can be determined in particular from the Applicant's Photo viewpoints 1 and 5. The development of two storey houses in this view would block views of the Cotswold escarpment.
5. The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-18² includes as a special quality of the AONB "*the Cotswold escarpment, including views to and from it.*"
6. The issue of the importance of the retention of views of the Cotswold escarpment was considered by the Planning Inspector with respect to appeal reference APP/G1630/A/12/2183317, a copy of which is attached to this response.
7. Paragraph 29 of that decision states:

"29. In views towards the AONB the visual effect of the development on Site A would be much more pronounced. This is due to the prominence of the topography and the construction of the housing on the elevated part

¹ Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

² <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/?page=managementplan>

of the site. At present Mount View Drive appears as two parallel rows of houses on the western side of Gretton Road. Whilst this development seems to me to be a highly evident feature it does nestle into its setting and the upper slopes of Langley Hill rise up behind to form a backdrop. It is the case that the new houses would interrupt that foreground view and be prominent to the observer standing outside the site in Greet Road. Whilst some of the upper slopes would be apparent the context of the rising hillside behind the town would be significantly diminished. **From Gretton Road the situation is likely to be even worse because the observer would find that views towards Salter's Hill and the AONB escarpment on the other side of the valley would be greatly impeded due to the proximity and elevation of the built development. The adverse impacts on the setting of the AONB would be significant.** *[My emboldening]* Whilst these impacts would be confined to limited viewpoints it seems unlikely that they would diminish in time, even with the proposed landscaping."

8. Paragraph 32 of that decision states:

"32. Of greater importance is the harm to the setting of the AONB arising from the housing on the elevated part of Site A. The latter plays a role in providing the foreground setting to Langley Hill within the adjoining AONB with which it shares a number of topographic and landscape features in common. The appeal development would interrupt westerly views thus adversely affecting the setting of the AONB. Furthermore views would be impeded in an easterly direction towards the Cotswold escarpment on the other side of the valley.

These impacts would be limited to those public viewpoints close to the east and west site boundaries. Nevertheless there would be significant harm to the setting of the AONB. *[My emboldening]* This would be contrary to development plan policy, including saved Policies S.6 and NHE.5 in the SP and saved Policy LND2 in the LP.

9. Paragraph 70 of that decision includes:

"...Whilst there would be significant landscape harm and conflict with development plan policy there would also be substantial benefits. Most notably these would include the contribution towards housing land supply in the face of a serious short term deficit."

10. This decision makes clear that the interruption of even very localised views of the AONB can cause significant harm to the setting of the AONB, contrary to Local Plan Policy NE8.

11. The Board is therefore of the view that this proposal is contrary to Policy NE8 of the Stroud Local Plan.