

Planning application Ref: 14/01449/OUT

Proposal: Outline application (all matters reserved except access) for the erection of up to 100 dwellings, public open space, associated infrastructure with new accessways from Main Road and Goose Lane.

Location: Land At The Corner Of Main Road And Goose Lane Lower Quinton

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. Paragraph 3.20 of the applicants Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) states under "topography

The site lies to the north of the prominent Meon Hill, which forms a distinctive landform to the south of the site. Meon Hill rises steeply to around 194 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). Meon Hill has a flat top and is the site of a former fort. The summit of this hill is approximately 1.5 km to the south of the site. The land rises gradually southwards from the site through Upper Quinton before steepening markedly and rising up to the Hill

3. Paragraph 3.22 of the applicants Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) states

The site is relatively flat at around 56 – 59 metres AOD, with only a very gentle fall from south to north and towards Main Road. Topographically, the site is indistinctive and sits within a wider context that includes the prominent Meon Hill.

4. Views across the site from the north show clearly that the proposed development would interfere significantly with views of Meon Hill within the Cotswolds AONB. This impact can be determined in particular from footpaths along the Main Road and also the Heart of England Way. The development of houses in this view would block views of substantial parts of Meon Hill.

5. The issue of the importance of the retention of views of the Cotswolds AONB 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.

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

6. Paragraph 29 of that decision includes

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."

7. 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.

8. 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."

9. 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.

10. Policy EF1 Of the adopted Local Plan includes:

"Proposals which will have a detrimental effect on the AONB, will not be permitted, whether located within the AONB or outside the designated area"

11. The Board is therefore of the view that this proposal is contrary to Policy EF1 of the Local Plan and paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework..

Malcolm Watt
Planning Officer
Cotswolds Conservation Board 1st July 2014