

## Planning Application 14/03742/FUL

### Agricultural Livestock and Storage Buildings, Laying of Yards, Erect Dwelling, Formation of Access and Associated landscaping.

#### Land at Shirehill Lane, West Kington, Wiltshire SN14 7AR

#### Comments of the Cotswolds Conservation Board

1. 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 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 within the Cotswolds AONB.
3. Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states

*'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.'*

4. National Planning Practice Guidance published in March 2014 confirmed that National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty management plans may also be material considerations in making decisions on individual planning applications, where they raise relevant issues.
5. The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-18 includes the following policies relevant to this application:

**LP1:** *The key characteristics, principal elements, and special qualities (including tranquility), which form the natural beauty of the Cotswolds landscape are conserved and where possible enhanced.*

**LP2:** *Development proposals and changes in land use and management, both within and outside the AONB, take account of guidance and advice published by the Board.*

**DTP1:** *All Local Plan documents, neighbourhood planning, and planning decision-making processes should have regard to the statutory AONB Management Plan, and Position Statements, Landscape Strategies and Guidance issued by the Board, as well as the following criteria in determining the acceptability of a proposed development in the Cotswolds AONB.*

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<sup>1</sup> Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Development should:

- be compatible with the distinctive character of the location as described by the relevant landscape character assessment, strategy and guidelines;
- incorporate designs and landscaping consistent with the above, respecting the local settlement pattern and building style;
- be designed to respect local building styles and materials;
- incorporate appropriate sustainability elements and designs;
- have regard to the impact on tranquility, including dark skies;
- not have an adverse impact on local community amenities and services as well as access to these;
- protect, and where possible enhance, landscape and biodiversity;
- be in accordance with a more sustainable pattern of development, reducing dependence on car travel.

6. The site lies within the Dip-slope Lowland Landscape Character Type (LCT) as described in the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment.<sup>2</sup> The Board has published Landscape and Strategy Guidelines (LSGs) for each LCT. The LSGs describe forces for change which adversely or positively affect the character of the relevant LCT.
4. For the Dip-slope lowland LCT<sup>3</sup> the LSG describes a force for change as 'Agricultural intensification and in particular the construction of new industrial scale sheds...' The landscape implications are due to 'the construction of large-scale 'industrial style' agricultural sheds on the skyline or in prominent locations'. The response is to 'Ensure that new large-scale farm buildings do not adversely affect views across the Dip-Slope Lowlands and views from the neighbouring High Wold Dip-Slope.'
5. As noted in the Council's pre-application advice "*the proposed site occupies a potentially prominent position within the landscape.*" and "*The currently proposed location on the top of a rolling ridge line is far from ideal for development of the proposed scale and appearance of modern industrial agricultural sheds. While I did observe some isolated dwelling houses and a distant modern farmstead complex on higher ground to the east and north of the proposed site, respectively, which do break the skyline, this is not an appropriate precedent to follow for the nature of this proposed development in my opinion. The various landscape character assessments support this view.*"
6. The Board supports this view. The site is very prominent in the landscape, being located on a ridge against the skyline. Such a location is uncharacteristic of farmsteads in this LCT. The proposed mitigation measure involving the formation of bunds around the site is itself uncharacteristic of the area, producing an incongruous skyline feature in the landscape. The problem cannot be addressed by the proposed tree planting at the base of the bunds will take many years to screen the development effectively.
7. Lighting associated with the development will impact adversely on the tranquillity of the area contrary to policies LP1 and DTP1.

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

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/userfiles/file/Landscape/11DIP-SLOPELOWLAND.pdf>

8. The Board is therefore of the view that this proposal is contrary to NPPF paragraph 115 and policies LP1, LP2 and DTP1 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and that these defects cannot be satisfactorily mitigated. The application should therefore be refused.
9. The Board is also concerned that archaeological issues may not have been fully considered and addressed by the applicant.
10. The local highway network may be insufficient to deal with traffic generated by the proposed development.
11. In view of the above the Board **objects** to this proposal.