



Frank Whitley
Development Services
Tewkesbury Borough Council
Gloucester Road
Tewkesbury
Gloucestershire
GL20 5TT

By email only to: frank.whitley@tewkesbury.gov.uk

25 January 2023

Dear Frank,

APPLICATION NO: 22/01370/FUL

DESCRIPTION: New farm manager's/owner's Agriculturally tied dwelling in association with existing agricultural business and farmstead

LOCATION: Gotherington Hill Farm, Wickfield Lane, Cheltenham

Thank you for consulting the Cotswolds National Landscape Board¹ on this proposed development, which would be located within the Cotswolds National Landscape².

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.³ 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 publications⁴:

- 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 Types (LCTs) 2 Escarpment;
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to LCT 2 ([link](#)), including Section 2.2;
- 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](#)).

For the reasons outlined in Annex 1 below, the Board considers that insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal will conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape as required by paragraphs 176 and 185c of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SD7 of the Joint Core Strategy.

Accordingly, we wish to raise a **holding objection** pending the submission of further information to allow the Board to make an appropriate assessment of the proposal. As explained in the Annex accompanying this response, this holding objection requests further information and clarification to be submitted by the applicant to allow the Board to fully assess any potential adverse impacts of the proposal. In particular:

Cotswolds Conservation Board

The Old Prison, Fosse Way, Northleach
Gloucestershire GL54 3JH
01451 862000
info@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

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

Chairman:
Brendan McCarthy

Vice Chair:
Rebecca Charley

- A revised Landscape and Visual Appraisal which fully assesses the impact of the proposal on the landscape character and visual receptors, features viewpoint images taken at a time of year when trees are not in leaf and visual representations of the proposed dwelling and associated landscaping/structures from key viewpoints, including views at night/dusk.
- Clarification regarding any proposed landscaping.
- Details of internal and external lighting proposals to allow assessment of impact upon dark skies of the National Landscape.
- A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment to assess the current health of the trees on site (which are relied upon for screening the proposed dwelling) and how the proposal would impact them.
- An update to the Ecological Assessment to demonstrate how biodiversity net gain can be achieved.

We consider that the provision of this additional information is appropriate given the highly sensitive location of the proposed development on the Cotswold escarpment within the nationally significant Cotswolds National Landscape.

The Board will be happy to provide further opinion on likely effects once this information has been submitted by the applicant.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this response further.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Joyce

Planning Officer

simon.joyce@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk | 07808 391227

ANNEX 1 COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSULTATION RESPONSE IN RELATION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 22/01370/FUL

The Board notes that this application is a revised submission following the refusal by the Council of application reference 20/01123/FUL on 22 February 2022. One of the Council's reasons for refusal was harm to the character and appearance of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and that the Cotswolds National Landscape has the highest level of protection in respect of these matters.

As far as adopted Development Plan policy relating to landscape issues is concerned, Policy SD6 of the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS, 2017) requires development to seek to protect landscape character for its own intrinsic beauty and for its benefit to economic, environmental, and social well-being. This reflects advice in the National Planning Policy Framework that requires policies and decisions to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

JCS Policy SD7 further requires that all development proposals in or within the setting of the Cotswolds AONB will be required to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance its landscape, scenic beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and other special qualities. Proposals are also be required to be consistent with the policies set out in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.

The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023, which is a material consideration in planning decision making, identifies the Cotswold escarpment, where the site is located, and extensive dark sky areas as being two of the AONB's 'special qualities'. The special qualities of the AONB are those aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are valuable, especially at a national level. They are also the key attributes on which the priorities for the AONB's conservation, enhancement and management should be based.

CAONB Management Plan Policy CE1 states that proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape, should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the location, as described by the Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines. They should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced. Policy CE3 relates to local distinctiveness of the National Landscape. Development should have regard to and be compatible and reinforce the local distinctiveness being designed and where relevant, landscaped to respect the settlement local pattern, building styles, scale and materials.

With regards to potential impacts on landscape character, the proposed development is located in the 'Escarpment' Landscape Character Type (LCT 2 in the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment referred to above), the landscape sensitivity of which is described as *"very sensitive to change, particularly where this would introduce built elements within the otherwise agricultural landscapes"*.

Section 2.2 of the LS&G highlights a number of potential adverse landscape implications of the erection of isolated new dwellings such as that proposed. These include:

- Visual intrusions introduced to the landscape;
- Introduction of 'lit' elements to characteristically dark escarpment slope landscapes;
- Potential for glint from buildings;
- Suburbanisation and domestication of agricultural landscape by the introduction of gardens e.g. ornamental garden plants and boundary features, garden sheds, gateways, parking areas and conversion of tracks to manicured drives and ornamental gateways; and
- Loss of tranquillity and sense of seclusion

The application site is in a highly sensitive location on the Cotswold escarpment in close proximity to several public rights of way, including the Winchcombe Way. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) submitted in support of this application is dated September 2020 and appears to be identical to the document submitted in support of the previous application. Whilst it outlines relevant the policy background and provides a summary of both the landscape character and the visual context of the site, identifying a number of key visual receptors and their sensitivity, it does not assess the impact of this revised scheme on that landscape character and those visual receptors.

We also note and support the comments of the Council's Landscape Advisor made when considering the LVA in respect of the previous application that the photographs contained within the LVA were taken in September whilst trees were still in full leaf and as such do not fully represent the views that would be experienced during winter. This should be addressed in a revised assessment. It is also recommended that visual representations are provided of the proposed dwelling and associated landscaping/structures, ideally in the form of photomontage, although 3D wireline images may be sufficient. As discussed below, the proposed development would introduce 'lit elements' into the dark hillsides of the Cotswold escarpment. As such, we also recommend that the applicant should be required to provide photomontages of the site at night-time / dusk in photographs from key viewpoints including from relevant roads and / or settlements.

The LVA concludes by stating that the development *"offers potential for enhancement to local green infrastructure which can benefit both local landscape character and visual amenity with the introduction of new native tree and hedge planting"* however no landscaping plan has been submitted and the proposed plans appear to make no mention of landscaping or new planting. Clarification is also sought from the applicant on this matter.

We acknowledge that this application seeks to overcome the Council's concerns regarding the scale and design of the previous proposal. The proposed dwelling has been slightly repositioned, its size reduced from 311sqm to 209sqm and the design amended in an attempt to better reflect the Cotswold vernacular of a simple rural barn. Notwithstanding this, we share the Council's previous concerns regarding the size of the proposed dwelling, which should be proportionate to the essential need the applicant seeks to demonstrate.

The Officer's report for the previous application outlined how *"Within the last 10 - 15 years, a dwelling with a gross internal area of 150 -160m², was a frequently accepted size limit for a new rural worker's dwelling, based on the primary functional requirement for animal welfare management. This equates to a reasonably sized 3-bedroom house with room for a small office and downstairs WC... On the above basis a dwelling of more than say 160m² would be considered excessive without there being any justification"*. The proposed dwelling at 209sqm remains significantly in excess of this 'rule of thumb' and by any measure is substantial for a three-bedroom property. We also consider that its appearance remains more that of a modern house that does not assimilate well with the historic site.

Lighting and dark skies

The applicant has also not provided details of any internal or external lighting that would be associated with the proposed development, both on the house itself and on/around the car parking areas and communal areas. In line with Policy CE5 (Dark Skies) of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan, lighting should be avoided if possible. If it cannot be avoided, it should be minimised.

Any additional lighting could potentially introduce a 'lit element' into what would otherwise be a relatively dark night-time landscape with these dark skies being one of the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds National Landscape and this being highlighted as a potential adverse landscape implication in the LS&G referred to above.

Paragraph 185c of the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location and in doing so they should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation. Paragraph 001 of the Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') on Light Pollution (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 31-001-20191101) states that *'intrinsically dark landscapes' are those entirely, or largely, uninterrupted by artificial light. National parks ... can serve as good examples'*. As AONBs have the same level of protection with regards to landscape and scenic beauty as national parks within the NPPF and PPG and dark skies are one of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape, we consider it reasonable to treat the National Landscape as an 'intrinsically dark landscape' in NPPF and PPG terms.

Whilst we acknowledge that the amount of glazing has been reduced in comparison with the previous application, the front elevation in particular has a significant glazed area including several full-length glazed sections. As such the potential for light spill and glow from these areas is a concern. Chapter 9 of The South Downs National Park Dark Skies Technical Advice Note ([link](#), page 44), which is considered by National Park Authorities and AONB Boards to comprise best practice for protected landscapes in relation to this issue, advises that large (>50% on a single elevation) single areas of glazing should be avoided in protected landscapes.

Accordingly, further information on internal and external lighting and external glazing is required to demonstrate adherence with the above guidance and, by extension, with the policies of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan in particular Policy CE5 (Dark Skies) as well as the ILP Guidance Note for Reduction of Obtrusive Light (updated in 2021) and the CfDS Good Lighting Guide which form Appendices B and C of the Board's Dark Skies & Artificial Light Position Statement (linked above). We would recommend that the relevant 'environmental zone' for which compliance should be assessed is Environmental Zone E1 which relates to AONBs.

Other matters

In common with the previous application, we note that no tree survey or Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been provided by the applicant to either assess the current health of the trees on site (which are relied upon as screening for the proposed dwelling) or how the proposal would impact them. We would also request an update to the Ecological Assessment to demonstrate how biodiversity net gain can be achieved.

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) The name used for the organisation associated with the AONB designation is the Cotswolds National Landscape Board. At times this is abbreviated to National Landscape Board or The Board. The legal name of the organisation remains the Cotswolds Conservation Board but this name is no longer used in most circumstances.
- 3) Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85
- 4) 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