



Stuart McIver
Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Elizabeth House
Church Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 6HX

By email only to: stuart.mciver@stratford-dc.gov.uk

10 May 2023

Dear Stuart,

APPLICATION NO: 23/00679/FUL

DESCRIPTION: Erection of an accessible accommodation (hostel type) and activities/education block for day-time and overnight visitors

LOCATION: Edgehill Country Park, Camp Site, Camp Lane, Knowle End, Warmington, Warwickshire, OX17 1DH

Thank you for consulting the Cotswolds National Landscape Board¹ ('the Board') 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 2023-2025 ([link](#)), in particular policies CE1 (Landscape), UE1 (Health and Wellbeing), UE3 (Sustainable Tourism), CE4 (Tranquillity) and CE5 (Dark Skies);
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to Landscape Character Type (LCT) 2 (Escarpment) which the site lies within;
- 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](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to Chapter 4 (The Built Environment) ([link](#));
- Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statements ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to the Tranquillity Position Statement ([link](#)) and Dark Skies and Artificial Light Position Statement ([link](#)) and its appendices ([link 1](#), [link 2](#), [link 3](#)).

Having reviewed the plans submitted and for the reasons outlined within Annex 1 below, the Board wishes to raise an **objection** on the basis that the proposal as submitted has not adequately considered, and may negatively impact, the ancient woodland adjoining the site. We also make some recommendations within Annex 1 as to how the applicant may wish to address this matter.

Cotswolds Conservation Board

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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

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Joyce', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Simon Joyce

Planning Officer

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

ANNEX 1. COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE BOARD CONSULTATION RESPONSE IN RELATION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 23/00679/FUL

The Board acknowledges the aim of the proposal, to provide visitor accommodation to aid the understanding and enjoyment of the countryside, particularly amongst those with additional needs. We consider that this aim accords with the second of the Board's two statutory purposes⁵ which is to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

However, where there is a conflict between this purpose (i.e. purpose (b)) and the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape (i.e. purpose (a)), the Board has a statutory requirement, under Section 87 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to attach greater weight to purpose (a)⁵. This requirement is commonly referred to as the 'Sandford Principle' and under the 'duty of regard' referred to above we would encourage the Council to apply the same principle as in this case, we wish to raise concerns regarding the potential impacts of the proposal on ancient broadleaved woodland, which is one of the 'special qualities' of the National Landscape.

Ancient woodland

Paragraph 180c of the National Planning Policy Framework states *"when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:...c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists"*.

Part C1 of Policy CS.5 of the Stratford Core Strategy states that development will be permitted where *"Proposals do not lead to any loss or damage but rather protect the quality of ancient semi-natural woodland and aged/veteran trees"*. This is supported by point 4 in the 'Development Management Considerations' pursuant to this policy which advises that *"all development proposals in the proximity of ancient woodland shall have regard to the 'Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees' published by Natural England. As a starting principle, development must be kept as far away as possible from ancient woodland. The necessary width of any buffer zone will depend upon local circumstances and the type of development. Buffer zones should be retained in perpetuity and allowed to develop into semi-natural habitats. Section 6 of the Standing Advice includes guidance on mitigation measures, including buffers."*

Natural England's Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees ([link](#)) is clear that development proposals should not be approved within buffer zones to ancient woodland. The Standing Advice states that this buffer zone should be *at least* 15 metres from the boundary of the woodland to avoid root damage. For ancient or veteran trees (including those on the woodland boundary), the buffer zone should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5 metres from the edge of the tree's canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter. This will create a minimum root protection area. The Standing Advice also recommends that where possible a buffer zone should consist of semi-natural habitats with local and appropriate native species to contribute to wider ecological networks.

We note that the applicant has not provided a tree survey or Arboricultural Impact Assessment and would recommend that these are undertaken to adequately assess the potential impact of the proposal on the adjacent ancient woodland. The site plan as submitted shows the proposed accommodation building occupying a position well within 15m of the ancient woodland and the Design & Access Statement mentions how excavations would take place 1m below current ground levels to provide below ground parking spaces and a general store for equipment. Such excavations may have the potential to damage the root network of trees within the ancient woodland.

As such, we also recommend that the hostel building should be relocated outside of this 15m buffer zone to ensure that the ancient woodland is protected and that a buffer zone of semi-natural habitat is established in line with Natural England's Standing Advice.

Lighting

The Board also notes that no information has been provided regarding external lighting. Without prejudice, if the local authority is minded to grant planning permission, planning conditions should be imposed to ensure compliance with the requirements of with Guidance Note 01/21 on The Reduction of Obtrusive Light, published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) (which forms Appendix 2 of the Board's Position Statement on Dark Skies and Artificial Light, referenced above). We would recommend that the relevant 'environmental zone' for which compliance should be assessed is Environmental Zone E1 which relates to AONBs to mitigate any adverse impact and ensure that all lighting meets the standards to preserve the dark skies and landscape character of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

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
- 5) Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/87>