

15/00443/FUL. Full application for an Exceptional New Dwelling - under the policy provisions of paragraph 55(4) of the National Planning Policy Framework. Flight Farm Leckhampton Hill Leckhampton Cheltenham Gloucestershire.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board wish to **object** to this planning application. The site is outside and away from any defined settlement within the open countryside of the nationally protected Cotswolds AONB. There is a legal duty under Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 for the Local Authority to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the AONB which has the highest status of landscape and scenic beauty protection and is afforded "great weight" under Paragraph 115 of the NPPF. It is noted that the proposal is seeking justification under Paragraph 55 of the NPPF. However, the starting point for Para.55 is "To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities." Accordingly Local Planning Authorities are advised to specifically avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The AONB Board see no exceptional circumstances in this case that meet with the tests of Para.55 of the NPPF that would overcome and take preference above the protections afforded to the AONB and to protection of the countryside generally from sporadic housing development. Para.55 states that one requirement of the development is that it should "significantly enhance its immediate setting", however in this case what limited development exists on site is low key and rural in character and therefore maintains character of this part of the AONB. However, this proposal will bring considerably more development on this site, the house will obviously be lit at night, it will have the usual domestic paraphernalia, and parking and gardens. Irrespective of the design of the house and whether mature landscaping can be protected from being removed, the character of the site will clearly change to one of a developed residential property in a location where there is not one at the moment. Therefore in terms of assessing whether this proposal "conserves and enhances" the character and special qualities of the AONB, the addition of a new dwelling in this location will result in a negative impact on the AONB and therefore the proposal will not "significantly enhance its immediate setting". The future occupiers of the site would also likely to be car reliant as the site is away from any settlement and so this development also fails the tests of "sustainable development" at Paras. 6 and 7 of the NPPF and would lead to a precedent for other such developments across the open countryside of this nationally protected landscape.