

15/01020/OUT. Residential development for up to 33 dwellings and associated works (Outline application). Land Off Draycott Road Draycott Road Blockley Gloucestershire.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board wish to make the following comments:

The Board notes that this site does feature in the emerging Cotswold Local Plan as a preferred allocation site (BK5), though it also recognises the Plan is still subject to the Hearings process.

The loss of an open, edge of village greenfield site to a housing development would impact on the recognised scenic quality of this nationally protected landscape that is afforded “great weight” through Paragraph 115 of the NPPF.

It should also be noted by reason of footnote 9 in relation to paragraph 14 of the NPPF, the “presumption” in favour of sustainable development does not automatically apply due to the restrictions of the AONB. As the NPPG advises it is also a requirement for the decision maker (the Council in this case) to assess whether Paragraph 116 of the NPPF is relevant in this case. However, even if Paragraph 116 is considered not to be relevant by the Council, the NPPG advises that the AONB should still be afforded great weight. An appeal decision at Upper Quinton is attached (within the Cotswolds AONB) where an Inspector considered a 9 house site proposal to be inappropriate by reason of impact on the AONB and that there was no overriding need in that case. The Board is also aware of the interest within the village to potentially extend the Conservation Area to include this site, whilst also seeking out potentially more acceptable housing sites to meet local need.

The Board also notes that the SHLAA originally suggested that this site should only accommodate 22 dwellings. The Board considers the current proposal for 33 dwellings will inevitably result in greater impact and that the development should not develop land both in the first paddock and then break through the hedge into the second adjacent paddock to the east (despite what has been shown in the SHLAA and Local Plan map). The current scheme therefore unnecessarily extends the level of development beyond that originally proposed in the SHLAA in terms of housing numbers, on a site that was already considered to be in a sensitive location in the AONB.

In conclusion, given this site has been submitted for consideration prior to the Local Plan Hearings process, the Council are requested to consider the need for the development in terms of the current 5 year housing supply figures and within the planning balance ensure that “great weight” is afforded to conserving landscape and scenic beauty within the nationally protected AONB. Even if the Council conclude there is still a need for this development despite the above, the scheme should still be amended to be no more than 22 dwellings and avoid development into the second adjacent paddock to the east.