

Paul Thompson
Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Elizabeth House
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 6HX



By email only to: paul.thompson@stratford-dc.gov.uk

25 May 2022

Dear Paul,

APPLICATION NO: 22/00257/FUL

DESCRIPTION: Construction of one treehouse sleeping two to four tourists year-round, including self-contained bathroom and kitchen facilities, along with associated access and parking.

LOCATION: Land Opposite Edgehill Shooting Ground, Camp Lane, Warmington

Thank you for consulting the Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') on this proposed development, which would be located within the Cotswolds National Landscape.¹

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.² 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 publications³:

- 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 Type (LCT) 2 (Escarpment) which the site is located within and 19 (Unwooded Vale) from which the site can be seen;
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to LCT 2 ([link](#)), including Section 2.2 and LCT 19 ([link](#)), including Section 19.1;
- Cotswolds AONB Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change ([link](#)); and
- 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 now updated in 2021](#), [link 3](#)); and
 - Tranquillity Position Statement ([link](#)).

For the reasons outlined in Annex 1 below we consider that the applicant has not demonstrated that the proposed development would conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and as such has not demonstrated compliance with Policies CS.11 and CS.5 of the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy 2011-2031, paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework as well as the guidance contained within Policies CE1, CE4, CE5 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 and the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines. As such we wish to **object** to this application.

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

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Joyce', written on a light-colored background.

Simon Joyce

Planning Officer

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

ANNEX 1: COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSULTATION RESPONSE IN RELATION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 22/00257/FUL

The proposed development comprises a 'high-end' treehouse for tourist accommodation capable of sleeping 2-4 people with self-contained bathroom and kitchen facilities along with associated access and parking. The application seeks permission for year-round occupation of the treehouse by guests.

In responding to proposals such as this, the Board recognises the role of tourism in maintaining the vitality of local communities in the Cotswolds and encourages sustainable tourism proposals which provide a range of type and priced accommodation options and which are compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty. This is recognised in Policy UE1 of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2018-2023.

Landscape and visual impact

Policy CS.11 of the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy 2011-2031 requires that development proposals in the District involving land within the Cotswolds AONB should conserve and enhance the special landscape qualities and scenic beauty of the AONB and be consistent with the objectives set out in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan. Policy CE1 of the AONB Management Plan outlines how proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, 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. Policy CE1 also advocates that proposals which are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views – including those into and out of the AONB – and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced.

The Council's pre-application response highlighted by the applicant in their submission outlined that the site lies within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 19 Unwooded Vale. The LCT Map ([link](#)) seems to indicate that the site and Arlescote Woods lies within LCT 2 Escarpment, specifically LCT 2G (Edge Hill). The site lies on the escarpment and in our view exhibits the landscape sensitivity characteristics described in the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (LS&G) for LCT 2, in that *"the escarpment is a distinctive and dramatic landscape. The combination of its elevation, and the steep slopes rising from the lowlands, make it a highly visible feature and is therefore very sensitive to change, particularly where this would introduce built elements within the otherwise agricultural landscapes"*. Views to and from the Cotswold escarpment are also one of the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds National Landscape, those being the features of the AONB that makes the area so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it.

The application is supported by a number of plans and also a Design & Access Statement, which briefly considers landscape and visual matters at section 10, however no landscape and visual appraisal has been undertaken to inform, or allow an assessment of, the proposal. The sections provided appear to look along the escarpment rather than towards it. No photoviewpoints have been provided to help an assessment of the site and the potential impact of the proposal, particularly in views from local Public Rights of Way both on the escarpment and further to the north, looking back towards the escarpment, for example from 293/SM166a/1, 293/SM165/2 (the Battlefields Trail), 293/SM165a/1 and the Centenary Way. We would note that the site's proximity to a named,

promoted trail (the Battlefields Trail) is likely to increase the sensitivity of walkers on this route and, by extension, the overall significance of any visual effects.

The parking area, which appears to be a large area to accommodate two vehicles, is likely to be highly visible when travelling along Camp Lane (B4086) and also when walking the Public Right of Way (293/SM166/2) which runs adjacent to the parking area. We would also welcome a further assessment of whether or not the treehouse would be visible from the B4100 and from the minor road running between Arlescote and the B4100, particularly when occupied at night during winter months.

The computer-generated renders submitted to show the treehouse in situ give it a rather prominent appearance and do not appear to show the canopy mentioned within the DAS as a measure to minimise light spill. As such we consider that the treehouse would potentially appear as an incongruous addition to the local landscape, contrary to Policy CS.11 of the Core Strategy and CE1 of the Management Plan.

Lighting/dark skies

Any lighting in this location would introduce a 'lit element' into what would otherwise be a relatively dark night-time landscape which would be undesirable on this highly exposed location on the Cotswold escarpment. The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy & Guidelines for LCT 2 (Section 2.2) identifies 'the introduction of lit elements to characteristically dark landscapes' as a potential (adverse) implication for isolated development such as this. The guidelines seek to 'conserve areas of dark skies', with these dark skies another of the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds National Landscape. Policy CS.11 of the Core Strategy states that the minimisation of light pollution within the National Landscape is a priority and Policy CE5 (Dark Skies) of the AONB Management Plan advises that proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to these dark skies, by seeking to (i) avoid and (ii) minimise light pollution. The Board's Dark Skies and Artificial Light Position Statement and its appendices provides further guidance.

Paragraph 7.2 of the Design and Access Statement outlines some measures proposed to minimise the impact of the development on dark skies, local amenity and wildlife however further plans showing any proposals for external lighting would be welcomed to demonstrate adherence to this guidance and, by extension, with the policies of the Management Plan. Further information should include an assessment to demonstrate the extent over which light from the treehouse would be visible after dark; for example, could it potentially be experienced by users of the B4086, the B4100 and the minor road east of Arlescote?

We also note the plans show full length glazing on both the ground floor living room and first floor bedroom looking out from the escarpment. Although this clearly has been designed to maximise the expansive views for occupants, the potential for light spill and glow from this elevation 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.

We also note that the first floor plan shows an outdoor bath which presumably would require some external lighting whilst the plans and DAS make no mention of whether or not lighting is proposed along the path between the car parking area and treehouse or on the external stairs and balcony to ensure safe access after dark. Bearing the above in mind we do not consider that the proposal meets the requirements of Policy CS.11 of the Core Strategy and Policy CE5 of the AONB Management Plan in respect of avoiding and minimising light pollution.

Other matters

The application proposes a change of surfacing to the footpath to provide access to the treehouse from the car park area. This would formalise the path, changing it from grass to bark/wood chipping which would be detrimental to its rural character. No mention is made of whether any reprofiling is required to ensure the access path meets accessibility requirements. The impact of the construction phase on the access path is also of concern.

The application also describes how the site is currently unmanaged but that woodland and wildflower meadow improvement areas would be created as part of the proposal. Whilst any improvement would be welcomed, these are mitigative measures to compensate for the development and we would encourage environmental improvements to be carried out as part of the applicant's ongoing management of their land.

Notwithstanding our objection and without prejudice, should the Council be minded to grant planning permission, we would recommend conditions to require pre-commencement submission of detailed lighting plans and to ensure that the treehouse can only be used for short stay tourism purposes in the interest of the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and scenic beauty 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) Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85
- 3) 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