

S.15/0834/OUT Grange Fields, Wick Street, Stroud.

Residential development of up to 80 new dwellings with supporting infrastructure and the creation of a new vehicular access from the A46 roundabout, open space, landscaping, drainage and other enabling works.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board raise an **objection** to the above proposed development.

Of note the Secretary of State under the "Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Designation) Variation Order 1989" confirmed in 1990 the inclusion of land at Grange Fields within the revised AONB boundary following the review process. The Secretary of State's reasoning for the inclusion of new areas within the AONB designation was that such areas were of "such outstanding natural beauty" that it was desirable for the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 should apply. It remains the case today that the land in question still exhibits the similarities with the rest of the Cotswolds AONB and accordingly is of a landscape quality commensurate with the landscape quality of other parts of the AONB.

The development of this site for 80 dwellings and associated infrastructure and access will however completely change the character and special qualities of this area of land. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function in relation to, or affecting land within, AONBs. This is reiterated in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-2018 as a statutory purpose of the Conservation Board. The loss of this site to development will result in an obvious urban extension of development into the countryside of this nationally protected landscape, visible from public viewpoints, which will not meet the purposes of the CROW Act 2000.

Paragraph 115 of the Framework says that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The Board also considers that Paragraph 116 of the NPPF is relevant in this case as the development does represent "major development." Paragraph 116 notes that in such areas planning permission should be refused for major development except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. The Board considers that the housing need for the area can be met "in some other way"; the emerging Local Plan has not considered it necessary to allocate this site and instead offers solutions outside the AONB; and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB is also a matter of public interest.

The Board wishes for the attached appeal decision within the AONB at Broadway (70 dwellings) to be taken into consideration. This site was dismissed on appeal with the Inspector concluding in part "*Overall, however, the proposed development would be contrary to the development plan; there would be harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, to which the Framework advises that great weight should be given...*"