

Planning application Ref: 13/00734/OUT

Proposal: Residential development (up to 70 dwellings)

Location: Land East Of St Margaret's Drive Alderton Tewkesbury GL20 8NN

Comments of the Cotswolds Conservation Board

1. The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') was established by Parliament in 2004.

The Board has two statutory purposes¹:

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); and
- b) To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these roles, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

2. Appendix 3 of the applicants Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) shows the close relationship between the Cotswolds AONB boundary and the northern side of Alderton village, and also the location of the AONB to the south of the village. The site itself is within a Special Landscape Area (SLA).. Paragraph 3.18 of the LVIA rightly states

"3.18 The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding natural beauty (AONB) is located on land to the north and the south of Alderton. It covers Alderton Hill and surroundings, Oxenton and Dixon Hills to the south- west and the Cotswold escarpment to the south. At its closest point the AONB is approximately 170m from the site where it runs along the northern boundary of Alderton. Therefore there is the potential for the site development to have an impact on the setting of the AONB to the north, south and south west of the site."

3. Views across the site show clearly that the proposed development would interfere significantly with views of the Cotswolds AONB. This impact can be determined in particular from the Applicant's Photoviewpoint 13. The development of houses in this view would block views of substantial parts of Dixon Hill and Oxenton Hill.
4. Table 1 in paragraph 7.27 of the LVIA – Visual Effects states with respect to Recpetor 1 (described as "Properties on the site boundary in Alderton" that the predicted effect of the development would be that *"The rural views over pasture and views to surrounding escarpments and hills to the south will be lost."*, which would be a "substantial adverse" effect, albeit from predominantly private viewpoints.
5. The issue of the importance of the retention of views of the Cotswolds AONB was considered by the Planning Inspector with respect to appeal reference APP/G1630/A/12/2183317, a copy of which is attached to this response.
6. Paragraph 29 of that decision includes

¹ Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

From Gretton Road the situation is likely to be even worse because the observer would find that views towards Salter's Hill and the AONB escarpment on the other side of the valley would be greatly impeded due to the proximity and elevation of the built development. The adverse impacts on the setting of the AONB would be significant. *[My emboldening]* Whilst these impacts would be confined to limited viewpoints it seems unlikely that they would diminish in time, even with the proposed landscaping."

7. Paragraph 32 of that decision states:

"32. Of greater importance is the harm to the setting of the AONB arising from the housing on the elevated part of Site A. The latter plays a role in providing the foreground setting to Langley Hill within the adjoining AONB with which it shares a number of topographic and landscape features in common. The appeal development would interrupt westerly views thus adversely affecting the setting of the AONB. Furthermore views would be impeded in an easterly direction towards the Cotswold escarpment on the other side of the valley. **These impacts would be limited to those public viewpoints close to the east and west site boundaries. Nevertheless there would be significant harm to the setting of the AONB.** *[My emboldening]* This would be contrary to development plan policy, including saved Policies S.6 and NHE.5 in the SP and saved Policy LND2 in the LP.

8. Paragraph 70 of that decision includes:

"...Whilst there would be significant landscape harm and conflict with development plan policy there would also be substantial benefits. Most notably these would include the contribution towards housing land supply in the face of a serious short term deficit."

9. This decision makes clear that the interruption of even very localised views of the AONB, particularly as in this case within a SLA, can cause significant harm to the setting of the AONB, contrary to Local Plan Policy LND2.
10. The Board is therefore of the view that this proposal is contrary to Policy LND2 of the Local Plan.

Malcolm Watt
Planning Officer
Cotswolds Conservation Board 1st October 2013