

Planning application Ref: 13/00794/FUL

Proposal: Residential development (47 dwellings)

Location: Bentham Works Bentham Lane Bentham GL51 4UT

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. The Board has been alerted to this application by Natural England. The contents of the agency's response dated 27th September 2013 have been noted.
3. The Board notes that an application for residential development on this site was refused on appeal in May 2009. (Appeal reference APP/G1630/A/08/2091327).
4. With respect to that scheme, which was for 30 units, the Inspector concluded that
"In visual terms it would appear as an overwhelmingly alien, unprepossessing feature in the countryside and thus harmful to the character and appearance of the AONB. It is in an unsustainable location, outside any development boundaries, where there are little or no services or facilities."
5. The proposed scheme is for 47 dwellings, and built development occupies far more of the site than the previously refused scheme. Despite the engagement of landscape architects in an attempt to produce a more "inspired" layout and design, it is difficult to see how the proposed scheme of dense residential development with a significantly reduced amount of open space addresses the fundamental concerns of the Inspector regarding the harmful impact on the character and appearance of the Cotswolds AONB.
6. Whilst the previous decision predates the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), national planning policy with respect to AONBs and National Parks remains essentially the same in the NPPF as in the former Planning Policy Statement 7. Furthermore the "heart" of the NPPF (paragraph 14) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Inspector identified that the proposed location is unsustainable.
7. The Board therefore considers that this proposal is contrary to paragraphs 14 and 115 of the NPPF, and **objects** to this proposal.

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