

Planning application reference: 09/00812/FUL

Proposal: Stopping up of two existing access points to the highway, construction of two new highway access points and roadway, removal of hedgerow on the road frontage, extension and alterations to parking areas and retrospective consent for the erection of a detached building.

New Farm, Daylesford, Adlestrop, MORETON-IN-MARSH, Gloucestershire, GL56 0YG

Response of the Cotswolds Conservation Board

Background

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 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 published the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13 in April 2008.²
3. The statutory Management Plan, endorsed by the Council on 20th January 2009 as supplementary guidance for the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework documents and in the determination of planning applications contains the following policies of relevance to this application:

Landscape Policy **LP1**: *That the unique character, tranquillity, and special qualities of the Cotswolds landscape are conserved and enhanced.*

Development and Transport Policies:

DTP1: *That all Local Development Framework documents and planning decision-making processes will use the following criteria to determine the acceptability of a proposed development in the Cotswolds AONB. Development will:*

- *be compatible with the distinctive character of the location as described by the relevant landscape character assessment, strategy and guidelines*
- *incorporate designs and landscaping consistent with the above, respecting the local settlement pattern and building style*
- *be designed to respect local building styles and materials*
- *incorporate appropriate sustainability elements and designs*
- *maintain or improve the existing level of tranquillity*
- *not have an adverse impact on the local community amenities and services and access to these*
- *protect, or where possible enhance, biodiversity*

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

² http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/management_plan/conserving.html

- *be in accordance with a more sustainable pattern of development, reducing dependence on car travel*

4. The Board is also mindful of the following relevant parts of policies in the Cotswold Local Plan:

POLICY 19: DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES

Outside Development Boundaries, and subject to [Policy GB.1](#) and policies for site-specific allocations indicated on the Proposals Map and insets, development appropriate to a rural area will be permitted, provided that the proposal relates well to existing development; meets the criteria set out in other relevant policies in the Plan; and would not:

- (a) result in new-build open market housing other than that which would help to meet the social and economic needs of those living in rural areas;
- (b) cause significant harm to existing patterns of development, including the key characteristics of open spaces in a settlement;
- (c) lead to a material increase in car-borne commuting;
- (d) adversely affect the vitality and viability of settlements; and
- (e) result in development that significantly compromises the principles of sustainable development.

POLICY 26: TOURISM

Hotels and Serviced Accommodation.

1. New hotels and other serviced accommodation will not be permitted outside those areas where [Policy 18](#) applies except:

- (a) within the Cotswold Water Park in accordance with criteria set out in [Policy UT.1](#);
- (b) where provided as part of a roadside facility which is considered to be in accordance with [Policy 40](#); or
- (c) where the proposal is provided by the change of use of existing buildings, especially where this would involve the renovation of a listed or other historic building.

2. The extension of an existing hotel will be acceptable, provided it is in keeping with the scale of the existing building, and provided adequate space is available to meet any increased vehicle parking requirements.

5. The Board understands that since the Local Plan Policy 7 relating to the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has not been “saved”, the relevant policy to apply to this application is the relevant policy in the Gloucestershire Structure Plan:

Policy NHE.4

In Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty will be given priority over other considerations. Regard will also be had to the economic and social well-being of the AONB.

Provision should not be made for major development within the AONB unless it is in the national interest and the lack of alternative sites justifies an exception.

6 The Board has also been mindful of relevant National Planning Policy Statements, (PPS) and Regional planning policies. Some weight should be given to the Protected Landscapes Policy in the draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy, currently awaiting publication. The most recent wording of this policy is:

ENV3

Protected Landscapes

In Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the 14 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the region, the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage will be given priority over other considerations in the determination of development proposals. Development will only be provided for where it would:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; or
- Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park; or
- Foster the social or economic well-being of the communities within the National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, provided that such development is compatible with the pursuit of National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty purposes.

Consideration will also be given to proposals which promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Particular care will be taken to ensure that no development is permitted outside the National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which would damage their natural beauty, character and special qualities or otherwise prejudice the achievement of National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty purposes.

Comments

New Access arrangements

7. The starting point for the consideration of this application is the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB. A landscape character assessment of the Cotswolds AONB was

undertaken in 2004³. This assessment described a number of distinct landscape character types (LCT) in the AONB. The site lies within the “Pastoral Lowland Vale” LCT. The road to the east of the site forms the boundary between this LCT and the “Farmed slopes” LCT.

8. A “key feature” of the Pastoral Lowland Vale LCT identified in the assessment is the:

“Network of hedgerows of varying height and quality with intermittent hedgerow trees and occasional stone walls create a neat patchwork of fields.”

9. A “key feature” of the Farmed Slopes LCT is the:

“Strong pattern of hedgerows divide the farmed slopes into a patchwork of fields of sometimes contrasting colours and textures.”

10. The Board is therefore of the view that the existing pattern of hedgerows in the vicinity of the application is an important element of the natural beauty of the landscape.

11. The Board has published a Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for each of the LCTs⁴. These identify local forces for change to the character of the LCT, and measures to enhance character.

12. For the Pastoral Lowland Vale LCT a local force for change is identified as:

“Road upgrading and improvements, especially of minor country roads, as a result of development or general improvement schemes.”

The potential landscape implications of that change include:

- Loss of roadside hedges and walls
- Loss of verge/roadside habitat”

The strategy and guideline to address this force for change include:

“Conserve the character of the local road network.”

13. The same forces for change, potential implications and strategy and guidelines are identified for the Farmed Slopes LCT.

14. The Board therefore considers that removal of existing roadside hedgerows in these LCTs to facilitate development would be harmful to the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB, contrary to relevant national, regional and local policy, and the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13.

15. The application proposes the removal of some 300m of existing roadside hedgerow, of which some 240m is identified as being of greater than 30 years old, of potential value for nature conservation. Whilst it is proposed to plant a new hedgerow to the rear of an extensive vision splay with a width from the highway of approximately 30m, this will cause the loss of the sense of enclosure to this rural lane, harming its character.

³ <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/?page=LandscapeCharacter>

⁴ <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/?page=LandscapeStrategyDocs>

- 16. The Board therefore objects to the removal of the hedgerow to form the vision splay on the grounds of harm to landscape character.**

Transport issues

17. The applicant seeks to justify the new access arrangements by reference to the Transport Statement submitted with the application. Examination of this document shows that the traffic counts etc refer to a future possible application for a hotel on the site. “

Para 1.1 ...“The proposal includes a new hotel and restaurant..”

Para 4.1 “The proposal comprise ... (i) ...a six bed hotel...”

Since such a proposal does not form part of the application, the Board considers that it not appropriate to permit development required for a proposal which itself is not being applied for.

18. The Transport statement suggests that the current access arrangements are unsafe due to road conditions, even given the present use of the site. However Paragraph 2.6 of the Transport Statement states :
“It is therefore considered that the road is lightly trafficked”
Furthermore, following an analysis of the accident record statistics it is stated in Paragraph 2.16
“It is therefore considered that the accident record does not indicate that there is a highway safety problem associated with the local public highway and the existing arrangements are observed to operate safely.”

Despite there not being a safety issue with the current arrangements, the Statement goes on to recommend the construction of a significant vision splay designed with reference to “...guidance for Trunk Roads...” Paragraph 4.8

- 19. The Board therefore objects to this application on the grounds that the case for a new access on highway safety grounds has not been made.**

New Car parking arrangements

20. The plans show that the new access is proposed to provide vehicular, including 44ton HGV access across existing agricultural land to a new car park to be constructed on agricultural land to the east of a shelter belt which currently visually contains the Daylesford complex to the west. The access road extends further to the south to provide access for lorries to the Daylesford complex.
21. All the land proposed to be used for this access and car parking is currently agricultural in character. Clearly the laying of hard surfacing and introducing extensive vehicular movements, including parking for 30+ cars will be harmful to the character of the landscape, contrary to national, regional and local policy for AONBs, and the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.
- 22. The Board therefore objects to the provision of a new access road and additional parking on the grounds that it is harmful to the AONB.**

Erection of detached building

21. The Board has no comment to make on this aspect of the application.

Consideration of social and economic benefit.

23. The Board is mindful that the Daylesford complex is a significant local employer and contributor to the local economy. However, the operation and development of the site has to take place within the constraint of being within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The attractive landscape within which the site operates is no doubt an important element in its successful establishment. The Board is therefore concerned that proposals are now coming forward which would harm that landscape setting for reasons of simplifying site management.

Conclusion

24. **For the reasons set out above, the Board objects to the application.**