

Planning Reference: 09/0477/P/FP
Site at: Ridings Lane, Crawley, Oxfordshire.
Proposed Development: Travellers Site.

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

DTP7: *That opportunities are taken to promote public transport and reduce the use of private cars.*

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

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

4. The Board is also mindful of the following policy in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan:

POLICY NE4

Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape and the countryside of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be given great weight when determining proposals within or impacting upon the AONB.

Regard will be had to the economic and social well being of the area and its communities.

(Policy reference to major development criteria not relevant in this case)

5. The site lies within the “Wychwood Forest” Landscape Character Area which is of the “High Wold Dip Slope” Landscape Character Type described in the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment 2004.³

Two “key characteristics” of this landscape character type are:

“large scale open arable fields with little tree cover, as well as a more complex mosaic of smaller scale arable and pasture contained with a strong framework of hedges and woodland” and
“evidence of small scale quarrying in shallow delves, often overgrown by trees and scrub”

The Board considers that these two key characteristics are present at the application site.

6. The Board notes that the proposal requires the construction of a new access onto the site, alongside and comparable in size with that which is used to access the existing scrap yard. Access to the site is not achieved by “Alterations to existing vehicular access” as stated in the description of the development in the officer’s report. Creation of this access will require the removal of a number of trees and part of hedgerow. As noted above, such hedgerows are a key characteristic of this landscape type. The creation of the access is therefore considered by the Board to be harmful to the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB.
7. The Board notes that the site has permission for a quarry and scrapyards. However it is understood that access to the site for these uses is through the existing scrapyards. These permissions do not include the formation of a new access as proposed with the current application.
8. In view of the disused nature of the quarry, the Board would suggest that it would be appropriate for a Phase 1 Habitat survey to be required to be undertaken to confirm that the site has no special biodiversity or geological interest. Such interest has been confirmed in a number of similar disused quarries in the AONB.
9. The Board notes and supports the objection of the Environment Agency on the grounds of potential pollution of ground water.

³ http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/landscape_character_assessment/index.htm

10. The Board has carefully considered the social and economic issues raised by this case. The Board considers that the location of such a proposal adjacent an active lawful scrap metal business would give rise to justifiable complaints regarding noise, dust and danger arising from that business. Measures required to mitigate these issues could be of such significance as to cause the business to become unviable. This would lead to the loss of employment which is significant in local terms. This has to be weighed against the social needs of travellers who by definition are unlikely to have a local connection.
11. **In view of the above the Board objects on the grounds of non compliance with Planning Policy Statement 7, Policy C3 of the South East Plan, and Local Plan Policy NE4.**