

**Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership**  
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Your Ref: 10/00835  
Our Ref: GB\_070410\_Mr T Williams\_10/00835

7 April 2010

Dear Tristan

### **Planning Application 10/00835 Proposed Affordable Dwelling - Corfton, Craven Arms, SY7 9LE**

Mr Martin Jones of Yew Tree Cottage, Corfton, Clerk to the Parish Council of Diddlebury, contacted the AONB Partnership office in the week before Easter to discuss the above planning application 10/00835. I have subsequently visited the site and would like to make the following observations.

While the AONB Partnership fully recognises the need for affordable housing as a part of the future sustainability of rural communities, there is a great need for such developments within the AONB to take regard of the sensitive nature of the AONB landscape and to have regard to natural and cultural elements within that landscape. The Partnership has considerable concern in relation to the suitability of the proposed building at the proposed location. It is the view of the AONB Partnership that the development, though in itself small, will create a disproportionately substantial negative visual impact within a discrete sensitive area of landscape. **The AONB Partnership therefore objects to the proposal in its current form.**

A detailed analysis supporting this response is given below.

1. This application has the potential to negatively impact on the following features of the Shropshire Hills AONB landscape:

- Landscape character
- Visual amenity

**2. Impact on local landscape character.** The character of the Shropshire Hills landscape – the ‘sense of place’ and the pattern of the landscape – is of national significance. Changes to this character arising from planning proposals should be closely assessed to determine their impact.

3. In this specific case the proposed location on an exposed slope is both locally and distantly prominent. Existing landscape character at the site is of considerable age and defined by an ancient sunken hollow way which climbs from the B4368, adjacent to the Sun Inn, up Corfton Bache, into the hill country of Diddlebury Common to the west. Existing houses flanking the lane are cut into the slopes of the land and are of a local stone fabric giving the area a distinct character.

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4. The housing development proposed on the site, within a small raised paddock on the eastern side of the sunken way, will introduce a quite alien structure into this landscape which will significantly detract from the distinct local character both in style and fabric. Its exposed elevated position, perched above the hollow way is similarly at odds with the positioning of existing dwellings making it a potentially over-dominant element in the local landscape.

5. The Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2009 - 2014 defines Objective 9 *"to conserve heritage features and attributes, preventing damage and acting to maintain value where necessary"*. The considerable level of earth moving necessary to provide access from the lower level of the sunken lane floor to the site will substantially damage the hollow way which is in its own right a significant landscape element of considerable antiquity.

**6. Visual amenity** is a measure of the visual quality of an area as experienced by people. It is among a range of considerations for a planning proposal within the AONB and includes the effect on views within the AONB locally and into and out of the designated area. For the purposes of assessing the impact of such a development the following factors are taken into account:

- The visibility of the development - with the assumption that the more visible the proposal, the greater the adverse effect.
- The number of places from where the development is likely to be seen – with the assumption that the more view points there are, the greater the adverse impact.
- The number of people (both visitors and residents) who are likely to be able to see the development – with the assumption that again, the higher the number the greater the negative impact.

7. The site in question is prominent within the local landscape, to the extent that its construction will have a significant negative impact on both public and private areas of the locality.

8. The local prominence of the site is most pronounced when viewed from the approach along the sunken lane from the south. The elevated nature of the site and the significant earthworks necessary to obtain access will dominate the approach way into the bache.

9. Planning records show that the applicant for the current proposal has existing planning permission for a storage barn within the same land parcel but at a much lower and discrete location adjacent to the B4368 at approx Grid Ref SO497852 Reference 02/13510/F and 08/20929/VC. This extant permission permits use of an existing vehicular access off the main road and is located in the vicinity to existing red brick built buildings beyond the discrete hamlet of Corfton. This location is set lower down the valley and is screened by a tree-lined bank and would seem a much more suitable site for a domestic structure in association with the planned barn development.

## 10 SUMMARY OF EVALUATION:

The location of and structure of the proposed dwelling will have a substantial and adverse impact on the visual amenity and landscape character of this sensitive area of landscape both locally and by its high visibility more distantly within the AONB landscape. Relocation of the site to the envelope of the existing barn permission 08/20929/VC would be more appropriate. Relevant Planning documentation produced in Appendix A below.

Yours sincerely

Glynn Barratt  
Planning & Landscape Officer  
On behalf of Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

## Appendix A

Policy background, AONB Position Statements and Government Policy This application must be determined within a framework comprising policies from the Regional Spatial Strategy, Local Plan and any Supplementary Planning Guidance. The AONBs response to South Shropshire's consultation on this Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance is also relevant.

The Regional Spatial Strategy Policy QE1 deals with conserving and enhancing the environment and states that that (with emphasis of particularly relevant sections added in bold);  
23/05/2008 3.

*A. Environmental improvement is a key component of the Spatial Strategy in order to underpin the overall quality of life of all areas and support wider economic and social objectives.*

*B. Local authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies and proposals should:*

- i) support regeneration, by restoring degraded areas, conserving existing environmental assets, including the reuse of redundant and under-used buildings of merit, and creating new, high quality, built and natural environments, particularly within the Major Urban Areas;*
- ii) conserve and enhance those areas of the Region, where exceptional qualities should be reinforced by sustainable use and management, including the Peak National Park, the five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the European wildlife sites, and the World Heritage Site (see Environmental Assets Diagram);*
- iii) protect and where possible enhance other irreplaceable assets and those of a limited or declining quantity, which are of fundamental importance to the Region's overall environmental quality, such as specific wildlife habitats (Annex B), historic landscape features and built heritage, river environments and groundwater aquifers;*
- iv) protect and enhance the distinctive character of different parts of the Region as recognised by the natural and character areas (Figure 4) and associated local landscape character assessments, and through historic landscape characterisation.*

*C. In bringing forward development, all agencies and developers should adopt high standards for sustainable natural resource use and management in line with policies such as QE3, QE9, EN1-2 and M3.*

South Shropshire Local Plan and Interim Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance.

*Policy E1 deals with development affecting the AONB and states that;*

*Proposals for development will not be permitted which would adversely affect:*

- the character or natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to achieve the highest level of protection.*
- the scenic quality and distinctive character of the South Shropshire Landscape outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;*
- the character and appearance and setting of the District's historic parks or gardens of special historic or ecological interest.*

*In determining planning applications in the countryside the Council will have regard to:*

- the suitability of the design, the quality of the proposal and the appropriate use of materials.*

*Policy SDS3 Settlement Strategy*

*Most new housing development will take place on appropriate sites within the development boundaries or specifically identified in policy S1 of the following towns and main villages in South Shropshire:•*

- Craven Arms will be the principal centre for growth;*
- Bishop's Castle, Burford, Church Stretton, Cleobury Mortimer and Ludlow will provide opportunities for more limited growth.*

*Within the settlements of Bucknell, Clee Hill and Clun infill housing development will be permitted within the settlement boundaries shown on the inset maps, of a scale which is in keeping with the character of the settlement.*

*Policy SDS7 covers affordable housing. The first part deals with affordable housing as part of market priced housing developments and states that:*

*Affordable Housing will be provided throughout the District, through ..... 'Dwellings provided on new housing developments in other settlements listed under policies SDS3 irrespective of the*

*number of houses proposed, where the need for affordable housing can be demonstrated by an up-to-date local needs survey. In these cases as well as in Church Stretton and Ludlow, the Council will negotiate for 50% of the development for affordable housing.*

*The second part deals with exception sites such as this. It states that: 23/05/2008 4.*

*Outside the towns and main villages listed in Policy SDS3, affordable housing may be permitted on small sites not identified for development in the Plan (including building conversions) within and adjoining the villages named below provided that:*

- o The development meets an identified local need as evidenced by an up-to-date local housing needs study; •*
- o It is subject to an agreement which ensures that it remains as affordable housing for local people in perpetuity;*
- o It is in scale and character with the settlement it is located in;*

*Interim Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance.  
Section 6 of this document covers exception sites. It states that:*

*Affordable housing proposals must comply with the criteria set out below:*

- It meets identified local need, including the need of creating and or maintaining sustainable communities.*
- It remains affordable in perpetuity and a Section 106 Agreement (Planning obligation) is entered into, ensuring that the affordable housing remains as such in perpetuity.*
- It is within or adjoining a settlement, identified in the Adopted local Plan as amended (see Appendix C).*
- The housing will provide an affordable housing solution to the persons who will occupy it.*
- The persons to occupy each dwelling meet the definitions of 'local housing need' set out in Appendix B below.*
- The scale of any development under this policy must reflect the scale of the settlement in which it is proposed.*
- There is general support in the local community for the proposal but identified local need must prevail over local objections.*
- The relevant siting, access, servicing and design requirements of the Local Plan are met.*

*The AONB Partnership's response to South Shropshire's consultation on their Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable housing states that:*

*'Though the issue of affordable housing is not unique to the Shropshire Hills or to AONBs, we recognise that the issue is fundamentally connected with the AONB. The natural beauty of the area and the strict protection of it through planning both contribute directly to the affordability problem. While the AONB's purpose is principally to conserve and enhance natural beauty, the purposes of designation include a requirement take account of the economic and social needs of local communities, and we are particularly mindful of this requirement in our response to this consultation. The purposes of AONBs also support a sustainable development approach. In this we recognise that vibrant and sustainable communities are an integral part of the countryside of the AONB. It is not intended or desirable that the existence of natural beauty and its protection have serious social consequences, and efforts to mitigate these are therefore supported.'*

*.....'It may be deduced that the majority of new (market priced as well as affordable) housing will be provided outside the AONB. This would seem justified since although the AONB comprises around 67% of the total area of South Shropshire District, only 39% of the District's population live within the AONB (15,628 in the AONB within South Shropshire, of 40,410 in the District as a whole).'*