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Your Ref: 15/01045/FUL
Our Ref: ph_230415_15_01045_FUL

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Dear Nanette

15/01045/FUL Erection of an agricultural workers dwelling with associated office and garage facilities, formation of vehicular access and installation of Package Treatment Plant (Revised Scheme). Proposed Dwelling North West of The Fishpools, Pontesford Hill, Pontesbury, Shropshire

The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership objects to this application. The AONB Partnership believes that, while there are other houses in the vicinity, this is a sensitive and high quality site on which development of a house would be harmful to the AONB landscape. The knoll and cluster of trees is a valuable landscape feature in this part of the AONB, and highly valued locally, as apparent from other comments on the application. It is also highly visible immediately adjacent to the most popular and publicised approach to Pontesford Hill and Earl's Hill, which are very well-used and important hills in the northern part of the AONB. The small change of location made in this new application does not, in our opinion, substantially reduce the landscape impact of the proposed building.

The following national and local policies applicable support the position that this application should be refused:

Para 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (as quoted by the applicant's agent) on the 'golden thread' of sustainable development, **highlights AONBs through footnote 9 as an exception to a presumption in favour of development, as one of a few types of special area where "specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted."**

Para 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that:

115. Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. (emphasis added)

Shropshire Core Strategy Policy CS17: Environmental Networks states:

Development will identify, protect, enhance, expand and connect Shropshire's environmental assets, to create a multifunctional network of natural and historic resources. This will be achieved by ensuring that all development:

- Protects and enhances the diversity, high quality and local character of Shropshire's natural, built and historic environment, and does not adversely affect the visual, ecological, heritage or recreational values and functions of these assets, their immediate surroundings or their connecting corridors. Further guidance will be provided in SPDs concerning the natural and built environment;***

- **Contributes to local distinctiveness, having regard to the quality of Shropshire's environment, including landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets, such as the Shropshire Hills AONB, the Meres and Mosses and the World Heritage Sites at Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal and Ironbridge Gorge.** (emphasis added)

Shropshire Council SAMDev Policy MD12: The Natural Environment states:

In accordance with Policies CS6, CS17 and through applying the guidance in the Natural Environment SPD, the conservation, enhancement and restoration of Shropshire's natural assets will be achieved by:

1. Ensuring that the social or economic benefits of development can be demonstrated to clearly outweigh the harm to natural assets where proposals are likely to have an unavoidable significant adverse effect, directly, indirectly or cumulatively, on any of the following:

i. the special qualities of the Shropshire Hills AONB;

ii. locally designated biodiversity and geological sites;

iii. priority species;

iv. priority habitats

v. important woodlands, trees and hedges;

vi. ecological networks

vii. geological assets;

viii. visual amenity;

ix. landscape character and local distinctiveness. (emphasis added)

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19 (as approved by Shropshire Council) Policy for Protection of the AONB states:

In line with national and local authority planning policies, the AONB has the highest standards of protection for landscape and natural beauty and the purposes of designation should be given great weight in planning decisions, also taking into account the statutory AONB Management Plan.

Consideration of the purposes of designation in all decisions affecting the AONB should reflect sustainability and the full range of special qualities defined in the Management Plan as well as landscape character and visual amenity. Exceptionally where a significant adverse impact associated with development cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation measures including habitat creation or community benefits, should be sought.

Management Plan Policy for Housing and Design of Development states:

The design of all housing (market priced and affordable) should demonstrate sensitivity to the special qualities of the AONB.

Where affordable housing is allowed when other forms of development would not be, in order to meet social need, the standards of sensitivity to the AONB should not be compromised, and are expected to be higher than outside the AONB. Such cases need to include a rigorous assessment of identified local housing need and consideration of the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development without undermining the purposes of designation. Development should not contribute to the loss of irreplaceable habitats or established ancient trees.

All development should integrate well into the historic pattern and character of the surrounding built environment and landscape. *Building style should reflect local tradition, and designs should be of a high standard in keeping with the nationally designated landscape. In line with Core Strategy policy CS6, particular regard should be paid to village and town design statements and Conservation Area Appraisals. Inappropriate design, layout and materials should be avoided. Innovative sustainable schemes are to be encouraged where they take account of the surrounding vernacular and the use of local materials.*

Where possible, locally-occurring building materials should be used. Roofing materials should be in keeping with those used in nearby buildings, with no bright coloured tiles or reflective surfaces. The use of photovoltaic tiles matching existing and surrounding roof colours should be encouraged. External lighting on new developments should be kept to a minimum and use down-lighting to reduce light pollution. (emphasis added)

Yours sincerely

Phil Holden
AONB Partnership Manager