

Applicant response to the Cotswolds National Landscape Board Objection

LPA Ref: PL/2026/034415

1.0 Introduction

This note sets out the applicant's response to the Cotswolds National Landscape Board (CNLB) representation dated 22nd June 2026.

The note should be read with the submitted application documentation including the Planning Cover Letter (PCL) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

2.0 Relationship to the Settlement and Sustainability

The CNLB characterises the site as being “divorced from the settlement boundary” and forming part of the wider agricultural landscape. This assertion does not reflect the relevant planning history set out in the PCL. Furthermore, it conflicts with the consultation response provided by the Highway Authority.

The Highway Officer notes in the consultation response that the application site is immediately adjacent to a proposed development comprising 45 dwellings and a doctor's surgery, with the proposed access being approximately 58 metres from the access serving that development. The officer further states that the character of Sopworth Road will change from that of a country road to a residential road and concludes:

“it would be harder to make a sustainable transport objection” and “I would not recommend a refusal reason on Sustainable transport grounds.”

The Highway Officer's assessment recognises that the approved development, associated footway connections and proposed reduction in vehicle speeds will materially alter the character of this part of Sopworth Road and strengthen its relationship with the village.

The Court of Appeal judgement in the landmark case, *Braintree DC v SoS CLG [2018] EWCA Civ 610*, ruled at ‘isolated’ refers strictly to physical separation or remoteness from a settlement, rather than functional isolation from services for facilities.

Accordingly, the site cannot reasonably be described as isolated countryside. Rather, it represents a logical village-edge location, with a designed landscaped buffer, that will be closely related to existing and committed development and will benefit from improved pedestrian connectivity to village services and facilities.

3.0 Consistency of Advice from the CNLB

The CNLB's current objection should also be considered in the context of its consultation response to planning application PL/2024/00865 for the adjoining 45-dwelling development and doctor's surgery. In that response, the Board confirmed that it: ‘...does *not* wish to object to this application’.

This was despite concluding that the proposal constituted major development within the National Landscape. The CNLB accepted that exceptional circumstances existed and that the proposal would be in the public interest. The CNLB further concluded that ‘...the landscape and visual impact of the development could be moderated..’ and accepted that visual effects would be largely contained through landscape buffers, planting, reduced ridge heights and a softer settlement edge.

The applicant acknowledges that the adjoining site benefits from allocation within the Sherston Neighbourhood Plan. However, the Board's response demonstrates that development on this edge of Sherston is not inherently unacceptable in landscape terms and that impacts can be successfully moderated through landscape-led design and mitigation.

The current proposal differs materially from the adjoining development insofar that it is a 'non-major' development proposal, comprises of five dwellings, all of which are proposed to be single-storey and accessible. It is therefore difficult to conclude that a development of this scale would necessarily result in unacceptable landscape effects when the CNLB accepted that the impacts of a significantly larger adjoining scheme could be moderated.

4.0 Accessible Housing Need

The proposal seeks Permission in Principle for up to five accessible single-storey dwellings as stated in the application description. These homes would meet an identified need for accommodation suitable for older residents in the local community with mobility requirements. This would allow existing residents to remain within the local community whilst freeing up larger family homes for reoccupation by families.

The proximity of the proposed doctor's surgery further reinforces the suitability of the location for accessible housing and supports the social sustainability objectives of the development. The proposal should therefore be distinguished from a conventional market housing scheme, as it responds directly to an identified demographic need within the community.

5.0 Local Demographic Need and Housing Mix

The proposal responds directly to the demographic characteristics of Sherston and the identified need for smaller, accessible accommodation within the village.

Census evidence and local housing assessments demonstrate that Sherston has an ageing population, reflecting a pattern common to many rural settlements within the Cotswolds National Landscape. At the same time, the village housing stock is dominated by larger family dwellings, with limited opportunities for older residents wishing to downsize whilst remaining within their local community.

The proposed development specifically addresses this need through the provision of accessible single-storey homes. Such accommodation enables older residents and those with mobility needs to remain independent within the village, maintain established social and family networks, and continue to access local services and facilities.

The delivery of accessible homes can also assist in releasing larger existing dwellings back into the local housing market, thereby contributing to a more balanced housing stock and supporting the wider housing needs of the community.

Importantly, the proposal's single-storey form not only responds to identified local housing needs but also delivers landscape benefits. The reduced ridge heights and lower visual massing associated with a single storey development would minimise visual intrusion, soften the transition between the settlement and surrounding countryside, and reduce potential impacts on the character and appearance of the National Landscape.

The proximity of the proposed doctor's surgery further reinforces the suitability of the site for accessible accommodation and creates a sustainable location for residents who may have increasing healthcare needs as they age. Accordingly, the proposal should be viewed not simply as the provision of five additional dwellings, but as the delivery of a specific form of housing that responds to identified local demographic needs whilst minimising landscape impact and supporting the long-term sustainability of the village community.

6.0 Landscape and Visual Impact

The CNLB's comments on landscape and visual impact have not directly engaged with the evidence included in submitted LVIA, which has directly informed the location and extent of the application site, as explained in PCL.

The CNLB's objection relies heavily upon assumptions regarding the future appearance and impact of the development. However, this application is submitted in Permission in Principle form. Matters relating to layout, siting, landscaping, architectural treatment, boundary design, lighting and detailed mitigation are reserved for subsequent consideration at the Technical Details Consent stage.

Accordingly, it cannot reasonably be concluded at this stage that a sensitively designed scheme of five single-storey dwellings could not be accommodated without unacceptable effects on landscape character, visual amenity or the special qualities of the National Landscape.

7.0 Conserving and Enhancing the National Landscape

The Board suggests that the proposal would not seek to further the purposes of National Landscape designation. This conclusion is not considered to be well founded.

The submitted illustrative Landscape Framework Plan makes explicit provision for the required green and blue infrastructure, landscape mitigation screening, enhancement of adjacent hedgerow boundaries, lighting control and delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain.

The Landscape Framework Plan demonstrates that it will be possible to design a detailed scheme that has potential to contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, consistent with the statutory duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

It is also notable that the CNLB's response acknowledges that the statutory duty does not preclude development and does not require the complete absence of impact. Rather, it requires reasonable and proportionate measures to further the purposes of designation. Such measures can be secured and refined through the Technical Details Consent process in the event that Permission in Principle is granted.

8.0 Conclusion

The CNLB's consultation response has not engaged with application submission and is not considered to be well-founded in planning terms. It is also noted that the National Landscape designation over-washes the whole village. Therefore the village's future growth needs will require appropriate new development, such as the application proposal, to be accommodated within the National Landscape.

The non-major proposal represents a modest development of five accessible single-storey homes on a site that will be closely related to existing and committed development on Sopworth Road. The scheme addresses a specific local housing need, benefits from improving pedestrian accessibility to village facilities and healthcare provision, and through the submitted Landscape Framework Plan makes explicit provision for biodiversity and landscape enhancement.

The Highway Officer has confirmed that a sustainable transport objection cannot reasonably be sustained. The CNLB has previously accepted that development on this edge of Sherston can be accommodated within the National Landscape where impacts are moderated through landscape-led design. The current proposal is materially smaller in scale and specifically designed to minimise visual impact through the provision of single-storey dwellings, as noted in the application description.

For these reasons, the applicant considers that the proposal represents an appropriate form of

development at the edge of Sherston and that the objections raised by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board should be afforded limited weight.