

A REVIEW has highlighted worries about the amount of building in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

An independent review by the Campaign to Protect Rural England is anxious about the growing trend particularly highlighting the Cotswolds as an area of concern.

This follows a number of applications in AONB areas in the Cotswold District, including the controversial passing of 30 new houses at Leasows Farm in Chipping Campden last month and in Draycott Road, Blockley in 2015.

The review by Dave Dixon, Neil Sinden and Tim Crabtree is based on data collected by Glenigan covering planning applications and approvals for major housing development in and near to AONBs between 2012-2017, including the Cotswolds.

Liz Eyre, chairman of the Cotswold Conservation Board said: "This joint study is welcome support to the board's own concerns about development pressures within and adjacent to the Cotswolds AONB.

"The Cotswolds is a living and working landscape.

"The report highlights the significant pressures it is facing, seeing the highest number of major housing schemes and second largest increase in the number of new housing units completed across the country's AONBs for the study period, many of these as a result of speculative planning applications.

"Securing the appropriate scale, location and design of growth and development within one of the country's most special and iconic landscapes is an ongoing responsibility for the areas 15 local authorities and Conservation Board."

"AONBs are outstanding landscapes of national value and significance.

"In its forthcoming review of the National Planning Policy Framework, CPRE looks to the government to state a presumption against large scale housing development in AONBs.

"Demand for housing or the lack of a five year housing land supply should not justify inappropriate development in our finest landscapes" said Richard Lloyd, vice-chairman of CPRE Gloucestershire Branch added: "The Cotswolds is one of our most precious landscapes and we must avoid it being undermined in dribs and drabs.

A Cotswold District Council spokesman said: "Cotswold District Council totally agrees with the importance of the Cotswolds AONB and is currently at the Local Plan Examination defending the proposed policies which are considered to be a sound and robust approach to promoting appropriate sustainable development in the AONB.

"In particular, Policy EN5 states, in determining development proposals within the AONB or its setting, the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape, its character and special qualities will be given great weight.

"Major development will not be permitted within the AONB unless it satisfies the exceptions set out in national policy and guidance."

"This is further emphasised in paragraphs 10.3.2.1 to 10.3 2.4, many of the key issues for the Cotswolds AONB are outlined in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan (2013-2018),

produced by the Cotswolds Conservation Board in consultation with its partners including Cotswold District Council.

"The National Planning Policy Framework accords great weight in planning decisions to the conservation of landscape and scenic beauty in these areas, together with their wildlife and cultural heritage.

"It stipulates that planning permission should be refused for major developments in the AONB except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.

"It will be a matter for the development management process to determine whether or not a given proposal constitutes major development.

"The design of new developments should reflect the analysis of the special qualities of the AONB and opportunities for enhancement as described in the AONB Management Plan and relevant landscape character assessments."