### Application Ref: NP/12/0550

**Application Type** 

Full

Grid Ref:

SM82770750

**Applicant** 

St Ishmaels Garden Centre

Agent Proposal Mr J Bratherton, Bratherton Park Design Consultants Demolition of existing redundant glasshouses &

associated buildings, replacement of existing garden centre buildings, plus siting of 18 timber clad lodges for holiday purposes in a landscaped setting and provision

of picnic and ecological improvement areas.

**Site Location** 

St Ishmaels Nursery, St Ishmaels, Haverfordwest,

Pembrokeshire, SA62 3SX

**Case Officer** 

Julia Evans

#### Summary

This is a full application for the demolition of the existing redundant glasshouses and associated buildings, the replacement of the existing garden centre buildings with new ones, plus the erection of 18 timber clad holiday lodges in a landscaped setting and the provision of picnic and ecological improvement areas at St Ishmaels Nursery, St Ishmaels. The proposal has been carefully considered against all material considerations and relevant national and local development plan policies. On balance the application is recommended for refusal for three reasons. The first is that the erection of 18 holiday chalets and associated development is contrary to adopted development plan policy. The second is that the proposed chalets are considered harmful to the special qualities of the National Park. The third is that the proposal fails to provide sufficient landscaping details. As such the proposal is considered contrary to national and local policy and harmful to the special qualities of the National Park, and is therefore recommended for refusal.

The application has been referred to the Development Management Committee because it is a major application and a departure from the Adopted Development Plan.

Members undertook a site visit on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

#### **Consultee Response**

St Ishmaels Community Council: No objection

Dyfed Archaeological Trust: Conditional Consent - Recommend

archaeological watching brief

**Environment Agency Wales:** Conditional Consent

PCC - Head of Public Protection: Conditional Consent

PCC - Transportation & Environment: Conditional Consent

#### **Public Response**

The application has been advertised and neighbour notifications undertaken. Two responses have been received making the following comments:-

- The Conservative Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire has written to support the application on the basis of the significant economic benefits it would have for the local economy;
- It is difficult to run a business growing plants when there is no help from the Government, so it makes sense to use the land for holiday lodges. This will bring visitors and jobs to the area;
- Modernising the garden centre will bring in more custom and create jobs; and
- The proposal will blend in with the surrounding countryside.

#### Policies considered

Please note that these policies can be viewed on the Policies page Pembrokeshire Coast National Park website - <a href="http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=549">http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=549</a>

LDP Policy 01 - National Park Purposes and Duty

LDP Policy 07 - Countryside

LDP Policy 08 - Special Qualities

LDP Policy 09 - Light Pollution

LDP Policy 11 - Protection of Biodiversity

LDP Policy 13 - Historic Landscapes Parks and Gardens

LDP Policy 15 - Conservation of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

LDP Policy 29 - Sustainable Design

LDP Policy 30 - Amenity

LDP Policy 31 - Minimising Waste

LDP Policy 32 - Surface Water Drainage

LDP Policy 35 - Visitor Economy

LDP Policy 38 - Camping, Touring Caravans, Statics and Chalet Sites

LDP Policy 42 - Employment Sites and Live/Work Units

LDP Policy 45 – Affordable housing

LDP Policy 49 - Retail in the National Park

LDP Policy 51 - Garden Centres

LDP Policy 52 - Sustainable Transport

LDP Policy 53 - Impacts on traffic

PPW5 Chapter 04 - Planning for Sustainability

PPW5 Chapter 05 - Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast

PPW5 Chapter 06 - Conserving the Historic Environment

PPW5 Chapter 07 - Economic Development

PPW5 Chapter 08 - Transport

PPW5 Chapter 10 - Planning for Retailing and Town Centres

PPW5 Chapter 11 - Tourism, Sport and Recreation

PPW5 Chapter 12 - Infrastructure and Services

PPW5 Chapter 13 - Minimising and Managing Environmental Risks and

**Pollution** 

SPG05 - Sustainable Design

SPG06 - Landscape

SPG08 - Affordable Housing

SPG12 - Parking

SPG13 - Archaeology

TAN 02 - Planning and Affordable Housing

TAN 04 - Retailing and Town Centres

TAN 05 - Nature Conservation and Planning

TAN 06 - Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities

TAN 12 - Design

TAN 13 - Tourism

TAN 18 - Transport

TAN 22 - Planning for Sustainable Buildings

#### Officer's Appraisal

#### **Background**

This is a full application for the demolition of the existing redundant glasshouses and associated buildings, the replacement of the existing garden centre buildings with new buildings, plus the erection of 18 timber clad holiday lodges in a landscaped setting and the provision of picnic and ecological improvement areas at St Ishmaels Nursery, St Ishmaels. The garden centre lies to the west of the unclassified road between Mabesgate and Trewarren, to the north-west of St Ishmael's village. The whole site is approximately 3.24 hectares in size and consists of an existing garden centre and associated sales space to the north-eastern corner of the site, with two rows of abandoned greenhouses to the west and south of it. To the rear of the southern range are a number of containers and a long storage building. previously used in association with the nursery business that used to operate from the site. Beyond this is a pond and large water tank. Past the greenhouses to the west is a row of mature coniferous trees which form a wind break to the nursery. Beyond these further to the west is a field of grass bounded to the north, west and south by mature hedges. This area of the site slopes downhill towards the north-western corner.

The garden centre buildings consist of a fabric building to the north of the internal access road, with to its immediate east the existing shop building and café. This is a much extended building constructed of a mix of materials, including render and upvc for the walls, and corrugated sheeting and flat roofs. External and covered sales areas lie to the east and north. Parking lies to the west of the shop. It currently sells a range of plants (both indoor and outdoor), gardening equipment, chemicals, furniture, and tools, gifts and cards, sweets, milk and eggs, summer fruit and vegetables, books, and clothing.

An agriculturally tied dwelling lies adjacent to the site to the north of the access, whilst directly opposite it is an area of levelled grass that has had a history of granted applications on it for a further agriculturally tied dwelling. None of these were implemented and the last permission has expired. Both areas are outside the site's boundary.

#### **Constraints**

The site lies within the open countryside in a Historic Landscape. To the north of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

## Relevant Planning History

The previous applications of relevance to this application are:-

- NP12/0596 Environmental Screening Opinion for the current application – an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required – 21<sup>st</sup> December 2012;
- NP10/349 outside the site but immediately adjacent to its northeastern corner - Managers house (renewal of consent) – Refused 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010
- NP07/362 Managers house (renewal of consent) Permission 30<sup>th</sup> August 2007
- NP04/620 Telecommunications mast Refused 16<sup>th</sup> December 2004
- NP03/636 Managers house and new private access Permission 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003
- NP03/572 Managers house Withdrawn 21<sup>st</sup> November 2003
- NP01/060 Conservatory over front entrance of garden centre Permission 20<sup>th</sup> March 2001

## **Current Proposal**

The current application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing redundant glasshouse and associated buildings, the replacement of the existing garden centre buildings with new, plus the erection of 18 timber clad holiday lodges for holiday purposes in a landscaped setting and the provision of picnic and ecological improvement areas. The development proposed is as follows:

 The demolition of the existing garden centre buildings and its replacement with a single building housing the shop, café, toilets and office. The L-shaped building (with entrance porch), would be constructed of natural cedar cladding under a sedum and cedar shingle roof, and at its maximum extent would measure 27m x 19.6 m x 4.2m. The existing fabric building to the north-west of the shop would be replaced with a polytunnel. External sales areas would remain to the east and north of the shop, whilst the existing plastic mesh polytunnels would be removed. Opening hours for the garden centre would be between 09.00 to 17.30 everyday in the summer including bank holidays and Sundays. In the winter the hours would be reduced to between 10.00 and 16.00. The same goods would be sold as are currently offered;

- The demolition of the greenhouses to the west and south of the garden centre building, along with the removal of the storage building, containers, water tank and pond;
- The leveling of this area to facilitate the erection of 18 holiday lodges orientated around a 4m wide internal access road, leading onto a single parking pitch for each lodge. Two large ponds would be provided within the centre of the lodges. The lodges are static caravans that would be timber clad with sedum or shingle roofs, each with its own balcony. Each would measure approximately 15.8m x 8m x 3.8m;
- To the west of the lodges would be a picnic area / recreation / wildlife area, including one large pond with three smaller scrape ponds to the south-western corner of the site; and
- To the north of this area the land would be fenced off to provide grazing land.

The development would be drained using a package treatment plant for the foul drainage, whilst surface water would be disposed of through a sustainable drainage system. Apart from saying that foul drainage may be dealt with by a bio-disc, no further details have been provided, whilst all surface water would go into the existing and proposed ponds.

The application has been submitted with the following supporting information:-

- A Design and Access statement:
- A planning statement, including ecology, landscape and arboricultural matters, an archaeology statement, a demolition method statement, a transport statement, drainage and infrastructure, socio and economic considerations and a financial justification for the proposal;
- A retail impact assessment; and
- A letter from the agent stating that the proposal is in accordance with the Pembrokeshire Destination Management Plan 2012 2017.

#### **Key Issues**

The application raises the following planning matters:-

- Principle of the development and planning history;
- Provision of holiday accommodation in the open countryside;
- Impact on the special qualities of the National Park and landscaping matters:
- Provision of replacement garden centre buildings and retail matters;

- Protection of employment sites;
- Impact on the historic Landscape;
- Highways matters;
- Protected species and habitats matters;
- The water environment and drainage matters;
- Contaminated land matters:
- Sustainable development; and
- Neighbouring amenity matters.

## Principle of the Development and Planning History:

The garden centre lies in the open countryside on a site used as a garden centre nursery. New development in such locations is strictly controlled under both national and local development plan policy. The application proposes two separate elements:-

- The erection of 18 static caravan holiday chalets; and
- The demolition and rebuilding of the existing garden centre buildings, and retention of this use, including its retail function.

Each raises separate policy issues, which will be considered below.

Provision of Holiday Accommodation in the Open Countryside:
Policies 35 and 37 of the Local Development Plan state that tourist accommodation in the open countryside should conserve and enhance the landscape importance of the National Park, and where new self-catering accommodation is to be provided in the open countryside it should be in conversion schemes only, with affordable housing provision given priority. New build self-catering development on greenfield sites will not be permitted. Policy 38 of the Local Development Plan states that new static caravan or chalet sites will not be permitted. In their consideration of this application, the Authority's Development Plans Section has clearly defined the modular holiday chalets as self-catering accommodation. As a result they consider the application needs to be considered under the requirements of Policies 35, 37, and 38. Within the Design and Access Statement the lodges are "defined as static caravans": the pertinent Policies are therefore 35 and 38.

The justification for these policies is set out in paragraph 4.168 of the Plan. which states that the National Park occupies 37% of the total land area of the County, but already accommodates 56% of caravan, camping and chalet sites. There remain over 400 vacant pitches within existing holiday parks and sites. This gives an indication of the high level of overall provision already available and the policy approach therefore seeks to protect the National Park landscape; control over-domination of this sector of tourist accommodation, which is clearly already extensively available; and to support existing businesses, which also have some capacity to react to increases in demand.

Prior to the submission of the application, a lengthy pre-application process had occurred advising the applicant that the proposed holiday chalets were contrary to development plan policy. The applicant has stated that the proposal allows the redevelopment of the vacant nursery buildings, and that as the site is a brownfield site in the open countryside, it should be allowed on

the basis of the environmental improvement that it offers. Notwithstanding this, the policy situation is clear: new tourist chalet sites in the open countryside are contrary to adopted development plan policy, and therefore cannot be supported. It is not considered that the redevelopment of the site offers significant environmental improvements to warrant a departure from adopted development plan policy. In view of part of the proposal being for a new site holiday static caravan site in the open countryside it is clearly contrary to these policies notwithstanding that this is a brownfield site and this forms the first reason for refusal.

Impact on the Special Qualities of the National Park and Landscaping Matters:

Policies 8, 15, 29, and 30, in particular, in the adopted Local Development Plan seek to protect the special qualities of the National Park, including the pattern, diversity, and character of the landscape and villages, nature conservation habitats, and the historic environment. Development that is visually intrusive, that fails to incorporate traditional features and is insensitively sited in the landscape will not be supported. The proposed replacement garden centre building seeks to amalgamate the existing eclectic mix of buildings with their differing styles and materials into a purpose built building. This would be constructed of cedar timber cladding under a sedum / cedar shingle roof, and in terms of visual impact, it would be an improvement on the existing buildings in terms of its design and use of materials. It would provide a purpose built building that is visually more cohesive and sympathetic to this open countryside location than the existing ones. The removal of the existing buildings, which have little architectural merit and form a discordant grouping of elements and their replacement with a purpose built single building in natural materials reduces the visual harm to the special qualities of the National Park. Subject to conditions concerning materials and uses (including restriction of the type of goods sold from the garden centre, the café area, and opening hours), no objection is raised to this aspect of the proposal.

Turning now to the impact of the holiday chalets on the special qualities of the National Park, the applicant considers that the replacement of the vacant nursery buildings with the more attractive holiday chalets and associated uses is deemed an improvement which justifies the proposal, despite it being contrary to policy. Although the existing greenhouses have a large footprint. they and their associated buildings are effectively single storey in height, and have an appearance that is functionally agricultural, and are structures that are acceptable in an open countryside location. By replacing them with 18 holiday lodges, the character of the site is changed to one that is visually discordant to this open countryside location. They would effectively urbanise the character of the site by giving it a residential appearance that would be at odds with its rural location. This plus the associated picnic and recreation areas, plus ancillary uses and requirements, such as parking and lighting, is considered to substantially change the character and appearance of the site. It would no longer have an agricultural appearance, but would have a very residential one that would be at odds with this open countryside location, and therefore be harmful to the special qualities of the National Park. It is not felt

that conditions, including the provision of additional landscaping, could ameliorate the fundamental harm that the proposal results in, and this forms a further reason for refusal.

The application proposes some hedge planting to screen the chalets, along with large areas of landscaping and planting, and has been supported with an arboricultural report. The Authority's Trees and Landscape Officer has been consulted on the application, and he has raised no objection to the proposed tree and hedgerow protection measures for the development of the site, but requires further information concerning their protection during the demolition works that are to occur. In addition, the lack of information provided concerning the proposed new planting and wildlife areas has also raised an objection from him. In view of the scale of the landscaping proposed on this large site, plus its visibility within the wider landscape and the potential harm to the special qualities of the National Park, the lack of landscaping details forms a further reason for refusal.

Provision of Replacement Garden Centre Buildings and Retail Matters: Policy 51 of the Local Development Plan states that garden centres will be permitted where the proposal is located within or adjacent to a centre; and it would not undermine the vitality and viability of retail facilities in any nearby centre; and the scale and nature of any buildings proposed for retail use and the size, design, materials and siting of any new building or extension blend with existing buildings. In the supporting text for the policy it advises that planning conditions may be applied to limit the range of goods which can be sold from the premises so as to protect the viability and vitality of existing centres and local shops.

The existing garden centre has been in existence for some years, although there does seem to have been a mixed use operating on the site. It has previously been used as a nursery, then a nursery and garden centre and now just the garden centre uses are operating. In 2001 a conservatory to the garden centre was permitted with no question being raised as to the function of the site: i.e. whether it is a nursery and / or garden centre. In view of the Authority's previous acceptance of applications for the site being a garden centre, it is considered that this planning history is material to the consideration of the current use on the site, which from your officer's recent site inspection is clearly as a garden centre with no nursery activity occurring. The current scheme is to replace the existing garden centre buildings with new ones, which as discussed in the section above, offer a substantial visual improvement to those already present. As a result the proposal is considered acceptable under the requirements of Policy 51, in that the size, materials and design of the new building is considered acceptable. However, as both the existing and proposed garden centre offers a mix of products for sale, if permission were to be granted conditions would need to be attached restricting sales to garden centre goods only so as not to undermine the vitality and viability of nearby centres.

#### Protection of Employment Sites:

Policy 43 of the Local Development Plan states that permission to redevelop or use, business, general industrial, storage or distribution sites or buildings for other purposes will be permitted where the present use is inappropriate for the locality: or there is adequate alternative provision in the vicinity; or the potential for continued use of the site or premises has been shown to be unviable. In their consideration of the application, the Development Plans Section has taken the view that a garden centre is both a business and an employer. The application form states that there are currently 3 full-time and 1 part-time job provided by the nursery. Including the holiday caravans, this would increase to 6 full-time jobs, and 4 part-time ones, with the potential for further seasonal jobs as cleaners. As regards the employment generated by the holiday caravans, although it is acknowledged that new jobs will be provided, due to the fundamental contradiction of the proposal to adopted development plan policies 35, 37 and 38, it is not felt that the provision of these overrides the harm that the proposal does to the special qualities of the National Park.

### Impact on the Historic Landscape:

Policy 8 of the Local Development Plan seeks to protect the special qualities of the National Park, including amongst other things, the protection and enhancement where possible of the historic landscape. Policy 13 refers to the presence of Historic Landscapes as a designation on the Proposals Maps, and the supporting text of this Policy requires consultation with Dyfed Archaeological Trust where development occurs in these designations. The site lies within a Historic Landscape, and there is a Bronze Age Standing Stone in the field to the north of the site, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Dyfed Archaeology have considered the application and raised no objection subject to a conditional requirement for an archaeological watching brief. In addition, because of the proximity of the SAM to the site, they have also suggested consulting CADW to ascertain whether the proposal would be harmful to it. This has been undertaken, but at the time of writing this report, no response had been received from them.

#### Highways Matters:

Policies 52 and 53 of the Local Development Plan refer to traffic impacts of proposed development, along with seeking to ensure that opportunities are taken to improve and promote accessibility and reduce the need to travel by car. Development will not be permitted where it will result in an unacceptable impact on congested areas; or where traffic will be generated at inappropriate times; or where there is an unacceptable impact on road safety; or where significant environmental damage would be caused and cannot be mitigated. The application proposes the use of the existing access and internal distributor road for the garden centre, plus resurfacing of the existing car parking area for the garden centre. There is currently parking for 40 cars, and this would be retained. Each of the chalets would have its own car parking space, accessed from the separate distributor road serving them. The Highways Section at the County Council have considered the application and raised no objection to it. They consider that the proposal would not result in a serious increase in overall traffic as a result of the mixed uses occurring, and

that it is sufficiently close to facilities in St Ishmaels and Monks Haven to encourage walking or cycling. As a result they raise no objection to the proposal subject to conditions concerning the provision of adequate parking and turning areas and their retention as such thereafter.

#### Protected Species and Habitats Matters:

Policy 8 of the Local Development Plan seeks to protect the special qualities of the National Park, including amongst other things, the restoration and enhancement of the National Park's ecosystems. Policy 9 seeks to minimise light pollution. Policy 11 states that development that would disturb or otherwise harm protected species of their habitats will only be permitted where the effects can be acceptably minimised or mitigated. The current application was submitted with a protected species report, which was sent to the County Council's Ecologist for comment. At the time of writing the report, no response had been received, and so the impact of the proposal on protected species and their habitats cannot be assessed.

## The Water Environment and Drainage Matters:

Policy 32 of the Local Development Plan requires development to incorporate sustainable drainage systems for the disposal of water on site. The application has stated that the existing septic tanks would be removed and replaced with a biodisk sewage treatment plant. Surface water would go to a sustainable drainage system, that includes drainage to the proposed ponds. Both the Environment Agency and Welsh Water have been consulted on the application. The former have raised no objection to the development, subject to conditions concerning the foul and surface water arrangements, pollution prevention measures, and the measures for the storage of chemicals. As regards Welsh Water, at the time of writing the report no response had been received from them.

#### Contaminated Land Matters:

Chapter 13 of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 5) states that planning decisions need to take into account the potential hazard that contamination presents to the development, its occupants and the local environment, and whether any mitigation measures are needed. In view of the previous uses on the site, the Public Protection Section at County Hall were contacted to ascertain their views as to whether the proposal raised any concerns as regards public health protection. They consider that the previous uses could well have resulted in land contamination (eg through the use and storage of chemicals and fuels), and in view of the proposed chalets, have requested that if permission is granted a condition is imposed requiring a contamination assessment of the site if evidence of it is found.

#### Sustainable Design Matters:

Both national and local Development Plan Policy requires sustainable design. Policy 29 of the Local Development Plan expects all proposals for development to demonstrate an integrated approach to design and construction, whilst Policy 31 requires development to minimise, re-use and recycle waste generated during demolition and construction and provide waste management facilities of an appropriate type and scale as an integral

part of the development. Policy 32 requires sustainable drainage systems for the disposal of surface water. The application has been supported by a Demolition Statement and a Design and Access Statement that details the sustainable measures included within the proposal. As regards the demolition works, all materials that can be recycled will be, such as the metals and concrete. The proposed buildings would be provided with high levels of insulation and renewable energy provision, and locally sourced materials. Subject to the conditioning requiring compliance with these statements, the proposal is acceptable in terms of the sustainable requirements of national and local Policy requirements.

## Neighbouring Amenity Matters:

Policy 30 of the Local Development Plan refers to amenity in a general sense, seeking to avoid incompatible development and significant adverse impact upon the amenity enjoyed by neighbouring properties. The nearest residential properties are the dwellings to the north-east and south-east corner of the site, the latter being across the road from the site. The rebuilding of the garden centre buildings is occurring in approximately the same footprint as the existing buildings, and as a result causes no significant loss of amenity. The provision of the holiday chalets will impact on amenity of these properties in that it introduces a new use to the area, but in view of the distances between the proposal and them, it is felt that landscape conditioning could satisfactorily mitigate the impact.

#### Conclusion

The proposal has been considered against all material considerations and relevant national and local development plan policies. On balance the application is recommended for refusal for three reasons. The first is that this erection of 18 holiday chalets and associated development is contrary to adopted development plan policy. The second is that the proposed chalets are considered harmful to the special qualities of the National Park. The third is that the proposal fails to provide sufficient landscaping details and details of tree and hedgerow and hedgebank protection. As such the proposal is considered contrary to national and local policy and harmful to the special qualities of the National Park, and is therefore recommended for refusal.

#### Recommendation

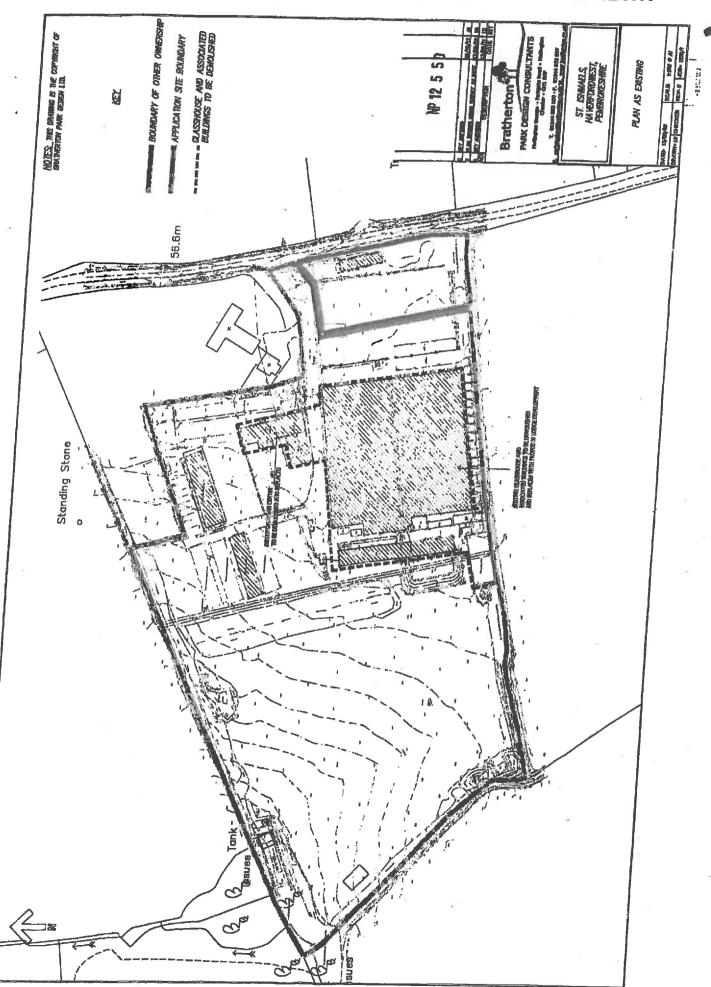
Refusal.

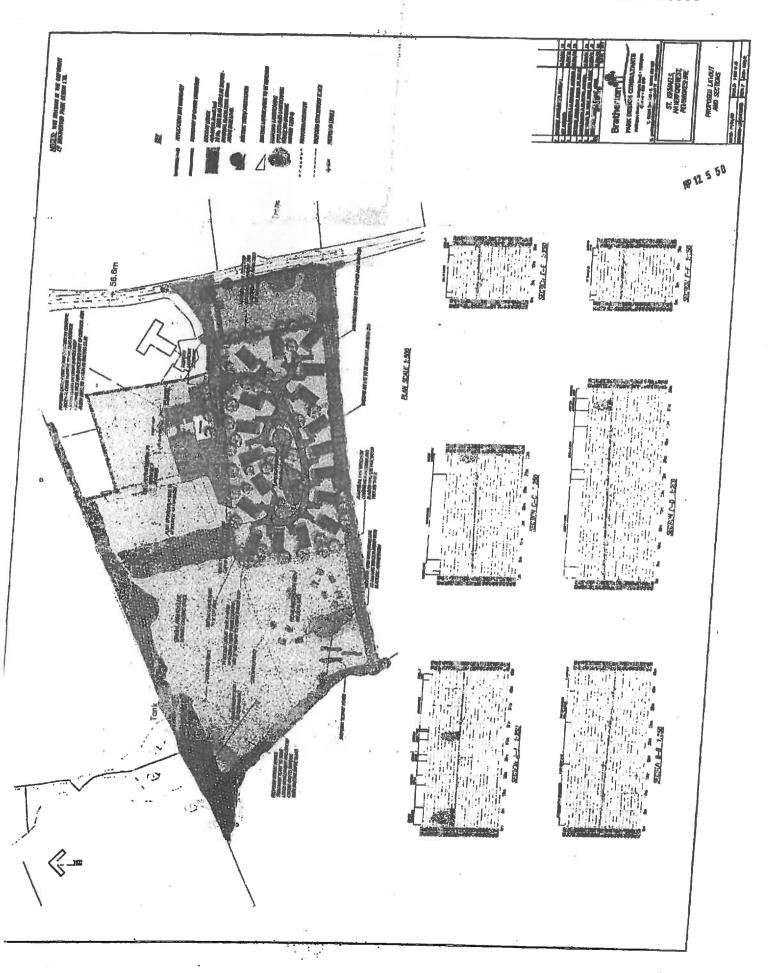
#### Reasons

1. Policies 35 and 38 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan state that new camping, caravanning, static caravan or chalet sites will not be permitted notwithstanding that the site is a brownfield site. The provision of eighteen static caravans on a site not previously in use for holiday accommodation in an open countryside location is therefore contrary to adopted Development Plan Policy.

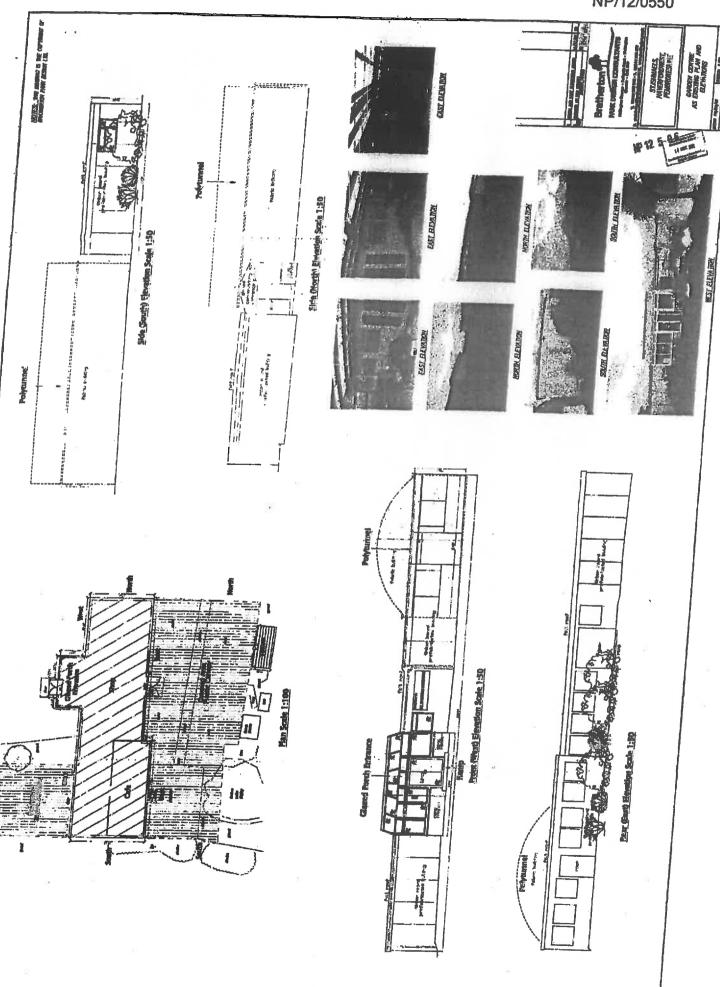
- 2. Policies 8, 15, 29 and 30 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan seek to protect and enhance the pattern and diversity of the landscape, and prevent development that fails to harmonise with or enhance the landform and landscape character of the National Park, that fails to incorporate traditional features, and that is insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape and visually intrusive. The proposed holiday static caravans (and the associated ancillary development to them), due to their siting, location, and design, form a visually intrusive and discordant addition to this rural area that is harmful to the special qualities of the National Park and therefore contrary to Adopted Development Plan Policy.
- 3. Policies 8 and 15 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan seek to protect and enhance the pattern and diversity of the landscape, and prevent development that fails to harmonise with or enhance the landform and landscape character of the National Park. The application has not been submitted with a sufficiently detailed landscaping plan to allow the impact of the proposal to be fully considered on the special qualities of the National Park, and it is therefore considered contrary to Adopted Development Plan Policy.

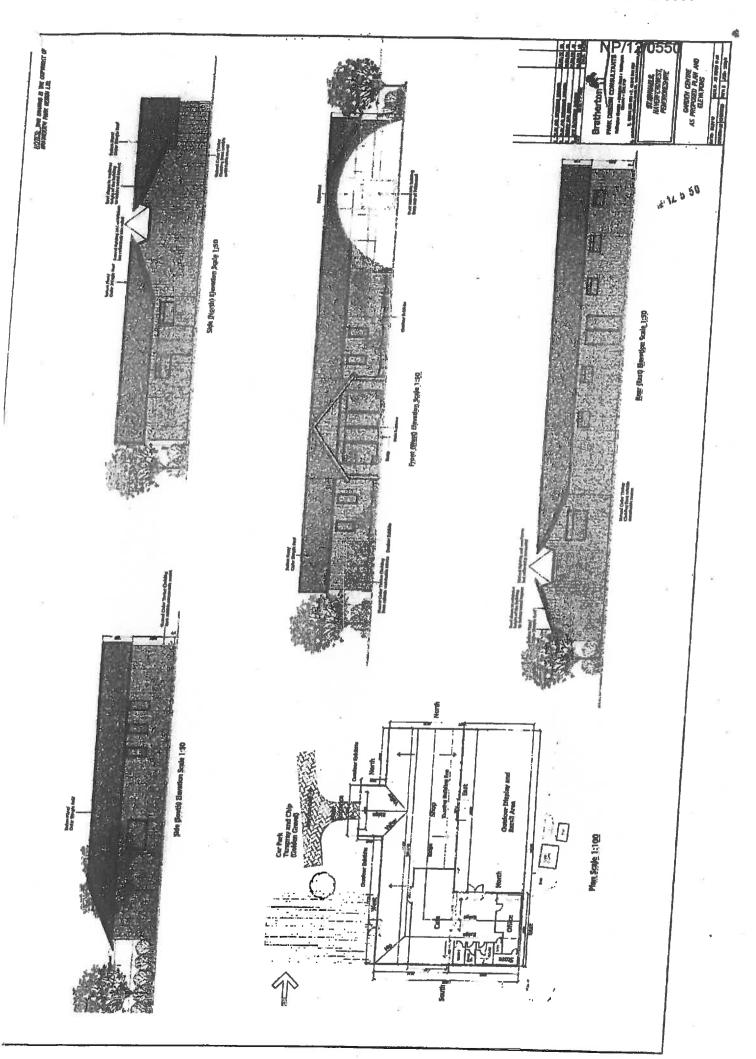
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