Application Ref: NP/13/0462

Application Type: Full
Grid Ref: SM85791266
Applicant: Mr & Mrs T & T Thomas
Agent: Mr Andrew Vaughan-Harries, Hayston Development & Planning
Proposal: Dwelling & detached garage (revised design)
Site Location: Plot 3, Blockett Lane, Little Haven, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA62 3UH
Case Officer: Vicki Hirst

Summary

This is a full application for a single dwelling at Plot 4 off Blockett Lane, Little Haven. It lies in the open countryside to the eastern side of Blockett Lane. The proposal has been carefully considered against all material considerations and the relevant national and local development plan policies. On balance the application is recommended for refusal for three reasons. The first and second are that the proposed dwelling and the new access are considered harmful to the special qualities of the National Park and the third is that the proposal fails to provide affordable housing dwellings in line with adopted policies.

The application has been referred to the Development Management Committee at the discretion of the Head of Development Management due to the history of the site.

Consultee Response

Coal Authority: Standard advice
The Havens Community Council: General support but concerns about removal of hedge and feel that possible flood issues should be addressed.
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water: Conditional Consent
Natural Resources Wales: Standard Advice
PCC - Common Land Officer: No objection
PCC - Education Department: No primary or secondary school contributions are required.
PCC - Head of Public Protection: Conditional Consent
PCNPA Conservation Officer: No adverse comments
Waste & Recycling Manager - PCC: No adverse comment

Public Response

The application has been advertised and neighbour notifications undertaken. Responses from four households have been received making the following comments:-
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- The application is not substantially different to those refused before
- Objection to the creation of a new access when there is a perfectly adequate one existing that can be used;
- The new access would result in the loss of a 200 year old hedge and ruin the character of the lane;
- Removing trees and increasing areas of hard landscaping would increase flooding in an area where drains cannot cope;
- There is a "strange wall" at the south-east of the boundary to Plot 1 that serves no useful purpose. It is an eyesore and should be removed;
- Whole site is within one ownership and it has been split into four to avoid providing affordable housing on site;
- Site is used as a dump.
- One letter provides support on the grounds that the history allowed for the re-development of the site and the current site is in an unfavourable introduction to Little Haven and is an untidy mess.

Policies considered

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

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 15 - Conservation of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
LDP Policy 29 - Sustainable Design
LDP Policy 30 - Amenity
LDP Policy 32 - Surface Water Drainage
LDP Policy 33 - Renewable Energy
LDP Policy 45 – Affordable housing
LDP Policy 48 - Community Facilities and Infrastructure Requirements
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 08 - Transport
PPW5 Chapter 09 - Housing
PPW5 Chapter 12 - Infrastructure and Services
PPW5 Chapter 13 - Minimising and Managing Environmental Risks and Pollution
SPG04 - Planning Obligations
SPG05 - Sustainable Design
SPG06 - Landscape
SPG08 - Affordable Housing
SPG11 - Coal Works - Instability
SPG12 - Parking
SPG13 - Archaeology
SPG14 - Renewable Energy plus Addendum on Field Arrays
TAN 02 - Planning and Affordable Housing
TAN 05 - Nature Conservation and Planning
TAN 06 - Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities
TAN 08 - Renewable Energy
TAN 12 - Design
TAN 18 - Transport
TAN 22 - Planning for Sustainable Buildings

Officer's Appraisal

Background

This is a full application for a single dwelling at Plot 3 off Blockett Lane, Little Haven. It lies in the open countryside to the eastern side of Blockett Lane. The larger site was originally a turkey farm, and occupies an elevated position overlooking the village of Little Haven. The land has now been cleared with concrete bases, gravelled and grassed areas present on site. To the south there are two new large detached houses and their associated access off Blockett Lane. To the north of this new access and separated from it by a concrete block wall which abuts the highway, is an existing access into the cleared area to the north. Electricity poles and cables run across the south-eastern corner of the site.

The Plot is part of a larger site that was originally designated as an Environmental Improvement Area under the Local Plan. This stated that development may be permitted providing that the former poultry farm had been entirely removed and the site restored to an appropriate condition providing that the development did not conflict with other Local Plan Policies. Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Plan was also prepared for the site. However, with the current Local Development Plan the designation of the site as an Environmental Improvement Area was removed and it is now considered as being a brownfield site in the open countryside.

The development of the larger site has been separated into three areas. The southernmost area has been developed for two large contemporary designed
houses. The land to the north has full planning permission for six dwellings: a terrace of three and three detached houses with 3 of the total provision being affordable housing. The remaining land (the central part of the site) has been the subject of four separate planning applications for single houses on four individual plots. An application in relation to Plot 3 was refused on 22nd May 2013 on the grounds that the proposed dwelling due to its design and materials, its size and proportions, and its prominent and elevated location forms a visually intrusive addition to the area that is harmful to the special qualities of the National Park. In addition the proposal would result in the loss of existing hedgerow which taken together with the cumulative impact of existing and other proposed accesses in the vicinity results in an unsympathetic siting within the landscape. The proposal also comprised a part of a larger site where provision of affordable housing would be sought and this was not offered on the site, contrary to adopted policy. Furthermore the proposal resulted in a proliferation of accesses where visibility is restricted and with no refuge for vulnerable road users. The proposal was therefore considered to be detrimental to highway safety and contrary to development plan policy. (NP/12/0479).

Constraints

The site lies within the open countryside over a Coal Standing Advice Area, and within a Military Safeguarding Zone.

Relevant Planning History

- NP02/189 – (Approximately Plots 4 and 3) Outline application for two dwellings – Refused 20th June 2002 – Appeal allowed 11th December 2002
- NP04/586 – 5 dwellings – Refused 29th November 2004
- NP05/357 – (Approximately Plots 4 and 3) Outline for 3 dwellings - Approved 8th March 2006
- NP05/628 – (Approximately Plots 4 and 3) Outline for 2 dwellings - Approved 24th January 2006
- NP08/392 – (Plot 4) Reserved matters application for single dwelling – Withdrawn 19th September 2008
- NP10/511 – (land to the north of the site) 6 dwellings – Permission 28th November 2011
- NP/12/0477 – (Plot 1) Construction of dormer cottage – Refused 19th June 2103
- NP12/0478 – (Plot 2) Construction of dormer cottage – Refused 19th June 2013
- NP12/0480 – (Plot 4) Construction of single dwelling – Refused 19th June 2013
- NP/13/0460 – (Plot 1) – Construction of dormer cottage - Live
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- NP/13/0461 – (Plot 2) Construction of dormer cottage – Live
- NP/13/0463 – (Plot 4) Construction of dwelling - Live

Current Proposal

The current application seeks full planning permission for a single dwelling, detached garage and associated access and internal estate distributor road some 35 metres from the existing site access. Three other applications for single dwellings have been received for Plots 1, 2, and 4 (applications NP/12/0460, NP/13/0461 and NP/13/0463 respectively). The proposed dwelling would be located to the east of Blockett Lane in an area of levelled land. The application proposes both the dwelling and a new access and internal estate distributor road providing vehicular access to the remainder of the site beyond to the north and west. The access to Plot 3 would be off the estate distributor road to the north of the proposed dwelling, and would lead onto two car parking spaces plus a single detached garage with associated storage area.

The proposed dwelling would be two storeys, orientated to overlook the estate distributor road to the west. It has been designed to comprise two distinct interlinked design elements. The main part of the house would be orientated on north-south alignment to provide views to the west and would be constructed of random stone to the west elevation, and smooth painted render to the rear and side elevations under a slate roof. It would have maximum dimensions of approximately 12.2 metres x 7.5 metres and a height of 8 metres. Joined to this by a two-storey glazed link would be a southern wing with an east-west alignment constructed of horizontal timber cladding under a curved corrugated metal roof measuring approximately 14 metres x 6 metres. This wing would project forwards of the main house towards the estate road. The proposed dwelling has been designed to reflect local design references, in particular a general purpose Dutch barn.

The proposed detached garage to the northern side of the site would be used as a single garage with inclusive storage area. At its maximum dimensions it would measure approximately 5.8m x 6.6m x 4.5m; details of materials have not been provided.

The proposed dwelling would have a finished floor level of 37.95 metres above sea level (existing levels are 37.87 metres). A grass retaining bank would run along the southern edge of the site, utilising the existing bank. A hedgerow is proposed to the eastern and western boundaries of the site, with tree planting to the southern and northern boundaries. The dwelling would be connected to the main sewer and surface water would be disposed of via a soakaway.

The application has been submitted with the following supporting information:-
- A Planning Report incorporating a Design and Access report and offer of £46,395 (on the basis of £150 per square metre) as a contribution to affordable housing under Policy 45 of the Local Development Plan
- A Transport Statement;

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A Planting Schedule;
A Code 3 Pre-Assessment, concluding that the house would meet Level 3.

Key Issues

The application raises the following planning matters:-
- Principle of the development;
- Impact on the special qualities of the National Park;
- Affordable housing matters;
- Community infrastructure requirements;
- Sustainable design;
- Highways matters;
- Landscaping;
- Archaeological matters;
- The water environment and drainage matters;
- Contaminated land matters;
- Electricity supply matters;
- Coal Referral Area matters;
- Ministry of Defense Safeguarding matters;
- Neighbouring amenity matters;
- Enforcement matters.

Principle of the development:

The proposed dwelling lies in the open countryside overlooking the village of Little Haven which lies in the valley below to the north and west. As referred to in the sections above, this site and those surrounding it, have a complex planning history, including a policy framework that once allowed the redevelopment of this site.

Although two dwellings have been built on the southern part of the site, whilst there is an extant planning permission for a further six dwellings to the north (NP10/511), the application must be determined under the current adopted Local Development Plan policy and this means that it has to be considered as a new dwelling in the open countryside. Policy 7 of the Local Development Plan makes it clear that new residential development in the open countryside is only acceptable if it is essential for farming or forestry needs. This is not the case with this application and so it has been advertised as a Departure to the adopted Local Development Plan.

In addition to considering the application under the policies of Local Development Plan, Welsh Government guidance also requires that all applications are considered in light of all relevant material considerations. In this case, planning permission NP10/0511 is material in that it permitted 6 dwellings to the north of this site, contrary to the provisions of the Local Development Plan. The decision to permit this scheme was justified by it having been previously identified in the Local Plan as an Environmental Improvement Area. It was felt that the proposal allowed the redevelopment of
the site to provide environmental enhancements to the area through extensive landscaping, and that it contributed to affordable housing provision required under Policy 45 (i.e. three of the six dwellings were proposed as affordable houses). Because of this it was concluded that the development of the site offered an opportunity to secure environmental improvements and to provide affordable housing for local needs.

The current application proposes both environmental enhancements (i.e. landscaping), and a financial contribution towards affordable housing, as set out above. Notwithstanding the merits of these particular characteristics of the development which will be discussed later in this report, the principle of the site's development is therefore considered to be the same as that established in 2010, and therefore no objection can be raised to the application proposing a dwelling in the open countryside.

Impact on the Special Qualities of the National Park:

As discussed in the paragraphs above, one of the reasons that the 2010 application to the north of the site was considered acceptable was because of extensive landscaping the scheme proposed. The current proposal for a single dwelling needs to be considered together with the existing dwellings built and permitted on the site, plus those proposed under the live applications NP/13/0460, 0461 and 0462 all of which are material considerations.

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 and diversity of the landscape and villages. The applicant considers that the house's design and materials incorporates traditional Pembrokeshire styles. Although this may be the case for both single elements of the proposed dwelling, the visual impression is one of two incongruous juxtapositions of elements, due to the proximity of the Dutch barn to the main house (which would not occur in a traditional farmstead), the size and proportions, and the inclusion of residential doors and windows and the mix of materials between the two elements. In addition to this the projection of the "cutch barn" element forward of the more traditional element makes this a dominating feature to the street scene and one which will cause significant visual intrusion to the overall development site. This element will also be a dominating feature when viewed from Blockett Lane through the new access point due to its orientation to the access and its elevation to the street. The consequence is that when viewed as a whole the proposed dwelling forms a visually incongruous building located in a very prominent and visible location. As a result the proposal is considered harmful to the special qualities of the National Park, and this forms the first reason for refusal.

In addition, the proposed dwelling does not use the existing access into the site, but will be accessed from a new service road to the south-west of it. In addition the three other dwellings proposed to the north, south and west of it (Plots 1, 2 and 4) would be serviced by this same road. Although it is accepted that this application includes some improvements to the existing
access to the south of the site, the fact remains that the overall site would be serviced by three separate accesses.

The new access would necessitate the removal of a length of existing hedgerow (which has been retained in the 2010 permission) and substantial excavation and alteration of the banking that the hedgerow is planted upon to facilitate the new access road and required visibility splays. It is your officer’s view that the impact of this access, combined with those existing (albeit slightly improved to the south) would be to transform the rural character of Bockett Lane into one dominated by residential development with a succession of accesses coming off it to serve the new and existing development. As a result of the above matters it is felt that the proposal is harmful to the special qualities of the National Park in that it fails to harmonise with the landscape character of the area, and results in the loss of important traditional features. This forms the second reason for refusal.

Affordable Housing Matters:

Policy 7 of the Local Development Plan states that where residential development is acceptable, affordable housing provision will take priority. Policy 45 states that “To deliver affordable housing the National Park Authority will as part of the overall housing provision” require under caveat (c) that “where affordable housing need has been identified prioritise affordable housing provision in countryside locations through filling in or rounding off or through conversion. 50% affordable housing to meet an identified need in developments of 2 or more residential units will be sought.” Footnote 145 of the Local Development Plan explains that “where a planning application is received for a site below the affordable housing threshold but which is part of a larger site which is above the threshold then the Authority will expect affordable housing to be provided. This is to ensure that sites are not broken up into smaller portions and phased which would avoid the requirement for affordable housing.”

This application has been submitted with the offer of the provision of a financial contribution of £46,395 in accordance with the £150 per square metre requirement for single dwellings as prescribed in the Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance. No unilateral undertaking to this effect has been provided with the application. The applicant’s agent contends that this is the appropriate way to provide affordable housing for this site as the site is in four individual ownerships and has been since 2010, the site is inappropriate for affordable housing due to the road having no pavement to get to the village, the access has constraints, Little Haven has few community facilities and the site has expensive delivery costs which affect viability (although no assessment has been done through the Three Dragons).

It is clear that Plot 3 of the site is part of a larger development site part of which already has permission including on site affordable housing. If the application was a single dwelling that was not part of a larger site, then the offered figure would be acceptable under the Policy requirements of the Local
Development Plan. Footnote 145 of the Local Development Plan makes it clear that where large sites are being split or phased to avoid providing the 50% affordable housing requirement, delivery should be provided on site. In this case there are four separate applications for single dwellings subdividing this large site. Land ownership is not a material planning consideration; different ownership of the land does not negate the large site affordable housing requirements generated by Adopted Development Plan Policy. Under the terms of Policy 45, this means that two of them should be affordable units. In addition it is not considered that the site is inappropriate for affordable housing (as demonstrated by the granting of consent for there affordable houses on the part of the site to the north), and no viability case has been presented. As such, the provision of a commuted sum is contrary to policy in this case, and as no affordable dwellings are proposed with any of these four applications, the proposal is contrary to Adopted Development Plan Policy. This forms a third reason for refusal, as it did on the comparable applications previously refused by the Authority.

Community Infrastructure Requirements:

Policy 48 of the Local Development Plan states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that have made suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services and community facilities made necessary by the development. Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on Planning Obligations states that the thresholds for infrastructure contributions will be required where there is a net gain of three or more dwellings. In this particular instance four applications have been submitted seeking to develop four detached houses on this large site. As a result the four applications therefore require public open space, education, libraries, and recycling and waste contributions. The relevant sections responsible for these services have been consulted and no contributions have been requested at the time of writing the report (with Education and Waste sections confirming that no contributions are required). Any further requirements will be reported verbally at the meeting.

The applicant has however stated within the application’s Planning Statement that a further contribution to services and infrastructure will be provided depending on the viability of the project. As a result, if permission was to be recommended, it would be subject to a legal agreement for the required financial contributions. It should be noted that in making this offer the applicant’s agent accepts that the development comprises a development of three or more dwellings rendering it liable for these payments, despite his contention that the site does not comprise a large site in respect of affordable housing.

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 32 requires sustainable drainage systems for the
disposal of surface water. The application has been supported by a Code for Sustainable Homes Pre-Assessment Report. This states that the dwellings will meet a Code Level 3 rating. Subject to the standard conditioning requiring compliance with these levels, the proposal is acceptable in terms of the sustainable requirements of national and local Policy requirements.

Highways Matters:
Policies 52 and 53 of the Local Development Plan refer to traffic impacts of proposed development. The application has been supported with a Transport Statement. The applicant’s agent has also been in discussion with the Highways Department following the previous refusal on highway grounds but at the time of writing the report, no response had been received from the County’s Highways Section. As a result, no assessment can be made as to the highways merits of the proposal. An update will be given at the meeting.

Landscaping:

The elevated location of the site means that it is very visible in the wider landscape, including from the Coast Path. Although the application proposes a new hedgerow to the northern and western boundaries of the site, this is not felt to be sufficient to mitigate the change in character of the area as discussed in the sections above. This is particularly so because of the removal of the existing hedgerow that defines the eastern edge of Blockett Lane. For the reasons discussed above, it is not felt that the proposed landscaping is sufficient to ameliorate the change of character of the area or the loss of the existing hedgerow, or make the environmental improvement requirements of developing this site, contrary to adopted plan policies.

Archaeological Matters:

Policy 8 of the Local Development Plan seeks to protect the special qualities of the National Park including the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. One of the concerns with the 2010 permission was that the hedgerow bordering the eastern edge of the Lane is a Historic Hedgerow, which is of importance in both historic and ecological terms. Dyfed Archaeological Trust have previously taken the view that the hedge predates the Enclosure Act of 1845 and that it is therefore historically significant. As a result Dyfed Archaeological Trust was consulted on this application and its proposed removal. Its response has not been received at the time of writing this report, but the Trust has previously advised in respect of NP/12/0479 that it raised no issues and as a result no archaeological objection can be raised to this proposal.

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 proposed dwelling would be linked to the main sewer whilst surface water would go to a soakaway. Both Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Water have been
consulted on the application and both raise no objection subject to conditions and informatives.

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 agricultural use of the site, the County Council’s Public Protection Section was consulted to ascertain whether residential development on the site was acceptable in terms of any contaminated land matters that the proposal raised. This could come from both the previous use and the demolition material on site. They raised no objection in principle to the proposal subject to a condition concerning a survey of the site be undertaken if evidence of contamination is found on site.

Electricity Supply Matters:

The larger site is traversed by electricity power lines, and this plot would be affected by them. As a result Western Power Distribution were consulted, and required that the developer contact them if planning permission was granted for this plot. This could be dealt with as a conditional requirement / informative if planning permission was granted.

Coal Referral Area Matters:

The site lies in a Coal Standing Advice Area, whereby Planning Policy Wales confirms that the responsibility for determining the extent and effects of unstable ground remain with the developer, and that the responsibility and subsequent liability for safe development and secure occupancy of the site rests with the developer and / or landowner (paragraphs 13.8.3 and 13.9.2 respectively). The Coal Authority is a statutory consultee for development within defined coal mining areas, and there is a duty on the National Park Authority to consider ground stability issues when determining applications within these areas. The Coal Authority has raised no objection to the proposal, apart from requiring its Standing Advice as an informative on any planning permission.

Ministry of Defence Safeguarding Matters:

The site lies within a Ministry of Defence (MoD) Safeguarding Zone, and the MoD have been consulted to ascertain their views of the proposal. No response has been received from them.

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 existing
residential property is to the south-east of the plot, on higher land, approximately 18 metres away. The southern elevation of the proposed dwelling has been designed so as to have "arrow-slit" windows, measuring approximately 30cm x 1.5m. There would be four of them on the ground floor and two on the first floor. Although these windows provide for habitable rooms, their size and location, plus the neighbouring dwelling to the south being at a higher level than the proposed, means that the overlooking impact is acceptable, subject to obscure glazing on the first floor being a conditional requirement, along with the removal of permitted development rights.

Conclusion

The proposal has been carefully considered against all material considerations and the relevant national and local development plan policies. On balance the application is recommended for refusal for three reasons. The first and second are that the proposed dwelling and the new access are considered harmful to the special qualities of the National Park and the third is that the proposal fails to provide affordable housing dwellings in line with adopted policies. At the time of writing this report there were several outstanding consultee responses and any issues raised will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Recommendation

That the application be refused for the following reasons:-

1. 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 the identity and character of villages, prevent development that fails to harmonise with or enhance the landform and landscape character of the National Park, and that is insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape and visually intrusive. The proposed dwelling, due to its design and materials, its size and proportions, and its prominent and elevated location, forms a visually intrusive addition to the area that is harmful to the special qualities of the National Park and 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, prevent development that fails to harmonise with or enhance the landform and landscape character of the National Park, that fails to incorporate important traditional features, and that is insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape and visually intrusive. The proposed access for the dwelling, the resulting loss of existing hedgerow, and the cumulative impact of existing and other proposed accesses in the near vicinity, results in the loss of a traditional landscape feature and the rural character of the area, and is therefore insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape. The proposal is considered to be harmful to the
special qualities of the National Park and contrary to Adopted Development Plan Policy.

3. Policies 7 and 45 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan require the provision of 50% affordable housing to meet the identified need in developments of 2 or more units. Footnote 145 of the Local Development Plan states that where a planning application is received for a site below the affordable housing threshold but which is part of a larger site which is above the threshold then affordable housing will be expected. The application forms part of a large site on which 50% provision of affordable housing will be sought. As neither this application nor the others submitted on the remainder of this large site proposes the required two affordable dwellings the proposal is considered contrary to Adopted Development Plan Policy.
Site adjacent to the application site with consent for 6 No. Dwellings
Ref. NP/10/511

Plots 1, 2 & 4 subject to separate planning applications

Application Site

Hayston
Planning Ltd
NP13 4GZ

NP 13 4GZ

30 SEP 2003

Tod and Bern Thomas

The Old Farm, Blackett Lane

Master Plan