Application Ref: NP/14/0236

Application Type

Outline

Grid Ref:

SM85791267

Applicant

Mr & Mrs T Thomas

Agent

Mr A Vaughan-Harries, Hayston Development &

Planning

Proposal

Residential development of 8 properties including 4

affordable apartments

Site Location

Land at Blockett Farm, Blockett Lane, Little Haven,

Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA62 3UH

Case Officer

Vicki Hirst

Summary

This application seeks outline planning permission for eight dwellings on the site, four as market houses, and four as affordable units in the form of a single block of flats.

The proposal has been carefully considered against all material considerations and the relevant national and local development plan policies. It is considered that the proposal would represent over development of the site, resulting in a cramped appearance that would be harmful to the special qualities of the National Park. Furthermore the proposals would result in an increased amount of traffic that would cause an unacceptable level of congestion and road safety danger and the illustrative access arrangements are not considered to be acceptable on highway safety grounds.

The recommendation is of refusal.

Consultee Response

Coal Authority: Standard Advice

PCC - Common Land Officer: The land is not registered common land and

therefore no issues are raised

PCC - Community Regeneration Manager: Conditional Consent

PCC - Education Dept: Contributions of £409 per dwelling will be required for primary school provision

PCC - Head of Public Protection: No objection

PCC - Transportation & Environment: Recommend Refusal

PCC - Waste & Recycling Manager: No objection

PCNPA Building Conservation Officer: No adverse comments

The Havens Community Council: Objecting - on the grounds that the site is too small for the proposal which should be restricted to four houses (two market, two affordable), the landscaping is not sympathetic to the site and surroundings, the adjoining, much larger site has planning for six houses which will significantly increase traffic on a very narrow road, and there is no bus service from Little Haven to Haverfordwest

Public Response

The application has been advertised and neighbour notifications undertaken. Six letters have been received and the main issues raised can be summarised as:

- The development will cause an increase in traffic that will result in blockages of Blockett Lane where there are no passing bays, which could delay emergency vehicle access
- The narrow nature of the lane will result in vehicles needing to reverse around a blind corner
- The character of the lane will be affected by such a large development on such a small site
- Support the change to the access but why is it a reserved matter
- The scheme results in a substantial increase in density which affects the amenity space available
- The height of the affordable housing seems unnecessary and intrusive
- The implementation of landscaping will be difficult due to the ground conditions and previous excavations
- The scheme is inappropriate and is overdevelopment
- There will be interference with water supply

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

PPW6 Chapter 04 - Planning for Sustainability

PPW6 Chapter 05 - Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast

PPW6 Chapter 08 - Transport

PPW6 Chapter 09 - Housing

PPW6 Chapter 12 - Infrastructure and Services

PPW6 Chapter 13 - Minimising and Managing Environmental Risks and Pollution

SPG04 - Planning Obligations

SPG06 - Landscape

SPG08 - Affordable Housing

SPG11 - Coal Works - Instability

SPG12 - Parking

SPG13 - Archaeology

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

The site lies in the open countryside to the eastern side of Blockett Lane and comprises part of a larger overall site. 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. The overall site including the application site, 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 two sets of applications for four separate planning applications for single houses on four individual plots. All of the latest four applications were refused at the Development Management committee on 20th November 2013 on the grounds that 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.

Appeals have now been lodged in respect of these applications.

Current Application

The current application seeks outline planning permission for eight houses on the site. The application site comprises the land on which the four plots were previously refused. Four houses would be provided as market housing and four would be provided as affordable units. The four affordable units would be provided as one bedroom flats and the applicant's agent has suggested that a condition be imposed on any permission requiring the affordable housing to be made available for sale or rent to persons specified in the Authority's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance.

All matters have been reserved but the application was accompanied by an illustrative layout including scale parameters and which is attached to this report. The layout is similar to that refused under the four individual plots, but with Plot 2 containing the four flats. Access is shown to be taken from Blockett Lane utilising the existing access which partly serves the two detached houses already constructed and also provides an access onto the application site.

In support of the application the applicant's agent states that the proposal seeks to provide a single development proposal for the whole site, use the existing access and thus retain the roadside hedge, reduce the overall scale of the properties within the site, increase the distance between Plot 2 and the adjacent property, include 50% affordable housing and include additional landscaping.

The application was accompanied by illustrative plans, a planning report with design and access statement, transport statement, illustrative landscaping proposals, and a Code for Sustainable Homes assessment.

Officers Appraisal

The key issues to be considered are:

- Principle of the development;
- Impact on the special qualities of the National Park;
- Affordable housing matters;
- Community infrastructure requirements;
- Sustainable design;
- Highways matters;
- 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;

Principle of the development

The proposed development 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), this application must to be determined under the current adopted Development Plan policy and this means that it has to be considered as a new residential development 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 comprises an infill or rounding off opportunity or 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 NP/10/0511 is material in that it permitted 6 dwellings 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 (ie 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 on the site and to provide affordable housing for local needs.

The current application proposes both environmental enhancements (ie landscaping), and the provision of 50% of the scheme as affordable housing. 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 further residential development in the open countryside but on the remainder of this larger site.

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 that the scheme proposed. The current application needs to be considered together with the existing dwellings built and permitted on the site.

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 proposed development indicated on the illustrative plans appears squeezed onto the site and provides little private amenity space, in particular for Plots 1, 2 and 3. In addition, despite Plot 2 being referred to as "Plot 2" it is fact providing four separate flats which will have associated requirements for storage, bins, and the normal residential paraphernalia associated with a full residential use. The layout represents a much tighter density of development than that approved on the adjacent sites and it is considered that it would represent a very urban and cramped form of development on this site. The illustrative landscaping proposals submitted with the application are also in relation to a different layout than that indicated on the submitted illustrative layout accompanying the application and therefore do not provide a realistic idea of the possible landscaping and thus environmental improvements that could take place with a scheme of eight dwellings. Whilst it is accepted that the layout is only illustrative, it is your officer's view that the provision of eight dwellings on this site is over development and will not be compatible with the intention to re-develop this site with environmental enhancements and to provide a more satisfactory form of development in this countryside location.

The illustrated access point does utilise the existing entrance to the site which is considered to be an improvement on previous schemes. However, it would be essential to provide substantial hedge planting along the required visibility splay to provide a continuous road frontage hedge bank in this rural location. The provision of such a hedge would inevitably encroach onto the space available for Plot 1 and which would further exacerbate the cramped appearance of the layout as discussed above. 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 would represent over development of the site and fail to harmonise with the landscape character of the area.

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."

This application has been submitted with the offer of four of the eight proposed dwellings to be offered as affordable units. This would be in compliance with adopted policy but would need to be secured through the appropriate mechanism to ensure that the affordable housing is delivered through the subsequent reserved matters application in the event of permission being granted.

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 of more dwellings. As this proposal is for eight dwellings it is necessary to consider whether there will be a requirement for public open space, education, libraries, and recycling and waste contributions. The relevant sections responsible for these services have been consulted and at the time of writing a contribution of £409 per dwelling is being sought as a contribution to primary school provision. A planning obligation would be required to secure this contribution in the event of planning permission being granted.

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; however, this relates to the four plots previously applied for rather than the current proposal for eight. Notwithstanding this, as the application is in outline form, the requirement for the development to meet the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 can be the subject of a condition should permission be granted.

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 which specifies that the proposal is likely to generate an additional 48 vehicular movements, 32 pedestrian movements, and 8 bicycle movements per day. A number of representations have been received with regard to the ability of Blockett Lane to absorb any further vehicular movements and the sub-standard nature of the road to serve this development.

Pembrokeshire County Council's Highways Officer has recommended refusal on the grounds that the development will increase traffic to an unacceptable level of congestion and road safety danger on Blockett Lane and Hill. In addition the proposed layout of the access will make movement between the site and the highway difficult and cause unacceptable problems for the use of the adjacent shared driveway. He is also of the view that there is insufficient information to guarantee that the visibility sight line looking south from the proposed access can be provided or that there will be adequate provision for the turning of vehicles clear of the highway which could result in a road safety danger.

Whilst the access arrangements are not included in this outline application, the illustrative layout provides information with regard to the possible arrangements. The Highways Officer objects to the application on the grounds of both increased traffic (which would occur irrespective of the access arrangements) and due to the illustrative layout proposals. Your officers have no reason to differ from this view of the professional advisor on highways matters and therefore the application is not considered to be acceptable on highway grounds.

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 were consulted on this application as the visibility splays for the access may require its removal/re-alignment. Their response had not been received at the time of writing this report, but have previously advised in respect of other applications 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 but at the time of writing the report no responses had been received.

Contaminated Land Matters

Chapter 13 of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 6) 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 conditions requiring a survey of the site be undertaken if evidence of contamination is found on site and requiring an assessment of any topsoil being imported to be carried out for its potential chemical or other contaminants content.

Electricity Supply Matters

The larger site is traversed by electricity power lines, and in particular Plots 3 and 4 would be affected by them. Western Power Distribution has previously advised that the developer should contact them if planning permission was granted for parts of the site due to the presence of overhead lines. Whilst no response had been received from Western Power at the time of writing this report, 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. At the time of writing the report there had been no response 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, so that it would look down into the illustrative layout for Plot 2. In the absence of any detailed plans of the design of the dwellings it is not possible to assess the potential impact on adjoining properties or between properties within the site at this stage and this will need to be considered at a reserved matters application stage.

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.

It is considered that the proposal would represent over development of the site, resulting in a cramped appearance that would be harmful to the special qualities of the National Park.

Furthermore the proposals would result in an increased amount of traffic that would cause an unacceptable level of congestion and road safety danger and the illustrative access arrangements are not considered to be acceptable on highway safety grounds.

At the time of writing this report there were several outstanding consultee responses and any further issues raised will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Recommendation

That the application be refused for the following reasons.

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, 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 proposal for eight dwellings as illustrated on the submitted drawings, would result in over development of the site, resulting in a cramped and urban appearance and providing limited opportunities for landscaping and environmental enhancement. It is therefore considered that the proposal would be harmful to the visual appearance of the area and the special

qualities of the National Park and would be contrary to Adopted Development Plan Policy.

- 2. Policy 53 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan seeks to only allow development where access is appropriate. Inappropriate access is considered to include where traffic is likely to have an unacceptable impact on road safety. The proposed development would result in an increase in traffic that will lead to an unacceptable level of congestion and road safety danger on Blockett Lane and Blockett Hill.
- 3. Policy 53 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan seeks to only allow development where access is appropriate. The illustrative plans submitted with the application do not provide sufficient information to guarantee that the visibility sight line looking south from the proposed access can be provided, that adequate provision for the turning of vehicles clear of the public highway can be provided, and that the layout of the access will enable satisfactory movement between the site and the highway for the users of the access for the proposed development and the existing development on the adjacent shared driveway. As such it is not considered that appropriate access can be achieved.





