REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT ON APPEALS

The following appeals have been lodged with the Authority and the current position of each is as follows:-

NP/12/0426  Erection of wind turbine – Brawdy Farm, Brawdy, Haverfordwest
Type Written Representations
Current Position The Appeal was dismissed and the Inspectors decision is attached.

NP/13/0071  Change of use of Fort to Visitor Centre – St Catherines Island, Tenby
Type Hearing
Current Position A hearing has taken place and the Inspectors decision is awaited.

NP/13/0216  Installation of 1 x 15kw wind turbine – Trelessy Farm, Amroth
Type Hearing
Current Position A hearing has been arranged for 5th March 2014.

NP/13/0260  Certificate of Lawfulness for touring and camping field for up to 35 touring caravans or tents at any one time on a seasonal basis for holiday purposes only from 1st March up to 28th September in any one year- Buttyland Caravan Park, Station Road, Manorbier
Type Public Inquiry
Current Position A Public Inquiry has been arranged for the 29th April, 2014

NP/13/0264  Section 73 Application: Variation of Condition 1 of NP/08/060 to extend the period for further five years- Burgage Green Close, St Ishmaels.
Type Written Representation
Current Position The initial paperwork has been forwarded to the Inspector

NP/13/0267  Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of two-storey dwelling with integral garages and associated landscaping, parking and boat storage areas- The Elms, Llanrhian
Type Hearing
Current Position A hearing has taken place and the Inspectors decision is awaited.
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The Welsh Ministers have transferred the authority to decide this appeal to me as the appointed Inspector.

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Peter Gwyther against the decision of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority [NPA].
- The application Ref NP/12/0426 dated 27/08/12 was refused by notice dated 19/12/12.
- The development proposed is the erection of an Endurance wind turbine – 25m to the hub and 34m to the tip of the blades.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed for the reasons set out below.

Procedural matter

2. The NPA determined that no Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA] was required with the application. However, the Welsh Ministers have also considered whether an EIA is needed before this appeal may be determined, but have concluded that none is required. Nevertheless, my attention has been drawn to the need for a bat activity survey to be carried out. However, since the results of a field survey of bats were included with the appeal, though Natural Resources Wales (or their relevant predecessor) were evidently unaware of its existence, I am satisfied that an appropriate survey has been undertaken and that its findings show little bat activity on, or in the vicinity of the appeal site.

Main issue

3. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the national park, but bearing in mind also the desirability of the generation of electricity from renewable resources.

Reasons

4. Policy 33 of the National Park Local Development Plan [LDP] adopted in 2010 deals specifically with renewable energy and is thus the most relevant local policy in this appeal. Supplementary Planning Guidance [SPG] issued by the PCNP in 2012 indicates that the proposal would be a medium-sized scheme. The LDP policy states that such schemes will be permitted subject to there being no overriding environmental and amenity considerations.
5. National policy on renewable energy developments is set out in chapter 12 of Planning Policy Wales [PPW], which was issued in November 2012. In general this policy supports the development of medium-sized wind turbines in the open countryside. However, paragraph 8.4 of Annex D to TAN8 on Planning for Renewable Energy makes clear that there is an implicit objective in this TAN to maintain the integrity and quality of the landscape within national parks. Although this TAN was issued some 6 years before the current chapter 12 of PPW, nevertheless this specific guidance on the conservation of national parks still remains in force.

6. The proposed 3-bladed turbine, which would be a medium-sized scheme, would be located on the landward side of the A487 which connects Newgale with Solva, and would be just over 1km inland from the coast. The turbine would be sited near the eastern end of a field about 0.75kms south of the house and buildings of Brawdy Farm, within the salient of the national park which stretches inland from the A487 at this point for some 4.5kms.

7. Although the proposed turbine would be screened to some degree by the wood at Heart Covert in views from the south, nevertheless, because of its substantial height in this elevated position at about 95m, I consider that it would be prominent on the skyline from the A487 and the beach at Newgale to the south west. In addition, it would be prominent from the public footpath which skirts the field which contains the appeal site. It would also be readily visible on the skyline from the minor road known as Bramble Hill about 1km south east of the site, as well as from a public footpath in this locality.

8. From further away however, including perhaps from much of the coastal path in this locality, it would not be especially visible. Nevertheless, because of its elevated position and isolated location, together with its rotating blades, I consider that it would be so prominent in the local landscape that it would have a visually harmful effect on the character and appearance of the national park, the largely undeveloped nature and attractiveness of which are important elements of the local environment and amenity of the landscape.

9. I have taken into account that the former military airfield and associated buildings which adjoin the national park (which are now evidently an army camp and business park) are themselves unnatural features in this landscape. However, as the airfield was developed at a time of national emergency, its nearby existence does not justify the incursion of unsympathetic development into this national park, the primary reason for the designation of which is the conservation of its natural beauty.

10. I have also had regard to the suitability of the location in engineering terms for the proposed turbine, as well as the likely reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from this farm. Whilst the latter is clearly a material planning consideration of substantial weight, nevertheless, in this nationally designated area I do not consider that this factor is of sufficient weight to override the harm to the landscape which I have identified.

11. In addition, I have considered the likely economic benefits to the Appellant of his proposal. I understand his desire to improve his farm business, and have no reason to conclude that he would not be successful in doing so. Nevertheless, in my view, these largely private considerations do not add sufficiently to the other advantages of the proposal which I have identified to outweigh the public interest of conserving the natural beauty of this national park.
Conclusion

12. I conclude, therefore, on the main issue in this case that in this nationally important, visually sensitive location there are overriding local environmental and amenity considerations which indicate that the appeal should be dismissed. Accordingly, since the proposal would not be in accordance with either Policy 33 of the LDP or paragraph 8.4 of Annex D to TAN8, there are sound and clear-cut reasons for my decision.

*Ian Osborne*

Inspector
The Welsh Ministers have transferred the authority to decide this appeal to me as the appointed Inspector.

- The appeal is made under section 174 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 ("the Act").
- The appeal is made by Mr Adam Holden against an enforcement notice ("the EN") issued by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority ("the Authority").
- The Authority's reference is EC12/0144.
- The EN was issued on 5 July 2013.
- The breach of planning control as alleged in the EN is:
  (i) Without planning permission, the making of a material change in use of the Land from use for agriculture to a mixed use for agriculture and for residential purposes through the siting of a converted van-type vehicle (Registration M948 JFP) used for permanent residential occupation and the parking of a second vehicle (Registration X146 CUJ) together with ancillary use for the storage of building materials;
  (ii) Without planning permission, the carrying out of building operations involving the erection of a storage shed; and
  (iii) Without planning permission, the carrying out of building operations involving the construction of a circular foundation in preparation for the erection of a building.
- The requirements of the EN are:
  (i) Permanently cease the use of the Land for residential purposes and for the storage of building materials;
  (ii) Permanently remove the converted van (Registration M948 JFP) and all associated domestic paraphernalia including gas bottles, bins, generator, plastic containers, television aerial and parked vehicle (X146 CUJ) from the Land;
  (iii) Permanently remove the storage shed;
  (iv) Permanently remove the circular foundation erected, all resulting spoil, hardcore and associated stored building materials from the Land; and
  (v) Restore the Land to its former condition as agricultural land.
- The period for compliance with the requirements is three months.
- The appeal is proceeding on the grounds set out in section 174(2) (a) and (g) of the Act.

Summary of decision: The appeal succeeds insofar as it relates to the ground (g) appeal, but otherwise the appeal fails and the EN as varied is upheld as set out below in the Formal Decision.

Procedural matter

1. The appeal form indicated that no appeal was being made under ground (g) of section 174 (2) of the Act. Nevertheless, I am mindful that the appeal site is occupied for
residential purposes by the appellant and his partner, Leila Amadou, and that if I was to find against the appellant in respect of his ground (a) appeal, this would result in an interference with their rights to private and family life and their home, and that Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights would be engaged. At the Hearing, I therefore invited the parties’ comments on the period for compliance of three months as set out in the EN. I shall, therefore, proceed on the basis that a ground (g) appeal has been made.

The ground (a) appeal

Main Issues

2. The ground of appeal under Section 174(2) (a) of the Act is that planning permission should be granted for what is alleged as a breach of planning control in the EN. In this case the main issues are: whether the development is acceptable in principle, having regard to planning policy which seeks to restrict new residential development in the countryside; the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area; and the human rights of Mr Holden and Miss Amadou.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a parcel of land, measuring about 1.1 ha in area, which lies in open countryside to the south-east of Broad Haven. The site, which is in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, is bounded by mature hedgerows and is accessed from a highway to its south which runs between Broadway and Little Haven. At the time of my site visit, the site was being used for agricultural and residential purposes by Mr Holden and Miss Amadou who occupy a converted van-type vehicle on the site. A number of buildings have been erected. One of these is a composting toilet, whereas others are used for storage purposes and to house livestock. In addition, a circular foundation has been constructed in preparation for the erection of a building, and a yurt has been erected on a raised platform. At the time of my site visit, the yurt had not been occupied, although I understand that the appellant and his partner wish to remove the residential vehicle from the site and live in the yurt prior to completion of a dwelling.

The principle of development

4. There is a wealth of planning policy relating to residential development in the countryside. Paragraph 9.3.6 of Planning Policy Wales: Edition 5, published in 2012, states that: ‘New house building and other new development in the open countryside away from established settlements, should be strictly controlled. The fact that a single dwellinghouse on a particular site would be unobtrusive is not, by itself, a good argument in favour of permission; such permissions could be granted too often, to the overall detriment of the character of the area. Isolated houses in the open countryside require special justification, for example where they are essential to enable rural enterprise workers to live at or close to their place of work in the absence of nearby accommodation’. Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (“TAN 6”) also gives guidance on what can be deemed appropriate development in rural areas. In terms of residential development, these are restricted to those in support of rural enterprises, affordable dwellings in appropriate locations, and One Planet Developments.

5. Policy 7 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan (“the LDP”), adopted in 2010, is also applicable. This indicates that outside identified centres, development will only be permitted in certain limited circumstances which include the filling in of small gaps or minor extensions to isolated groups of dwellings
where priority will be given to meeting affordable housing needs, housing for essential farming or forestry needs, and the proposal constituting low impact development making a positive contribution following the requirements of Policy 47.

6. In this case, the appellant is not contending that the residential use of the site constitutes affordable housing or that it is required to support a rural enterprise. However, it is the intention of the appellant and Miss Amadou to erect a low impact dwelling on the site and live in it. Indeed, a planning application for this was lodged with the Authority in August 2013, but was not registered by the Authority on the basis that it did not contain sufficient information.

7. Since acquiring the site in 2012, the appellant has planting a considerable number of trees and bushes, carried out drainage works, and established a reed bed. Goats, pigs, sheep, ducks and chickens have been introduced and the appellant considers it vital that he and his partner live on the land to manage this. I am advised that potable water needs are met by a hand dug well. As regards a business plan, I am told that most food will be grown on the site with an area dedicated to vegetables. In addition to the animals already mentioned (60 on site), bees would be kept for honey and wax production. Food would be supplemented by fishing and shell food. Hay produced on the site would help with animal feed and bedding. Waste would be recycled on site and energy needs met by the coppicing of willow and the use of broad leaf trees. Electricity would be provided by PV panels and a modest wind turbine.

8. The intended home of the appellant and his partner would be a single storey grass roofed roundhouse. Indicative plans and a block plan show that the building would have an open plan living and kitchen area along with separate bedroom and bathroom facilities. Areas across the appeal site would also be set out for crops, a barn and a polytunnel.

9. In addition to supporting themselves, Mr Holden and Miss Amadou intend to have a surplus of produce to supply the local community. A small additional income would come from educational courses. Projected income has been provided. After costs, the income has been documented as being £1550 for year one (2014), £3000 for year two and £5400 for year three. Financial need, which can be assumed relates to the occupiers of the site, is quoted as being £4910 for year one, £3985 for year two and £3320 for year three. However, the outgoings for year one are incorrect as the total of the listed outgoings amounts to £4610.

10. However, the information provided by the appellant has to be measured against the relevant planning policy background. In this case, policy concerning One Planet Development is relevant. Paragraph 9.3.11 of PPW states that: ‘One Planet Development is development that through its low impact either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality. One Planet Developments should initially achieve an ecological footprint of 2.4 global hectares per person or less in terms of consumption and demonstrate clear potential to move to 1.88 global hectares over time... They should also be zero carbon in both construction and use’.

11. Paragraph 9.3.12 of PPW goes on to say: ‘One Planet developments may take a number of forms. They can... be single homes.... They may be... situated in the open countryside. Land based One Planet Developments located in the open countryside should provide for the minimum needs of the inhabitants in terms of income, food, energy and waste assimilation over a period of no more than 5 years from the commencement of work on site. This should be evidenced by a management plan produced by a competent person(s). The management plan should set out the
objectives of the proposal, the timetable for the development and the timescale for review. It should be used as the basis of a legal agreement relating to the occupation of the site, should planning consent be granted’.

12. TAN 6 and the One Planet Development Practice Guide are also relevant. The Practice Guide builds on the policy contained in PPW and sets out the information that will be required as part of a management plan as well as calculating the Ecological Footprint of the development.

13. Policy 47 of the LDP states that: ‘Low impact development in the countryside that makes a positive contribution will be permitted where:
a) the proposal will make a positive environmental, social and/or economic contribution with public benefit; and
b) all activities on structures on the site have low impact in terms of the environment and resources; and
c) opportunities to re-use buildings which are available in the proposal’s area of operation have been investigated and shown to be impractical; and
d) the development is well integrated into the landscape and does not have adverse visual effects; and
e) the proposal requires a countryside location and is tied directly to the land on which it is located, and involves agriculture, forestry or horticulture; and
f) the proposal will provide sufficient livelihood for and substantially meet the needs of residents on the site; and
g) the number of adult residents should be directly related to the functional requirements of the enterprise; and
h) in the event of the development involving members of more than one family, the proposal will be managed and controlled by a trust, co-operative or other similar mechanism in which the occupiers have an interest’.

14. The Policy is supported by Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled ‘Low Impact Development – Making a Positive Contribution (One Planet Development)’ ("the SPG"), which was adopted by the Authority in 2013. The Policy, supporting text in the LDP, and the SPG make it clear that proof that proposals will achieve a neutral or at least the lowest possible adverse impact for each part of the government’s sustainable agenda must be submitted. A management plan for the proposal will also be required to cover a range of issues.

15. To my mind, the management plan submitted by the appellant fails to provide key assessments required by policy and guidance. For example, there is no comprehensive and detailed plan for the site, and no information on phasing and monitoring. Whilst an assessment of the ecological assessment of the proposed development has been provided, there is no schedule as to how the assessment has been made and what tool has been used to provide the assessment. A bespoke tool has been developed along side the Guide but has not been used in this case. The information that has been provided does not provide a comparable footprint in line with the guidance and cannot, therefore, be accepted as a true assessment of the likely footprint. Information has been given about the types of products that would be sold and potential avenues for marketing. However, there is no clear and defined business plan.

16. Basic information has been provided but, to my mind, it falls short of an adequate management plan for the purposes of the policy and guidance. Thus far, the appellant has not been keen to involve another person in the production of information as he believes that this goes against the grain of sustainability in its widest sense. I respect
the appellant’s view but, for a low impact development to gain permission, a management plan does have to be produced by a competent person, generally meaning in this case someone who is professionally qualified and suitably experienced. In addition, there is no legal agreement relating to occupation of the site in this case.

17. From the evidence before me, it is clear that the current use of the site by Mr Holden and Miss Amadou does not constitute low impact development that would comply with planning policy and guidance.

18. I therefore find that current residential use of the appeal site, as referred to in the EN, is in conflict with national and LDP policy which seeks to restrict residential development in the countryside. Having regard to this conflict with policy, I conclude that, in principle, the development the subject of the EN is not an acceptable form of development in the countryside.

Effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area

19. The Authority’s reasons for taking enforcement action do refer to the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area. The development on the appeal site is well screened, even in the winter months (when I carried out my site visit), by the hedging surrounding the appeal site. In particular, I noted that the development could not be seen from the road running past the appeal site, although the yurt could be seen at an oblique angle from the entrance to the site. In my view, the development does not, therefore, have a material adverse impact on the appearance of the area.

20. However, a form of residential development (albeit low key) has been introduced into this area of countryside which is within the National Park. To my mind, this form of development degrades the intrinsic undeveloped character of the area. Accordingly, I find that the development has failed to harmonise with the landscape character of the area contrary to Policies 8 and 15 of the LDP which, amongst other matters, seek to prevent such harm.

Other matters

21. Other matters raised by interested parties include waste disposal, water supply, additional development on the appeal site including a wind turbine, livestock welfare issues, possible behaviour by occupiers of the site, and the enforcement response by the Authority. As I saw on my site visit, there is a composting toilet on the site and there was no evidence on site that non-domestic waste is not disposed of in a responsible manner. Potable water on the site comes from a well. There is no firm evidence before me to suggest that this is not a satisfactory means of supply. Any additional development on the appeal site, whether it be further residential development or a wind turbine, would be subject to the planning control of the Authority. Livestock welfare issues are dealt with by separate legislation. There is no evidence to suggest that the current occupiers of the site have carried out acts which involve trespass, littering, undue noise or dog worrying. The enforcement response of the Authority is not relevant to my decision making. I therefore give little weight to the matters raised by interested parties.

22. I have found that the residential development currently taking place on the appeal site is not an acceptable form of development within the countryside as a matter of principle and that it fails to harmonise with the landscape character of the area. It is low key and enables Mr Holden and Miss Amadou to be on hand to tend to their
animals. However, in my opinion, the harm that I have found clearly outweighs those points in favour of the development. Accordingly, I find that a permanent planning permission should not be granted in this case.

23. However, given that the appellant and his partner say that they are working towards a form of development that would comply with the policy and guidance that relates to low impact development, I consider it appropriate to examine whether or not a temporary planning permission should be granted. It is clear to me that the appellant and his partner are committed to developing the appeal site in a way that has low impact. However, at the present time, there is no planning permission in place to facilitate the carrying out of acceptable low impact development.

24. Moreover, to my mind, the information that has been presented concerning the intentions of the appellant and his partner falls a long way short of that which is needed to support a planning application which could then be considered on its individual merits by the Authority. The appellant says that he is now willing to follow the One Planet path as a means to an end. I do not doubt the appellant’s intentions. However, from the limited information before me, I am not persuaded that the present time that acceptable low impact development on the appeal site is likely to reach fruition. I therefore find that temporary planning permission should not be granted.

Human rights

25. The appellant sought to rely on a number of rights identified in the European Convention of Human Rights (“the ECHR”). These are the rights set out in Article 10 of the ECHR – Freedom of expression, Article 14 – Prohibition of discrimination, and Article 1 of the First Protocol – Protection of property. In short, the appellant’s argument is that he and Miss Amadou should be allowed to continue living on the appeal site in accordance with their beliefs, namely to live off the land in a self-sufficient and sustainable way. Given that my decision could eventually result in Mr Holden and Miss Amadou becoming homeless, I also consider that Article 8 of the ECHR is relevant – Right to respect for private and family life, and home.

26. My decision will interfere with the rights of the appellant and his partner under Article 8, and Article 1 of the First Protocol so those Articles are engaged. However, I consider that my response is proportionate after taking into account the conflicting matters of public and private interests so that there is no violation of those rights. I am mindful here of my conclusion on the ground (g) appeal. It is arguable as to whether my decision will result in an interference with the rights under Article 10, but even if it does, I again consider that my response is proportionate after taking into account the conflicting matters of public and private interests so that there is no violation of those rights. Turning now to Article 14 (and also to my Public Sector Equality Duty under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010), I am satisfied that my decision will not result in Mr Holden and Miss Amadou (with their strongly held beliefs on self-sufficiency and sustainability) being treated differently to other persons, whether directly or indirectly.

Conclusion – ground (a) appeal

27. After taking account of all the evidence before me, and for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal under ground (a) should not succeed.
The ground (g) appeal

28. This ground of appeal is that the time given to comply with the EN is too short. The Authority has given three months as the period for compliance with the requirement of the EN. At the hearing, I sought the views of the parties as to whether this period was sufficient given that my decision could, eventually, result in the appellant and his partner becoming homeless. It was explained by the appellant that he and Miss Amadou had nowhere else to go, they had no friends in Pembrokeshire with whom they could stay, and they could not afford to buy or rent another property. Mention was made of alternative arrangements having to be made for care of animals on the site. A period of 12 months was suggested to also take account of the possible submission of another planning application for a low impact development.

29. Given the evidence before me, I am satisfied that the compliance period should be extended, though I consider that a period of 12 months would be excessive because of the conflict with policy and other harm that I have found. To my mind, a period of 9 months would be appropriate for Mr Holden and Miss Amadou to find suitable alternative accommodation and make arrangements for care of their livestock. It would also be open to the appellant during this period, if he so wished, to pursue matters concerning a low impact development scheme which might prove acceptable to the Authority. In this context, I note that the Authority has powers under section 173A(1) (b) to extend the period for compliance. I shall therefore vary the EN accordingly. To this limited extent, the appeal on ground (g) therefore succeeds.

Formal decision

30. I direct that the EN be varied by substituting ‘nine months’ for ‘three months’ as the time for compliance set out in paragraph 6 of the EN.

31. Subject to this variation, the appeal is dismissed and the EN is upheld. Planning permission is refused on the application deemed to have been made under section 177(5) of the Act.

James Ellis
Inspector
APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:
Adam Holden                      Appellant
Leila Amadou                     Appellant’s partner

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:
Liam Jones BSc (Hons), MSc,      Principal Planner (Development Management
MRTPi                            and Enforcement), Pembrokeshire Coast National
                                  Park Authority
David Griffiths                  Planning Enforcement Officer, Pembrokeshire
                                  Coast National Park Authority