Application Ref: NP/13/0441

Application Type

Full

Grid Ref:

SM87422078

Applicant

Mr I Bowie, Humbergrange Ltd

Agent

Mr Tim Colguhoun

Proposal

Demolition of existing Motel & replace with 40 bed hotel

with adjoining restaurant & associated parking &

landscaping

Site Location

Rochgate Motel, Roch, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire,

SA62 6AF

Case Officer

Liam Jones

Summary

This application has been reported to the Development Management Committee as it is an application for a Major Development.

The application proposes the demolition of the existing motel to be replaced with a 40 bed hotel with adjoining restaurant and associated parking and landscaping. The built form of the hotel and restaurant is proposed to arc around the perimeter of the application site with a central courtyard providing parking spaces to serve the buildings. Additional landscaping would be provided in addition to two ponds with a new access point.

Whilst the principle of the development in providing for a new hotel is considered to be acceptable the scheme put forward is not considered to be an acceptable design solution for this visually prominent site on the boundary of the National Park. The buildings would extend to two storey 2m above the existing structures and through their design and form would result in a prominent addition to the site which is surrounded by unspoilt open countryside to the south and west. The concerns in this instance are the form and appearance of the buildings proposed particularly the two storey flat roof entrance building, disjointed roof configuration, fragmented elevational treatments and dominance of glazing particularly on the north and west elevations which compromises the design.

Following consideration of the policies contained within the Local Development Plan and National Planning Policy in the form of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7, July 2014) and having regard to all material considerations it is considered that the development is not acceptable by virtue of the form, design and massing introducing a prominent development which will harm the special qualities of the National Park. As such through its design the scheme is considered to result in an unacceptable form of development that conflicts with policies 1, 8, 15, 29 and 30 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan (Adopted 2010).

Consultee Response

Nolton & Roch Community Council: No objection - We should like to give full support for the proposal to demolish the Rochgate Motel and replace with a 40 bed hotel and adjoining restaurant. We feel that this development would singificantly improve the area. Also it would be particularly good for the local economy and provide much needed jobs in the area.

PCC - Transportation & Environment: No objection - The applicants seek to demolish the existing motel and replace with a 40 bed hotel with restaurant. There appears to be adequate parking and turning facilities, together with a drop off zone, within the curtilage of the site. Following discussions between this Highway Authority and the applicants agent, as part of the previous application, the visibility agreed at the proposed access point, measured at an 'x' distance of 2.4 metres back from the edge of the carriageway would be 120m, which can be achieved in both directions. This does not appear to have been indicated on this application so a condition covering this has been recommended. The bus stop is nearby and can be relatively easily connected into the development via a new footpath link and crossing. Details of this will need to be submitted prior to any commencement and completed prior to opening. Alernatively the applicant could provide a contribution to the LHA via a S106 to provide the footpath and crossing point.

Conditions recommended include provision of visibility splays and their retention, stopping up of present means of vehicular access, completing and retaining parking and turning areas and full details of a footpath link and pedestrian crossing being submitted and agreed prior to occupation of the development.

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water: No objection - subject to conditions.

Ecologist - Pembrokeshire County Council: No objection - following receipt of bat survey

Natural Resources Wales: No objections subject to comments urging the authority to ensure that the recommendations made in the bat survey are incorporated into the proposed development, comments relating to surface water drainage, foul drainage and building waste materials.

PCC Access Officer: Conditional consent

PCC - Head of Public Protection: Conditional Consent

PCC- Development Management: Concerns about the design.

Public Response

The application was advertised by a site notice displayed at the site on 6 December 2013 in addition to letters forwarded to neighbouring occupiers. Furthermore it was advertised as a Major Development in the local press on 11 December 2013. Further letters were sent to neighbouring occupiers on receipt of amended plans.

To date 2 No. letters of objection have been received. These letters can be viewed on the application file although raise concerns on the following points:

- The nature of the development is one that would be more appropriately sited in an urban setting or a transport hub.
- The footprint of the development entirely dominates the site on which it sits, involving as it does a threefold increase in the size of the hotel and the addition of a very substantial restaurant and bar. In terms of profile it will also be a dominant feature in the local landscape.
- For the development to be successful it will need to attract significant traffic as there is no apparent market in the local area for its services.
 In addition the siting of the restaurant and kitchens directly facing the village will result in much increased levels of noise and odour pollution.
- The scale of the development is out of keeping with all other buildings in the area and represents a substantial increase in the visual impact on the landscape. Currently the majority of the development is at single storey level and visually unobtrusive in the landscape, with the buildings sitting naturally adjacent to the village crossroads. The roofline of the proposed buildings will represent a solid line on the landscape in three directions with no natural reference points and the impact will be exacerbated by the high density of parking and extension of that parking out into the countryside away from the village.
- Object to this application on the basis that there is already a surfeit of serviced accommodation bed spaces in Pembrokeshire. Should the application be approved, it will further undermine the fragile nature of this sector in the area.

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 31 - Minimising Waste

LDP Policy 32 - Surface Water Drainage

LDP Policy 35 - Visitor Economy

LDP Policy 36 - Loss of Hotels and Guest Houses

LDP Policy 48 - Community Facilities and Infrastructure Requirements

LDP Policy 52 - Sustainable Transport

LDP Policy 53 - Impacts on traffic

PPW7 Chapter 04 - Planning for Sustainability

PPW7 Chapter 08 - Transport

SPG04 - Planning Obligations

SPG05 - Sustainable Design

SPG06 - Landscape

SPG13 - Parking

SPG21 - Accessibility

TAN 06 - Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities

TAN 12 - Design

TAN 23 - Economic Development

Officer's Appraisal

Background

The application site has been subject to previous planning history with the most recent consent granted in 2009 for refurbishment of the existing motel. As existing the site is considered to be having an adverse impact upon the amenity of the area because of the poor state of repair of the existing buildings and officers have requested that works be carried out to remedy the visual impact of the existing buildings.

The current application was made valid in November 2013 and was an attempt from the owner to improve the condition of the site following concern raised by officers. Early consultation at this time with the Authority's Planning Ecologist raised concern with the lack of a protected species survey to rule out any presence of bats occupying the site. The application was held in abeyance at this time pending receipt of a survey in the summer season. In February 2014 officers met the applicant and agent to discuss the scheme and raised concern with the design approach taken. Options to change the design to produce a more traditional scheme were suggested by officers and the applicant was considering submitting alternative proposals based on the advice given.

A bat survey was received in June 2014 and despite the concerns raised with the design in February 2014 the applicant, in July 2014 advised officers that an alternative approach would not be taken. Following further comments some small changes to the initial plans presented which include the mitigation features mentioned in the bay survey were provided in amended plans received in August 2014. These revised plans form the basis of the application now before members for a decision.

History

- NP/09/061 Roch Gate Motel, Roch Refurbishment Approved 17 April 2009
- 00/004/s Roch Gate Motel, Roch Post Sign Refused 25 April 2000
- 00/003/s Roch Gate Motel, Roch Wall mounted sign Refused-17 March 2000
- NP/97/190 Roch Gate Motel, Roch Extension to kitchen & alterations for living accommodation - Approved – 20 June 1997
- NP/92/477 Roch Gate Motel, Roch Additional car parking Approved – 25 March 1993
- NP/92/472 Roch Gate Motel, Roch New Function Room Approved - 25 March 1993

Current Proposal

The application proposes the demolition of the existing Motel to be replaced with a 40 bed hotel with adjoining restaurant and associated parking and landscaping.

The built form of the hotel and restaurant is proposed to arc around the perimeter of the application site with a central courtyard providing parking spaces to serve the buildings.

Hotel

Plans show that the hotel would comprise of an arrangement of four two storey buildings with links positioned around the north and west perimeter of the site. These buildings which consist of pitched roofs are proposed to be integrated with a two storey flat roof structure to form the hotel entrance. These buildings measure between 6.6m and 7.1m above ground level whilst the flat roof structure, which is also proposed to include a grass roof, is to measure 5.7m. Each of the buildings measure approximately 19m in length with a depth of 7.4m. The front and rear elevations of the block buildings are proposed to contain large glazed doorways at ground floor level with upper floor glazing arranged with a horizontal emphasis across the buildings.

In terms of materials the walls are proposed to be rendered, include some horizontal wooden cladding and slate is proposed for the roof. The links to each building are proposed to be finished in random rubble pennant stone facing with zinc clad roofs. Windows and doors on the main blocks are proposed to be powder coated aluminium coloured light grey whilst the doors and windows on the link buildings are proposed to be stained timber.

Internally plans show the main building would provide a lobby at the ground floor entrance supplemented by a reception, office and various storage rooms, 20 bedrooms with bathrooms on the ground floor, 20 bedrooms with bathrooms on the first floor along with a breakfast bar, kitchen and storage cupboards.

Restaurant

The restaurant is proposed to be provided in a separate building to the east facing aspect of the site also fronting the highway which traverses past the site. The building itself is of traditional form with a two storey pitched roof structure in one portion and a single storey element adjoining. A conservatory forms the end profile of the building. The building measures upto 5.7 to ridge height and measures approximately 37.9m in length by 7.5m in width.

Internally the building consists of a kitchen, toilets, bar and dining area on the ground floor along with kitchen storage, office, staff toilet and storage room on the first floor.

Other proposals include a bat roost structure to adjoin the southern end of the hotel building, two wildlife ponds and landscaping and surfacing throughout the site. The rear aspects of the hotel accommodation buildings are proposed to include amenity areas for each ground floor bedroom separated by a timber close board fence and new hedges.

The scheme includes closure of the existing northern access and moving the existing access onto the A487 in a southerly direction.

The application has been supported with the following information:

- Design & Access Statement
- Landscape Specification
- Transport Statement
- BREEAM Pre-Assessment
- Bat Survey

Key Issues

The application raises the following planning matters:-

- Policy and Principle of Development
- Visual Amenity and Special Qualities of the National Park
- Neighbouring Amenity and Privacy
- Highway Safety, Access and Parking
- Water and Drainage
- Ecology
- Other Material Considerations

Policy and Principle of Development

In terms of principle the site lies within the countryside and on a key route into the National Park. The site is brownfield and currently occupied by a now redundant single storey block which was formerly used as a motel. The principle of a replacement building to provide a new hotel is considered to be acceptable subject to consideration of detailed planning matters. This is on the basis that whilst the proposal will increase the level of accommodation offered the site is a brownfield site and in proximity to the village of Roch which lies outside of the National Park.

Visual Amenity and Special Qualities of the National Park

Policy 8 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan (LDP) is a strategic policy which refers to the special qualities of the National Park and lists priorities to ensure that these special qualities will be protected and enhanced. Policy 15 of the LDP seeks the conservation of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park with criteria 'a' and 'b' resisting development that would cause significant visual intrusion and/or, that would be insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape. Criterion 'c' resists development that would introduce or intensify a use which is incompatible with its location. Criteria 'd' and 'e' resists development that would fail to harmonise with, or enhance the landform and landscape character of the National Park, and/or fail to incorporate important traditional features.

Policy 29 of the LDP requires all development proposals to be well designed in terms of place and local distinctiveness (criterion 'a'). Policy 30 of the LDP seeks to avoid development that is of an incompatible scale with its surroundings (criterion 'b') or is visually intrusive (criterion' d').

The site lies on the boundary of the National Park along the A487 which provides access in a westerly direction towards Newgale. The site is low lying and is prominent particularly when viewed from the south east on the approach road. It is surrounded by large open fields with some visual breaks including Roch Castle to the east, pockets of woodland as well as a recently constructed housing estate at Roch.

In terms of Policy the Authority's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Landscape Character Assessment' advises that the site lies within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 12 – St Brides Bay. This is identified as a very large expanse of rolling lowland and associated coastal cliffs and beaches between Solva and Little Haven with the coastal features providing a strong sense of place. The area consists of outstanding and high visual and sensory aspects with the special qualities including the very large tract of landscape with a strong visual relationship to the coast, high degree of exposure, sight and sound of expanse of sea, high ecological value of landscapes and historical landscape with high value and some outstanding value.

The supporting text to Policy 15 at paragraph 4.75 of the LDP states "Attention to detail and the cumulative effects of change are important considerations. Even seemingly minor changes in the landscape can have an adverse effect; prominent individual buildings or widespread application of inappropriate trends in design detailing can have an impact much wider than their immediate environs and cumulatively will subtly and irreparably alter the often fragile landscape character of the National Park."

Any development of the site needs to take account of these special qualities and the existing character of the site. Whilst the existing site is in a poor visual condition and a replacement building or demolition would be supported a detailed consideration of the design and form of the proposed replacement needs to be undertaken.

In terms of layout the development is proposed to be formed in an arc around the existing site with frontage buildings to the A487 and the B road which runs along the north facing aspect of the site. The applicant explains in the submitted Design and Access Statement that the site has been designed to screen the majority of the car parking and internal roads and street lighting by forming a central courtyard around a horseshoe shaped building that encloses them. Landscaping is proposed across the site including native hedgerows alongside the proposed restaurant building and access as well as a pond on the approach into the site. Tegular blocks are proposed for the parking bays whilst the internal routes would be laid to tarmac. Whilst the landscaping mitigation is encouraging the design of the scheme with the frontage of the building being set back into the site will result in the car parking area somewhat dominating the front approach and creates an urban setting.

The applicant advises that the proposal would increase the floor area of the site by approximately one third (an increase from 1,270m² to 1,970m²) although advises that whilst the single storey building will be taken to two storey in the new scheme the increase in height has been kept as low as possible. It is advised that the existing single storey block is 5.1m above ground level whereas the proposed bedroom blocks have a ridge height of 6.6m above ground level and the reception area being 7.1m high. The applicant suggests that by using a variety of finishes the building reduces the appearance of a single homogenous volume and facades are broken up with bays formed by columns and down pipes.

Design is a critical aspect to any development and demolition of the buildings as part of this proposal would offer a blank canvas approach to develop a scheme with a large emphasis on sustainable design and improvements to the appearance and quality of the environment. Although the proposed restaurant is of a form and traditional vernacular which would sit comfortably as a frontage building to the A487 the remainder of the buildings proposed on the site would represent an overall disjointed appearance with large two storey blocks of accommodation supplemented by a bulky two storey flat roof entrance structure. These buildings when viewed from the surrounding landscape will be up to 2m in height above the height of the existing buildings and will be very visible and apparent in the landscape.

Some design changes have been sought including the introduction of a grass roof to the flat roof, removing some fenestration from the outer elevations of the accommodation blocks and removing the downpipes that were sited in front of proposed windows, however, these changes do not go far enough in producing a scheme that will be appropriate in this setting.

The development is dominated by glazing along the north and western elevations whilst the flat roof structure to the front is not a traditional design solution and will look awkward when set against the backdrop of the gable roof structures. The design is considered to be a very urban solution and will fail to sit comfortably in the landscape due to its awkward form and appearance. This would conflict with Policy 15 criterion 'e' in that the flat roof structure would not be a traditional design solution.

As advised in Technical Advice Note 12 – Design (2014) paragraph 6.16 design is critical to a scheme and is a material consideration "The appearance and function of proposed development, its scale and its relationship to its surroundings are material considerations in determining planning applications and appeals. Developments that do not address the objectives of good design should not be accepted."

To summarise these concerns it can be noted that the site is very prominent from the southern approach and surrounded by undulating unspoilt low lying landscape. Any addition to the site will be visible and will need to react comfortably to the setting. The scheme proposed will not sit comfortably within its context in that it will create an urban setting which will result in a loss of a sense of remoteness and tranquillity (policy 8 criterion a). In addition the development by virtue of its disjoined appearance across the site, height and form will cause significant visual intrusion (Policy 15 criterion a), will be insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape (Policy 15 criterion b), will fail to harmonise with or enhance the landform and landscape character of the National Park and overall fails to incorporate important traditional features (Policy 15 criterion e).

Highway Safety, Access and Parking

Policies 52 and 53 of the Local Development Plan refer to sustainable transport and the traffic impacts of proposed development.

The scheme involves the closure of the existing access onto the B road at the north of the site and relocating the access onto the A487 further southwards. The Highway Authority has been consulted and confirms that there appears to be adequate parking and turning facilities along with a drop off zone within the site. They advise that discussions took place as part of the previous application agreeing to a visibility splay of 120m when measured 2.5m back from the edge of the carriageway. The Highway Authority comments that there is a bus stop nearby and can be relatively easily connected into the development via a new footpath link and crossing. They state that details of this will need to be submitted prior to commencement and completed prior to

opening or alternatively the applicant could provide a contribution to the Highway Authority via a Section 106 agreement to provide the footpath and crossing point. Such a matter could be dealt with by a suitable grampian planning condition which would require completion of works to improve the link between the bus stop and the site before commencing works on the hotel development. This would be a reasonable condition in the interests of providing a safe and sustainable link between the site and public transport.

Other conditions suggested include the provision and retention of visibility splays, present means of access to be permanently stopped up and highway reinstated in accordance with plans to be submitted and the parking and turning areas to be completed before development is brought into use. Such conditions would be reasonable in the interests of the development. As such it can be concluded that subject to suitable conditions the scheme would comply with the aims of policies 52 and 53 notwithstanding the development being unacceptable on other grounds.

Water and Drainage

Policy 32 of the Local Development Plan requires development to incorporate sustainable drainage systems for the disposal of water on site. The drawings provided show the provision of some landscaped areas including ponds. however, no specific details have been provided showing how surface water will be managed on site. Natural Resources Wales comment that surface water from the new buildings/structures should be controlled as near to its source as possible through surface water management (SUDS), SUDS is defined as being an approach to managing surface water run-off which seeks to mimic natural drainage systems and involve a range of technologies including for example soak-a-ways, infiltration trenches, permeable pavements, swales. Welsh Water has commented on the scheme raising no objection subject to conditions requiring surface and foul water to be discharged separately. Such matters could be agreed by provision of a suitable scheme to be provided by planning condition. It is therefore it is considered that the development would comply with the aims of Policy 32 notwithstanding the development being unacceptable on other grounds.

Ecology

Policy 11 of the Local Development Plan sets out the protection of biodiversity in that development that would disturb or otherwise harm protected species or their habitats will only be permitted where the effects will be acceptably minimised or mitigated.

On initial receipt the application did not have adequate information to ascertain whether there would be any harm to protected species, namely bats, in removing the existing buildings. An objection was received from Natural Resources Wales pending receipt of a survey. A survey was submitted by the applicant received on 30 June 2014 which revealed no recordings of bats using the buildings although birds roosting in the western apartment block. The report identified opportunities for ecological

enhancements including the provision of a bat night roost building and two bat tubes in the building. Natural Resources wales has now responded and considers that the recommendations of the bat survey are acceptable and urge the Authority to ensure that these be incorporated in the proposed development.

The applicant supplied amended plans detailing these mitigation measures which include the building to be constructed as s timber extension to the south bedroom block and bat tubes within the roofs of the buildings. In summary of the issues therefore it is considered that the development would comply with the aims of Policy 11 notwithstanding the development being unacceptable on other grounds.

Other Material Planning Considerations

The scheme offers the opportunity to redevelop the site and provide a new hotel use, restaurant and up to 40 bedroom spaces. The submitted application form does not indicate the number of job opportunities that would be created as a result of the development, however, the hotel use and its construction would ultimately bring local employment opportunities to the area above the level that could be provided through the existing buildings. TAN 23 – Economic Development places importance on weighing up economic benefit in schemes and where this would cause environmental or social harm which cannot be mitigated giving the economic benefits careful consideration. The TAN discusses looking at alternative locations where a development is not suitable at a particular site and steering it to a more sustainable location as well as considering the number of direct jobs accommodated and any special merit in terms of the objectives of National policy. In this particular instance it is the design and form of the scheme proposed that conflicts with the Local Development Plan and not the site location. Whilst the scheme may bring economic benefits there is no reason why these benefits could not be brought forward through a different acceptable scheme that is not at conflict with the protection of the Special Qualities of the National Park. As such the economic argument in support of the development would not override the harm identified in the above paragraphs.

Conclusion

Whilst the principle of the development in providing for a new hotel is considered to be acceptable the scheme put forward is not considered to be an acceptable design solution for this visually prominent site on the boundary of the National Park. The buildings would extend to two storey up to 2m above the existing structures and through their design and form would result in a prominent addition to the site which is surrounded by unspoilt open countryside to the south and west. The concerns in this instance are the form and appearance of the buildings proposed particularly the two storey flat roof entrance building, disjointed roof configuration, fragmented elevational treatments and dominance of glazing particularly on the north and west elevations which compromises the design.

Whilst officers have attempted to negotiate an alternative design solution, the applicant did not seek to formally change the scheme and confirmed that the scheme should be considered on the design proposed albeit with some minor changes. Regrettably, therefore, there is considered to be no option other than to recommend refusal of the scheme.

Following consideration of the policies contained within the Local Development Plan and National Planning Policy in the form of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7, July 2014) and having regard to all material considerations it is considered that the development, on balance, is not acceptable by virtue of the form, design and massing introducing a prominent development which will harm the special qualities of the National Park. As such through its design the scheme is considered to result in an unacceptable form of development that conflicts with policies 1, 8, 15, 29 and 30 of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan (Adopted 2010).

Recommendation

The application be refused for the following reason:

Reason

The proposed development by virtue of its form, scale, bulk and appearance within the landscape would represent a visually insensitive, incongruous and unsympathetic form of development that would harm and detract from the character, appearance and special qualities of the surrounding land within the National Park. As such the development would cause a significant visual intrusion, be insensitive and unsympathic in the landscape, fail to harmonise with or enhance the existing landform and landscape character of the National Park and fail to incorporate traditional features contrary to the requirements of Policy 8 (Special Qualities) (criteria a and c), Policy 15 (Conservation of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park) (criteria a, b, d and e) and Policy 30 (Amenity) (criteria b and d) of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan (Adopted September 2010), Landscape Character Assessment SPG and National Policy and Guidance in the form of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7, July 2014) and Technical Advice Note 12 – Design (2014).



















