



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 26 April 2021

by David Wyborn BSc(Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 May 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/W/20/3265247

The Countryman, Road From Belstone Corner Cross To Beacon Cross, Sampford Courtenay EX20 2SA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Roger Brentnall against the decision of West Devon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2961/20/OPA, dated 26 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is for the siting of seven glamping pods in the rear garden and associated access track and utilities to service the pods.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and outline planning permission is granted for the siting of seven glamping pods in the rear garden and associated access track and utilities to service the pods at The Countryman, Road From Belstone Corner Cross To Beacon Cross, Sampford Courtenay, EX20 2SA in accordance with the submitted details and subject to the following conditions.
 - 1) Details of the access, appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale, (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before any development takes place and the development shall be carried out as approved.
 - 2) Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall take place not later than 2 years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved.
 - 4) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Location Plan (Sheet 1) and Block Plan (Sheet 2).
 - 5) The development hereby permitted shall be used solely for holiday accommodation only and shall not be occupied as any person's sole or main place of residence. The owners/operators shall maintain an up-to-date register of the names and main home addresses of all owners/occupiers of the holiday units, and shall make this information available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application has been made in outline with all matters reserved. However, a layout plan shows the proposed position of the seven glamping pods and associated access track and drainage. I have had regard to this layout and associated details as to what the appellant has in mind for the proposal.

Main Issue and Reasons

3. The main issue is whether the development plan would support the proposed tourist accommodation in this location, having particular regard to access to services and facilities.
4. Policies SPT1 and SPT2 of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014-2034 (the Local Plan) sets out the guiding principles and broad locational strategy to deliver sustainable development across the plan area.
5. The Local Plan approach to sustainable development is explained in further detail in Policy TTV1 for the Thriving Towns and Villages parts of the plan area. This aims to prioritise growth through a hierarchy of sustainable settlements and, in the smaller villages, hamlets and the countryside, development will be permitted only if it can be demonstrated to support the principles of sustainable development and sustainable communities. Policy TTV2 of the Local Plan indicates that the specific objectives of rural sustainability include the delivery of sustainable rural tourism that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and respect the character of the countryside and historic settlements.
6. Policy DEV15 of the Local Plan sets out the policy approach to supporting the rural economy and includes that camping, caravan, chalet or similar facilities that respond to an identified local need will be supported, provided the proposal is compatible with the rural road network, has no adverse environmental impact and is not located in the Undeveloped Coast policy area. The policy also requires that development proposals should avoid a significant increase in the number of trips requiring the private car and facilitate the use of sustainable transport, including walking and cycling, where appropriate.
7. In this case, The Countryman is an established roadside inn with the frontage sign describing the premises as pub and carvery house. There is a fairly sizeable car park, which directly adjoins the B3215 and reasonably extensive land to the rear which is landscaped with some trees and includes an open field.
8. The seven glamping pods are proposed within the strip of land extending from the rear of the main building. This land is laid to mown grass, gently slopes and the likely position of the pods would be softened in the landscape by the surrounding trees. The tourist accommodation is intended to diversify the offer provided by the public house and the setting would provide a pleasant rural environment for guests.
9. While the submissions from the appellant are fairly limited in detail there is sufficient information to demonstrate that the accommodation would respond to an identified local need within this rural area. Furthermore, whilst noting the views of the Council, as the premises are a commercial business employing staff and, in the circumstances of supporting the rural economy where there is often a range of business types, I am satisfied it can be considered a small employment site. The number of proposed glamping pods would be an

appropriate and proportionate expansion of this existing employment site which the appellant believes would lead to about another two jobs being created and the extra business would help support the retention of the existing employment on the site.

10. The site is located away from the main towns and villages. Tourists who would stay in the glamping pods would, it is likely, mainly use a private vehicle to access the site, and also when visiting attractions in both towns and the countryside across the area. However, the accommodation would be provided on a site which has existing catering and drinking facilities. This would allow guests to walk to this immediate facility and thereby on those occasions reduce the need to travel for food and drink. I can envisage that this could be a particular component of the marketing of the pods and an attraction for visitors to stay in the accommodation.
11. Furthermore, the appellant has explained that the premises are on one of the main cycling routes for Land's End to John O'Groats and photographs with the appeal submission appears to support the use of the premises as a stop off, presumably for refreshments, which potentially could be extended to overnight stays if the appeal was allowed. Additionally, the appellant has explained that currently there are local cycle businesses with standard and battery assist cycles to hire, and the stated intentions of the appellant would be to work with one of these to target cycling and walking holiday makers. While this could not be a requirement of any approval, nevertheless it would appear there is some opportunity to reduce private car movements for guests staying in the proposed accommodation.
12. Taking all these elements together, I am satisfied that there would be the ability to reduce some of the dependence on the private vehicle by future guests and to facilitate walking and cycling. Having regard to the size of the existing premises and the likely associated vehicle movements, the addition of seven glamping pods would not, either alone or relative to the existing use, be likely to lead to a significant increase in the number of trips to the site that would require the private vehicle.
13. While the locational strategy of the Local Plan directs development to the main towns and villages it does not prevent some limited development to take place in countryside areas. Such an approach is compatible with the policy approach to supporting a prosperous rural economy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which, in particular, requires decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, including through well-designed new buildings.
14. The Framework acknowledges that decisions should recognise that to meet local business needs in rural areas they may have be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations not well served by public transport. Given the details explained above, the proposal would meet with the Framework requirements that, in such circumstances, it would be important to ensure that the development is sensitive to its surroundings, would not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and would exploit any opportunities to make a location more sustainable, such as by improving the scope for access by cycling.
15. It follows that I am satisfied that the proposed glamping pods would comply with the approach to camping accommodation in DEV15 of the Local Plan. In

particular, this is because I have already concluded that it would meet an identified local need for such accommodation and, furthermore, the proposal, because of its location and highway access, would be compatible with the rural road network, would have no adverse environmental impact and would not be located within the Undeveloped Coast policy area.

16. Drawing all these matters together, the modest number of glamping pods would be an appropriate and proportionate expansion of the existing business on the site and be delivered in a way that was sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area. It would not be a stand-alone proposal and the accommodation would have a complementary relationship with the existing pub premises, supporting this existing business and helping to reduce the need for guests to travel for all food and drink. Opportunities to reduce the dependence on private vehicle movements appear to be available and these are referenced in the submissions.
17. In the light of the above analysis, I conclude that the modest scale of the proposal would be appropriate to this rural location and the existing premises such that there would not be a material conflict with the locational policies of the development plan. The scheme would be supported by those policies that seek to support the rural economy, having regard to the available, although limited, access to services and facilities. As a consequence, the scheme would either not conflict with or accord with Policies SPT1, SPT2, TTV1, TTV2, DEV15 and DEV29 of the Local Plan and the Framework which seek, amongst other things, to support proposals in suitable locations which seek to improve the balance of jobs within the rural areas and diversify the rural economy.

Conditions

18. The Council has suggested a number of conditions which I have considered taking account of advice in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance. The standard conditions setting out the time periods for the submission of reserved matters and subsequent commencement are necessary, as well as a condition listing the approved plans.
19. The Council has recommended a condition which requires details to be submitted including of the design and external appearance of the proposed buildings, and their siting and means of access from the highway. However, these are all matters which can be addressed by the submission of the reserved matters details and a separate condition is not necessary.
20. A condition requiring the camping pods to be only used as holiday accommodation is necessary in the interests of supporting the rural economy and the strategy for the delivery of housing across the plan area.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, the scheme would comply with the development plan when considered as a whole and other material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, and taking all other matters into account, I conclude that, subject to the specified conditions, the appeal should be allowed.

David Wyborn INSPECTOR