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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 September 2021

**by C Cresswell BSc (Hons) MA MBA MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 5 October 2021**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/W/21/3274316**

**Morwelldown Bungalow, Morwellham, Tavistock, Devon PL19 8JH**

- 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 D Helcoop against the decision of West Devon Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 0489/21/FUL, dated 3 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 13 April 2021.
  - The development proposed is holiday chalet.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. The main issues in this case are:
  - whether the site provides a suitable location for the proposed holiday use.
  - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB).

### Reasons

#### *Location*

3. The appeal site is situated in the open countryside where Policy TTV2 of the Local Plan<sup>1</sup> applies. In combination with other Local Plan policies, this seeks to support a prosperous and sustainable pattern of development in rural areas. Of particular relevance to the appeal is part (5) of policy TTV2 which supports the delivery of sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and respect the character of the countryside and historic settlements.
4. Policy TTV2 does not define the term 'sustainable rural tourism' but instead references Policies SPT1 and SPT2, which set out the broad objectives of sustainable development across the Local Plan area. These relate to the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability.
5. With regard to the environmental aspects, the proposed chalet would be constructed on previously developed land, which Policy SPT1 supports. However, another objective of Policy SPT1 is to establish a low carbon economy

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<sup>1</sup> Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014 - 2034.

and I note that Policy DEV15 advocates sustainable transport options, including walking and cycling. With this in mind, I am conscious that the site is in a relatively remote location outside any defined towns or villages.

6. There is a bus stop approximately 190 metres away with an hourly bus service connecting Tavistock with the village of Bere Alston, where it is possible to access other public transport options, including a rail link to Plymouth. While this is within walking distance, the stop is along a road with fast moving traffic where there is no lighting or pavement, so is not particularly safe or convenient to reach. Although it may be possible to cycle to some visitor attractions in the surrounding countryside, this would not necessarily be an attractive option for all future occupiers of the proposed chalet, especially given the nature of the roads. Similarly, the public footbath network is some distance away and would also involve walking on the road. Therefore, even though there are some options to travel by means other than private vehicle, it seems to me that occupiers of the proposed chalet would be more likely to drive.
7. Nonetheless, given the rural nature of the area, I would anticipate that, in practice, most visitors would use their own vehicle to explore the countryside, wherever their holiday accommodation is located. A similar observation was made by an Inspector in considering an appeal<sup>2</sup> for new housing at Lamerton, although that was a village location rather than being open countryside. However, it is also the case that the length and frequency of vehicle journeys is likely to be reduced if holiday accommodation is situated in a location where there are at least some day-to-day facilities such as shop, public house or more extensive public transport services. In this case, while I acknowledge that occupiers of the proposed holiday unit would have the option of travelling by means other than private vehicle, there is nothing especially accessible about the location of the development that weighs heavily in its favour.
8. Turning to the social aspects of sustainable development, occupiers of the proposed chalet would be likely to spend money locally which would potentially contribute towards sustaining local shops and services in nearby villages. However, the contribution from a single chalet would be small and the same benefit could be achieved through any new accommodation within the vicinity. It is not necessarily a reason to develop in this particular location.
9. In terms of the economic aspects of sustainability, I am aware that there are various tourist related businesses in the area that rely on visitors to remain viable. Indeed, the Tamar Valley AONB Management Plan<sup>3</sup> recognises that tourism plays a key role in the economic vitality of the area. However, it does not necessarily follow that all forms of holiday accommodation anywhere within the Tamar Valley would be sustainable. While Policy DEV15 of the Local Plan supports camping, caravan, chalet or similar facilities, it also states that the development should respond to an identified local need.
10. The evidence supplied in support of the appeal emphasises the proximity of local attractions and the contribution that holiday accommodation can make to supporting the local economy and visitor spend. I accept the broader points made in relation these matters. However, the evidence provided is relatively general in nature and it is not made very clear what the local need is for a holiday chalet of the type proposed in this specific location.

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<sup>2</sup> Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/W/18/3206945.

<sup>3</sup> Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019 - 2024.

11. Without specific evidence of local need, I am unable to determine that the proposed chalet would comply with the terms of Policy DEV15. For the same reason, I am also unable to determine that the chalet would necessarily support the delivery of rural tourism in compliance with Policy TTV2.
12. I have found that the proposed chalet would make use of previously developed land and would make a limited contribution to supporting rural services. However, the potential benefits of the proposal to the local tourism sector have not been clearly demonstrated and, despite some public transport and cycling options, the site is not in a particularly accessible location. Hence, the merits of the proposal do not outweigh the policy conflict I have identified. It does not represent sustainable development in the context of the Local Plan.
13. I therefore conclude on this issue that the site would not provide a suitable location for the proposed holiday use. The development would not comply with Policies TTV2 and DEV15 of the Local Plan. As it has not been clearly demonstrated that the proposal would contribute to a sustainable pattern of development, there would also be conflict with the broader objectives of Policies SPT1 and TTV1. Considering that Policy SPT2 focuses on rural neighbourhoods, it is of somewhat less relevance to this case.

#### *Character and appearance*

14. Although the proposed chalet would be larger than the existing garage and workshop, it would nonetheless be a relatively small, single storey building. While the chalet would be visible from the road, it would not be particularly prominent due to its low height and, from many nearby vantage points, would be partly screened by boundary vegetation. The proposed glazing and patio doors would therefore not be very conspicuous.
15. In longer distance views, the chalet is relatively well screened by vegetation. Where it could be seen within in the wider landscape, it would be against the background of other nearby development. Light pollution would not be increased substantially from a chalet of this size and it would be consolidated on a site that is close to other buildings. Taking into account that there is already development on the site which the proposed chalet would replace, the visual impact on the AONB would be minimal.
16. I therefore conclude on this issue that the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the AONB. There would be no conflict with Policy DEV25 of the Local Plan which seeks to protect designated landscapes. Nor would there be any conflict with Policy DEV15 in relation to this particular issue.

#### **Conclusion**

17. Although the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the AONB landscape, the lack of harm in this respect is not sufficient to outweigh the policy conflict in terms of the location of the site. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

*C Cresswell*

INSPECTOR