

PA20/03842 Conversion of existing hotel building to provide a 14 bedroom hotel with restaurant (A3 use class) and retail shop (A1 use class) and demolition of existing buildings/structure and erection of 25 residential apartments/houses, together with access, highway remediation, car parking infrastructure, landscaping and ancillary works

Pendower Beach House Hotel Rocky Lane Ruan High Lanes Truro Cornwall TR2 5LW

Due to the restrictions placed on the Council as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, this response represents the opinion of members of Gerrans Parish Council identified through a consultation process and will be ratified at the next appropriate meeting of the Council.

Gerrans Parish Council has voted to oppose this application. We believe development of this size is completely out of character with the natural beauty of the Roseland and would cause significant harm to the landscape and environment of this highly protected area of the AONB.

In reaching our decision we considered the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Cornwall Local Plan (CLP) and Roseland Neighbourhood Development Plan (RNDP), and noted the large range of protections applied to the Melinsey Valley and Pendower area, since the site is in the sensitive setting of the AONB and an extremely important coastal and ecological environment. This application goes against all the key policies in the NPPF, CLP and RNDP and has a major conflict with AONB and SSSI principles. If the many protections afforded to this particular area were to be ignored a very dangerous precedent for the protection of other AONB areas would be set, that we believe is completely unacceptable.

We are aware of the huge amount of concern and negative feeling, within the Roseland and beyond, about how such an inappropriate proposal that has been opposed at every stage of consultation could ever have got this far. We note that there is currently not a single expression of support on the planning portal; these have only been supplied by the applicants themselves.

This would be a major development, with housing serving no local need, located on a site most unsuitable for extensive housing. A whole raft of policies within all of the above plans are specifically designed to protect and preserve valuable and beautiful landscapes, which this area undoubtedly is. The NPPF is particularly clear that permission for major development in an AONB should be refused in all but exceptional cases, which this undoubtedly is not.

In his pre-application letter the Development Officer mentioned AONB and National Trust concerns. In common with many other environmental organisations and Parish Councils within the AONB, we share the same concerns. The Development Officer also stated that economic reasons for residential development would need to be 'justified through a rigorous viability appraisal'. We do not believe that the applicants have shown any economic or social reason sufficient to warrant such destructive plans as these. The environmental damage and disturbance to wildlife and habitat during the two-year building programme alone would be irreparable and the costs of mediation excessive. The disruption to nearby residents, tourists visiting the beach and hundreds of ramblers using the South West Coastal path would also be very significant.

We therefore raise five overarching objections:

1 Impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and landscape character.

The importance of conserving and protecting the AONB is stressed in NPPF paragraphs 115, 116, 124, 127 and 172; CLP Policies 2, 3 and 23; and RNDP Policies LA1, LA2, GP2 and CD1. We do not believe that any of these policies have been properly addressed.

2. Sustainability and viability

Planning Practice Guidance in the NPPF states that “under no circumstances will the price paid for land be seen as relevant justification for failing to accord with the policies in the various local, regional and national plans” but the applicants’ argument focusses on their own financial costs. There is no demonstration that the 25 homes would be in the public interest or that there is a need for them. No economic benefit for the local community is shown.

We can see no justification for the assertion that the residential element of the development is essential to ensure financial viability and note the lack of precise modelling of the economics of developing the hotel on its own. CLP Policies 2, 7 and 21 have not been addressed since the re-use of previously developed land is only for the hotel and shop facility and the housing element would be entirely new. The proposals are also contrary to RNDP Policies GP1, GP3 and CLP12.

3 Scale and appropriateness

NPPF para 85 and CLP Policy 5 on tourism are not addressed. No overriding locational or business need is demonstrated, the site is not accessible by a range of transport means and the scale of these proposals is out of keeping and intrusive into the sensitive landscape of the AONB, threatening the peaceful, traditional nature of the Roseland - which is what attracts tourists to it. The 18 criteria that refer to the protection of the landscape character and environment, scale and appropriateness, visual aspects, flooding and environmental protection, traffic and parking, and wildlife protection in the RNDP CD (Commercial development) policies have not been met.

4 Environmental, geological and ecological impact

This site has the highest level of environmental protection afforded to it through its status as an AONB, SSSI, SAC, SPA and by protective policies within the NPPF, CLP, and RNDP (LA3, 5), as well as other recent policies such as Cornwall’s Tree Canopy Policy and Biodiversity Net gain for Cornwall. The impact on the natural environment and biodiversity would be in direct conflict with these. Initially there would be significant impact on wildlife as a result of the building works, pile driving, bore hole drilling, drainage, loss of trees, loss of broadleaf woodland habitat and marshy willow beds, dust, noise, traffic, vibration, etc. The fragile ecology might never recover. These environmental factors alone should be sufficient to confirm that this site is neither suitable, nor desirable nor economic for the construction of 25 residential second homes.

5 Traffic issues

CLP Policy 27 requires that plans should be consistent with Cornwall’s Local Transport Plan, minimise need for travel, and prioritise sustainable travel. This clearly is not the case and we are concerned that the application does not provide any viable solution to the issues in Rocky Lane, nor any justification for the changes proposed. The proposal will do nothing to support sustainable travel or reduce the need for travel, quite the opposite. It will increase traffic and be dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. We have significant concerns about the long-term effects at the junction, in the narrow lane and from inadequate parking – as well as regarding the whole approach proposed for the preparatory stages.

Notwithstanding all of this, the public consultations and responses to this application indicate that the community would welcome a more moderate renovation of the boutique hotel with a cafe/restaurant on the site - but not at the expense of the environment destruction incurred in the additional development of unnecessary housing. We too would welcome a sensitive re-development of the “Pink Hotel” and some associated facilities that would benefit both locals and visitors to Pendower. But the idea of a housing complex or holiday village is anathema to us: quite simply this is not a suitable site for such a development.