

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER

150827

Watsons Cottage, Drag Road Byway, Symonds Yat, Herefordshire, HR9 6BW

CASE OFFICER: Mr C Brace
DATE OF SITE VISIT: 20th April 2015

Relevant Development NPPF
Plan Policies:

HUDP

S1 – Sustainable development
 S2 – Development requirements
 S8 – Recreation, sport and tourism
 DR1 – Design
 DR2 – Land use and activity
 DR3 – Movement
 DR4 – Environment
 LA1 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 NC1 – Biodiversity and development
 HBA12 – Re use of rural buildings
 RST1 Criteria for recreation, sport and tourism development
 RST2 – Recreation, sport and tourism development within
 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 RST12 – Visitor accommodation

Relevant Site History: DCSE2006/1578/F – Erection of detached garage – Approved w/conditions

CONSULTATIONS

	Consulted	No Response	No objection	Qualified Comment	Object
Parish Council	√	√			
Transportation	√			√	√
PROW	√		√		
Site Notice	√	√			
Local Member	√				

PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL:

Site description and proposal:

Watsons Cottage and its associated garage, subject of this application, is on the east side of Meekswell Lane, a single lane unclassified road and is located in open countryside and within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The proposal is conversion of the detached garage to provide ancillary accommodation for holiday let use.

Representations:

The Council's Area Engineer objects on the following grounds –

The road that services the application site is defined as a byway. The byway is very narrow and steep with no verges. In places there are open sheer drops adjacent to the highway. Passing places are very limited resulting in vehicles requiring to reverse a distance along a tight narrow steep lane. Local knowledge of the area would be essential to negotiate the roads, as to some of the junctions look like private roads and are tight, steep and would be difficult to negotiate for the unfamiliar driver. Bad weather would also have a factor in the ability to gain access to the holiday let, therefore limiting the use of the proposed holiday let.

Public transport is access from the bus stop in Whitchurch. The bus stop is approximately 1 mile away from the site resulting in a walk of approximately 20 minutes with steep gradients in parts. The bus to Hereford requires changing at either Ross or Monmouth. Advanced experience of cycling and knowledge of the roads would be required to access the site by bike.

The Council's PROW Officer has no objection.

Pre-application discussion:

None

Constraints:

Impact on the character and appearance of the AONB
Impact on the character and appearance of the open countryside
Protected species

Appraisal:

The main issues are:

- (i) Whether or not the proposal would provide a suitable site for tourist accommodation having regard to the principles of sustainable development;
- (ii) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Holiday accommodation/ let is essentially a residential use with an occupancy condition. A Core Principle of the NPPF as listed under paragraph 17 is supporting the transition to a low carbon future. The site is in an unsustainable open countryside location where any employees/ users/ customers will be reliant on the use of the private motor vehicle to access the site.

Policy RST12 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) states that outside of identified settlements, the provision of permanent serviced or self catering accommodation for visitors will only be permitted if it consists of the re-use and adaptation of a rural building. Notwithstanding this, Policy S8 of the UDP supports tourism proposals to meet the needs of visitors and to contribute to local economic development, employment and community

Policy S8 also requires development such as that proposed to address recognised shortages of such provision, be close to the point of need and be readily accessible by a choice of a means of transport. Policy DR3 also requires that, where relevant to the proposal, all development will be required to include good links to public transport.

The Inspector in his findings regarding the appeal against planning refusal reference 131269/F stated –

The Framework indicates that to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. I have taken account of the degree of social and economic benefit that would be derived from the provision of an additional dwelling in the area. However, the extent of any such benefit from this single dwelling would be insufficient to outweigh the harm that it would cause in respect of its unsustainable location.

For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not provide a suitable site for a dwelling, having regard to the principles of sustainable development. As such the development would be contrary to Policy HBA13 of the UDP and to paragraphs 8, 14 and 55 of the Framework which relate to the need for development to be sustainable.

The site is noticeably detached from any sustainable settlement and tourist attractions and local facilities. The building is one of several isolated sporadic dwellings in this vicinity along the lane. This is further emphasised by the narrow country lane, without a separate footway which would be likely to discourage walking, and potentially cycling, to and from Symonds Yat, Whitchurch or attractions and facilities desirable to tourists from a safety point of view.

Therefore, in order to access services and facilities the occupiers would inevitably be dependent on the car, disproportionately more so than for holiday accommodation in a more sustainable location. This would especially be the case with the nearest bus stop being in the village and so not, for the above reasons, a convenient walking distance away. There is therefore not a clear local economy that the development would support and in any case it would not be a centre where additional development would be likely to be focussed due to its isolated location remote from day to day services and facilities.

Furthermore the comments of the Area Engineer are noted. The road that services the application site is defined as a byway. The byway is very narrow and steep with no verges. In

places there are open sheer drops adjacent to the highway. Passing places are very limited resulting in vehicles requiring reversing a distance along a tight narrow steep lane. Local knowledge of the area would be essential to negotiate the roads, as to some of the junctions look like private roads and are tight, steep and would be difficult to negotiate for the unfamiliar driver. Bad weather would also have a factor in the ability to gain access to the holiday let, therefore limiting the use of the proposed holiday let.

Public transport is access from the bus stop in Whitchurch. The bus stop is approximately 1 mile away from the site resulting in a walk of approximately 20 minutes with steep gradients in parts. The bus to Hereford requires changing at either Ross or Monmouth. Advanced experience of cycling and knowledge of the roads would be required to access the site by bike.

There is concern regarding the sustainability and viability of the proposal in addition to the issue of sustainability vis-à-vis its location. Numerous applications have been received seeking the change of use from holiday accommodation to unrestricted dwellinghouses. The applicant has not demonstrated there is any overriding need or demand for such accommodation.

Previous Inspectors at Appeal have stated in assessing similar proposals in open countryside locations –

Whilst there is pedestrian access to the surrounding countryside, I have not received any compelling or substantive evidence relating to the level or nature of nearby attractions, formal or informal, to suggest that occupants would generally tend to stay in the vicinity as opposed to travel elsewhere. Therefore, whilst I acknowledge that rural accommodation is intended to serve those seeking countryside tourism and so might be expected to be more remote, I have received insufficient evidence in this case to demonstrate that there is sufficient local attraction to justify such a use.

The applicant has not demonstrated there is any need or demand for such accommodation. It has not been demonstrated that there is a recognised shortage of provision in this specific location or a close proximity to a point of need as set out in Policy S8. Whilst it would potentially have a small benefit in terms of boosting tourism spending in the wider Herefordshire area, due to the remoteness from local facilities, services and attractions it is unlikely that the proposed single unit would significantly improve the local economy in this respect. In the absence of any evidence of need or business plan to clarify the viability of the proposal, I am concerned that there will inevitably be pressure to lift any occupancy restriction thereby creating a strong likelihood of the building becoming a dwelling in future .

Having regard to the size, location and context of the proposal, it is considered unsustainable development that does not address or meet any identified need for such development in the local area and as such is contrary to paragraph 10 and 14 of The proposal is considered to create unacceptable harm that would be caused by not providing a suitable site for tourist accommodation, having regard to the principles of sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATION: **PERMIT** ☐ **REFUSE** ☒

REASONS FOR REFUSAL:

1. There is no demonstrated need for tourist accommodation in the locality and no evidence as to how the proposal would be of benefit to the economic development of the locality contrary to UDP Policy S8 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan and the relevant aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The application site is not accessible by a choice of modes of transport other than the private vehicle due to its remote unsustainable open countryside location. Furthermore there is a lack of tourist facilities and services within the nearest settlement or immediately sustainably accessible area. As such there is a subsequent requirement for visitors to travel by private vehicle to access such amenities. This renders the development unsustainable contrary to policies S1, DR3 and RST12 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The proposal fails to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty through creating an unsustainable use, harmful to this part of the statutory protected landscape. As such the proposal is contrary to Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan policies S1, S2, DR1, DR2, LA1 and RST2 and the relevant aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives

1. Refused with way forward (needs to refer to need for additional evidence)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CJ' with a stylized flourish.

Signed:

Dated: 11/5/2015

TEAM LEADER'S COMMENTS:

DECISION:

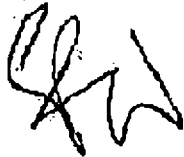
PERMIT

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REFUSE

X

Signed:



Dated: 13 May 2015