

TRINITY  
(Uplyme)

07/1017/FUL

Target Date: 15.06.2007

Applicant: J W Duncan

Location: Hartgrove Hill Farm, Trinity Hill Road, Axminster

Proposal: Conversion of barns to form storage/packing warehouse and office and extended holiday letting unit

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **County Highway Authority**

I understand the proposal seeks the relocation of a storage/packing warehouse facility from one barn within the site to another, with the existing barn (granted consent in 2002 for the same uses) being retained for holiday accommodation only.

The site is remotely located where the use of private vehicles is likely to prevail and the use of more sustainable modes of transport is unlikely to be an option. In addition, the farm access to the site is severely substandard in that visibility from and of vehicles emerging is restricted by the roadside boundaries. This is a fast stretch of road where visibility splays 2.4m x 120m would be appropriate, but it does not appear such splays are currently available. The farm access should also be 5.5m wide incorporating junction radii of at least 6.0m (but preferably more), and the whole access-way and access drive should be properly surfaced – not loose stone or gravel, as at present.

In transport and highway safety terms the development proposal is objectionable for the reasons given above, but on the basis that consent was granted previously to a similar operation – under planning application no. 02/P0204 – it may be unreasonable to raise a highway objection, if the current development proposal would not lead to further additional traffic being generated, however, I am not convinced that this would be the case.

I am mindful that in its letter dated 14 March 2002 in response to the previous application, the Highway Authority recommended access should be derived from the existing house entrance due to the substandard nature of the farm access, as mentioned above. I am concerned that the proposed development is seeking a larger holiday accommodation unit (which could generate more traffic) and that the supporting letter states that the business would expand as a result of this development, potentially generating more traffic, with a further two jobs being created.

At this stage, due to the very deficient nature of the farm access, I am minded to recommend refusal, unless further information or revised plans are submitted that address the aforementioned concerns.

Recommends the following reason for refusal:

The increased use of the farm access onto the Public Highway, likely to result from the proposed development would, by reason of the limited visibility from and of vehicles using the access, and substandard geometry/surface of the access, be likely to result in additional dangers to all users of the road contrary to Policy TR10 of the Devon Country Structure Plan.

### **TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL**

The Parish Council has no objections to this proposed development.

## **WARD MEMBER(S)**

The initial comments of Councillor K George are -

“This is just the sort of diversification farmers are encouraged to do and brings increased economic activity to rural areas. It is exactly what I hoped would happen as an extra rub off from the establishment of the River Cottage operation at Park Farm down the road and is a quality addition to the local tourist industry“.

In the event that this application comes to Committee I would reserve my position until I am in full possession of all the relevant facts and arguments for and against.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

None received.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

<b>App.No:</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Date</b>
02/P0204	Conversion and extension to outbuilding to create holiday housing and workshop (Full)	Approved	17.05.02

## **PLANNING POLICIES**

### Government Guidance

PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

### Devon County Structure Plan (2001-2016)

Policy CO3 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
Policy CO6 – Quality of New Development  
Policy TR10 – Strategic Road Network  
Policy ST5 – Development Priority 2001 - 2016

### East Devon Local Plan (1995-2011)

Policy S5 – Countryside Protection  
Policy D1 – Design and Local Distinctiveness  
Policy D10 – Re-use of Rural Buildings Outside Settlements  
Policy EN1 – Developments Affecting AONBs  
Policy TA7 – Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access

## **SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION**

Hartgrove Hill Farm is located on the eastern side of Trinity Hill Road just to the north of the crossroads formed by the junctions with Woodhouse Hill and the higher end of Mounthill Lane that leads to Musbury, around 3km to the west.

The principal farm dwelling, a comparatively modern bungalow, is served by a private driveway leading northwards from Woodhouse Hill and alongside the eastern boundary of Hartgrove

Retreat, a detached dwelling that occupies a large plot. Three buildings to the west of the dwelling, one of which has been extended and converted (as described below), are independently accessed via an unmade track from Trinity Hill Road.

The site is located within the designated East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ('AONB'). All three highways referred to above are classified Class 3, although Trinity Hill Road is a well-used link between the A3052 to the south and the A35 Trunk road to the north with a number of long, straight sections and of double vehicle width for the majority of its length, whilst Woodhouse Hill and Mounthill Lane are essentially lesser roads of single vehicle width.

The nearer of the two buildings referred to above to the farm dwelling has been converted to form a holiday letting unit and a workshop used in conjunction with the applicant's business, Country Covers, following a grant of planning permission in 2002 (02/P0204 refers). Country Covers is primarily a mail order company that designs and manufactures a range of outdoor clothing and accessories, leather cartridge bags and belts and tyre and seat covers and the authorised use of the building at Hartgrove Hill Farm is for the storage, wrapping and packing of goods associated with the business.

This building, although ostensibly of single storey form, occupies a sizeable footprint area and features a high wide span pitched slate roof with gables within which a second level of accommodation is housed. Externally, the walls of the building are finished in painted render with horizontal timber boarding at first floor level to the end gables.

The ground floor of the commercial part of the building currently houses a warehouse/showroom and retail outlet with the storage, wrapping and packing of goods taking place within a workshop area above. The adjacent holiday letting unit is housed within the northern part of the building.

The other main building on the site, to the west of the workshop and holiday let building and nearer to the road, currently retains an agricultural form and appearance. Constructed in the 1960s, it is mainly two storeys in height and features a mix of block, corrugated iron and timber boarding wall finishes with a shallow corrugated asbestos pitched roof that extends in catslide form to the south.

The building nearest to the road comprises a single storey range of stables that are not affected by the proposals described below.

The unmade track serving these buildings from Trinity Hill Road is of single vehicle width only. It gives access to an unmade parking area adjacent to the buildings that is of sufficient area to accommodate up to 20 vehicles.

A copy of an annotated location plan is attached for Members' information along with photographs of both the existing converted building and the other farm building.

## **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

Full planning permission is sought for the transferral of the Country Covers operation in its entirety to the agricultural building nearer to the highway and the conversion of the part of the building that it currently occupies to form an extension to the existing holiday letting unit.

The submitted details show that an appreciable number of new door and window openings would need to be formed in the existing agricultural building to facilitate its use for commercial purposes. All new windows would be double glazed 'PVCu/metal' units 'or similar'. Externally, the building would feature a similar range of finishes to the present building, although the extent is unclear from the submitted elevation drawing, a copy of which is appended to the report.

However, no details of the intended floor plan have been submitted.

The expansion of the present holiday let within the remainder of the building currently used as Country Covers' premises would involve internal alterations only with no external works proposed. The resulting unit would incorporate a lounge/dining room and games room within the additional ground floor area with four bedrooms (three with en-suite bathrooms and one with a further child annexe) and a bathroom at first floor level.

The justification for the proposal is set out in a statement accompanying the application which reads as follows:

'The existing warehouse/holiday lets building, completed in 2003/4 has proven to have limitations for purposes originally intended. In particular the storage and packing capacity is on the first floor, meaning far too much carrying of stock up and down stairs, a considerable problem with mainly female staff. The holiday lets side has proved very satisfactory.

If the whole Country Covers operation could be transferred to a nearby modern barn type building constructed in the 1960's, and easily converted, the problem would be overcome, because all the storage and packing would be on the ground floor.

This would facilitate further expansion of the business and enable a further two jobs all without the need for departure from the present site. The 2003/4 building would then wholly become available and the original warehouse unit would lend itself to a holiday unit for large families or small parties. No structural work would need to be carried out apart from a few internal partitioning walls. The whole building would then be given over to holiday lets instead of the one half only as it is now.

There is a proven need for holiday lets of the larger type in the district; particularly as River Cottage (Park Farm) is bordering our fields. They are requiring substantial accommodation nearby to meet the needs of numbers of people attending their regular courses. They have expressed interest in our increased accommodation as we are the only possible unit within walking distance, without the use of the main road.

This requirement apart there is a substantial demand for holiday lets in the area, particularly now we are part of a world heritage site.

We cannot see that the altered setup will involve any significant increase in the present traffic levels. Traffic involves approximately two visiting vehicles per day. The holiday unit would take one or two privately owned vehicles'.

## **CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT**

There are two main issues that are material to the determination of this proposal. The first of these relates to the extent to which the proposal complies with the relevant provisions of Policy D10 of the Local Plan (relating to the re-use of buildings in the countryside), with particular regard to the desirability of retaining the building into which it is intended to relocate Country Covers for conversion purposes and the degree to which the building is capable of conversion without significant alteration or reconstruction. The second main issue concerns the effect of the proposal on highway safety interests.

These are discussed in turn as follows:

### **Policy**

The building that it is proposed to convert to form the new storage/packing warehouse and offices for Country Casuals is of block, corrugated iron and timber boarded construction with a corrugated asbestos roof typical of many later 20<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings. It is not considered to

comprise a traditional building of architectural or historic merit that exhibits the use of local materials. As such, it makes little contribution to landscape character and is not thought to be worthy of retention for conversion purposes in terms of the requirements of Policy D10.

In a similar vein, it is also considered that the nature of the construction of the present building and the extent of the alterations proposed in order to undertake the conversion would be such that the requisite works would necessitate significant alteration and reconstruction contrary to the requirements of the policy. In particular, it appears clear from the plans that the existing corrugated iron finishes to the north west and south east elevations of the building, along with that on part of the front (north east) elevation, would need to be removed in order to allow for the replacement cladding with corrugated asbestos sheeting. The extent of such work that is required and the number of new openings proposed to convert the structure would be such that it is considered that the building would not be capable of being converted without substantial reconstruction or alteration. No structural survey has been submitted with the application to demonstrate otherwise.

It is considered that the proposed extension of the present holiday letting accommodation into the remainder of the building currently housing the warehouse and offices would in itself be acceptable from a policy standpoint. The conversion of the former farm building on the site following the granting of planning permission in 2002 referred to above has been undertaken in a manner that has improved its structural integrity and there would be no problems from this point of view, or from the perspective of the nature of any alterations to the building required to convert it to the extended holiday let as any such alterations would be internal only.

#### Highway Issues

As stated previously, the Country Covers premises and holiday let are set back around 80 metres from Trinity Hill Road with access from the highway taken from an unmade track of single vehicle width. Visibility in both directions from, and of, vehicles emerging from this point of access/egress is severely substandard due to the presence of established hedges close to the road carriageway. In this regard, it should be noted that, in its response to application 02/P0204, the County Highway Authority ('CHA') recommended that access to the workshop and offices should be taken from the driveway to the main farmhouse from Woodhouse Hill in view of the substandard nature of the access from Trinity Hill Road. However, this was never required by any condition imposed on the grant of permission and all access to the Country Covers premises has subsequently been taken from Trinity Hill Road.

According to the statement accompanying the application, the current proposal would facilitate the further expansion of the business and enable the creation of two additional jobs. Taken together with the considerably larger holiday letting unit that would result from the proposal, and the potentially greater level of occupancy, it is considered that this would create a material increase in the use of the present substandard access that would be to the further detriment of highway safety by reason of the inadequate visibility referred to above and the substandard dimensions and surface of the access itself.

It is suggested by the CHA that visibility splays of 120 metres in each direction would be appropriate given the fast stretch of road off which the access is located. In addition, the access should itself be of greater width with increased junction radii. However, it would appear that visibility splays of such dimensions could not be achieved given the limited extent of the land within the applicant's control or without significant harm to the rural landscape character of the AONB through the likely need for removal and realignment of the existing established roadside hedgebanks.

For these reasons, it is also considered that the proposal would be unacceptable on highway safety grounds.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Whilst the support expressed by the parish council and ward member for the proposal is noted, it is not considered that either element of the proposal could be achieved without conflict with either adopted Local Plan policy relating to the re-use of buildings within the countryside or without an intensification in the use of a wholly substandard access and driveway. Although it is accepted that there could be benefits in terms of additional job creation, it is considered that these are outweighed in this case by the shortcomings of the proposal set out above which are supported by adopted plan policies.

Refusal is therefore recommended on grounds relating to non-compliance with Policy D10 of the Local Plan and conflict with highway safety interests in accordance with the observations of the CHA.

Other matters not directly related to the proposal have emerged from an inspection of the site that will require a separate investigation. These relate to the use of part of the existing premises for retail sales contrary to a condition imposed on the 2002 permission, the display of unauthorised signage (advertising a shop within the site) at the entrance off Trinity Hill Road following two previous refusals of express consent under the Advertisement Regulations for similar signage on both amenity and highway safety grounds and the conversion of the building itself which does not comply in its entirety with the details approved in 2002.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

REFUSE for the following reasons:-

1. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the building to be converted is not of a form, bulk or design that is in keeping with its surroundings, local building styles or materials that would justify retention for re-use/conversion purposes. As a consequence, the proposal would be contrary to the provisions of Policy D10 (Re-Use of Rural Buildings Outside Settlements) of the adopted East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011.
2. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the building to be converted is not capable of conversion without the need for significant alteration and reconstruction. As a consequence, the proposal would be contrary to the provisions of Policy D10 (Re-Use of Rural Buildings Outside Settlements) of the adopted East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011.
3. The increased use of the farm access onto the public highway likely to result from the proposed development would, by reason of the limited visibility from and of vehicles using the access, and the substandard geometry/surface of the access, be likely to result in additional dangers to all users of the road contrary to the provisions of Policy TR10 (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access) of the adopted East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011, and Policy TA7 (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access) of the adopted East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011.
4. The achievement of visibility splays to the required standard at the access to the site would necessitate the removal of a significant length of hedgerow that would be to the detriment of the rural landscape character and natural beauty of the area, which is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As a consequence, the proposal would be contrary to the provisions of Policy CO3 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) of the Devon Structure Plan 2001-2016 and Policies S5 (Countryside

Protection) and EN1 (Developments Affecting Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) of the adopted East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011.

List of Background Papers

Application file, consultations and policy documents referred to in the report.