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Planning and Development Department
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June 20th 2016

Ref: Planning Reference P/16/055/FUL

Dear Isles of Scilly Council Planning Committee

P/16/055/FUL.

It is my understanding that the most significant proposals are:

- ***demolish the three lower ground floor guest rooms of the hotel***
- ***build six 3C cottages. These will be built on the area in front of Tregarthen's Hotel-directly behind the top level of the Mermaid car park.***
- ***The staff accommodation block to be rebuilt, with a change of use to two 3C dwellings.***
- ***Smaller works, include terrace gardens on the Garrison wall site, new pitched roof above the dining room area and some smaller alterations to improve the facade of the main hotel.***

The rationale for these proposals are primarily:

- ***Economic***
- ***Aesthetic***

The documentation supporting the proposal are comprehensive and in my opinion are not without merit and are a considered attempt at developing a challenging site which is surrounded by nationally important archaeology and heritage. Some of the reports have either repeated or reworded much that has been referenced before from various sources. The proposals have adopted a significant change of approach to the previous plans (P/15/060/FUL).

I believe the change of plans are based on Historic England's assertion in regard to the historic importance of ensuring the views between the main body of the hotel and the gate house are protected and '*ideally enhanced by any new development*'.

The importance of an unobstructed view across the flat roof covering the Hotel reception and lobby area is important, in that it ensures unrestricted views from the Garrison Hill defence complex to Rat island and onwards, therefore putting Garrison Wall and the defences into historical context.

Planning reference P/16/055/FUL refers to the developing cruise ship clientele. My own experience with this group of visitors in June highlighted the importance, yet again of this area, when two cruise ships visited the Isles on the same day and droves of people from the cruise ships walked up Garrison Hill with maps in hand to take the short walk up to the Garrison defences and walls.

I was tidying up the hill area outside 3 Garrison Hill and was approached on numerous occasions by these day tourists and asked questions about this area and *'would I mind taking a photo of a couple looking out towards Rat Island from the area above the flat roof'*.

Admittedly I have a personal interest in the Garrison Hill area, but this area and the views from Garrison Hill towards Star Castle are not only a very important historical feature of St Marys, but are also a visually important aspect of the visitor experience.

The proposals for the Tregarthen's Hotel site are not small scale developments- if passed they will significantly change the vista of the Mermaid car park area. The work required will impact on a large number of people, including those who live in the area, those who work on, or from the quay, those who need to drive down to the quay and those who use the Mermaid car park.

These are not full plans- dimensions are missing and the visual impact sketches need to be viewed with a good dose of reality. I am unsure whether the Planning Committee are being asked to grant permission for the concept of the development and then if passed, full plans with precise dimensions and drawings to scale will be presented to the committee for their consideration?

Would it be possible for the Planning Committee to request that the plans go on display to the public and the developer/owner, architects, planning officers and consultants be available to answer any questions from the public about the proposals?

Ideally a scaled cardboard/paper model of the proposals needs to be presented. This does not need to be a costly consultation and this approach compares more favourably to the preplanning strategy made by the owner of Tregarthen's Hotel for his previous plans for the Hotel.

➤ **Water and Sewerage:**

The issue of water and sewerage has not been adequately addressed, and the two concessions in the plans- 'grease traps and the possibility of out sourcing the laundry', do little to improve the situation. If the laundry is out-sourced and there is no commitment to do this, it will only move the problem of waste water to somewhere else on St Marys, as it is not economically viable to send the laundry to the mainland.

Therefore, the proposed development will put considerable strain on an already critical water and sewage system in this area. Self-catering accommodation, by their very nature have a higher consumption of the Island's most precious resource- water.

Considerable investment is required in the water and sewerage infrastructure on St Mary's. One of the most at risk areas is referred to as the 'Mermaid Run' - adjacent to the Tregarthen's Hotel redevelopment site and it is stated in the Isles of Scilly own Infrastructure Plan (2014):

Safe water standards and efficient sewerage management are essential and until the water and sewerage infrastructure is fit for purpose then I would contend that developments such as one proposed at the Tregarthen's site will be difficult to justify. If permission is granted, then other projects which use the Mermaid Run could reasonably expect to be granted by the Planning Committee.

➤ **Town cramming and maintain high way safety**

The Tregarthen's site and adjacent areas is probably one of the most built up areas in Hugh town. There are virtually no green spaces, with buildings in very close proximity to each other. The new proposals have tried to address this by maintaining the green areas presently in use and creating a terraced garden on the northwest side. It is difficult to visualize the impact of 6 new cottages facing into the Mermaid car park and such an increase in housing could possibly create a safe highway issue in what is the narrowest and busiest road on St Marys, with a constant flow of day time traffic to the quay and car park. A scaled model of how the proposal will look on completion may alleviate such concerns and could provide a positive projection of how the development will fit into this area.

➤ **Economic strategy:**

The building of 6 new 3C cottages and conversion of the staff accommodation to two C3 cottages could set a precedent for any future planning policy decisions about the building of houses on St Marys.

The plans states that a shared equity model of finance will be used for the cottages. My understanding of a shared equity model is part ownership of an asset, in this case a house. Until quite recently the most typical example of a shared equity is time share holiday homes, although more recently shared equity is used to part buy a life-time home, or pay towards an investment for a retirement or holiday home.

If the plans are passed for the building of new holiday homes, this represents a sea change in the new building development on St Marys and could arguably set a precedent for other hotel owners to put in similar plans.

The economic report accompanying the plans refers to the need for the Isles of Scilly tourist based economy to change focus of their service provision if the Islands' are to survive. I am not an expert in economics, although I have studied economic development and it is my understanding that all economies are subject to the fluctuations of a global community- Acts of terrorism, fiscal policies, the price of oil, economic recession and climate change all contribute to the massive market which is tourism.

At a local level, travelling to/from these islands has become something to be endured not enjoyed and a succession of wet summers will not improve the visitor experience regardless of how nice the accommodation is. It is also very difficult to prove that these cottages will attract new visitors to the Isles, when they could move return customers from one self-catering cottage/flat on St Mary's to the new Tregarthen's cottage complex.

The economic report accompanying the proposal
Paragraph 8.21:(8.22 & 8.23)

".....The planning application is a demonstration of the owner's commitment to the project, albeit it absolutely depends upon meeting the market at its needs and being able to develop and operate the cottages in accordance with the application and the proposed investment strategy described below(Investment into Tregarthen's Hotel and equity model, long lease on the cottages)"

I may have misconstrued this part of the economic report and I am happy to be corrected, but this could be read, that unless the Planning Committee agrees to the proposal then there will be no investment in the Hotel, as the cottages will finance the hotel upgrade.

My concern is that if the Planning Committee agree to this, then a precedent has been set which permits other businesses or individuals using the same rationale for their projects and all such projects could expect to be granted.

➤ **Housing:**

I am probably not alone in my belief that if change is to be managed successfully on the Isles of Scilly it needs to be managed within the context of what the infrastructure can support and should include sensitivities to the accommodation issues of all the residents, both in terms of holiday letting and permanent housing and is not solely about the commercial aspirations of an individual.

The proposal is not about the conversion of Tregarthen's Hotel into time-share or self-catering units, it is primarily about the building of 6 new houses on St Marys and the change of use of staff accommodation to two C3 cottages. If these plans are passed without public consultation, it could be viewed by people born on the Islands and who find it extraordinarily difficult to build or secure permanent accommodation that there is one rule for a hotel owner and another if you are local and in the need of somewhere to live.

As I understand the plans, and I am happy to be corrected, there is nothing to protect the 8 C3 cottages from becoming open market holiday homes.

I therefore, kindly ask the Planning Committee to consider the points I have raised in my letter when the plans for Tregarthen's Hotel (P/16/055/FUL) come before you.

Thank you
Anita Bedford