

From: Planning (Isles of Scilly)
Subject: FW: Planning Application Men a Vaur P/20/048

From: Lucy McRobert <PROVIDED>
Sent: 20 July 2020 12:39
To: Planning (Isles of Scilly) <planning@scilly.gov.uk>
Subject: Planning Application Men a Vaur P/20/048

For the attention of the Planning Department, Council of the Isles of Scilly

Dear Madam/Sir,

R.E. Planning Application Men a Vaur P/20/048

My husband and I purchased 3 Rosevean House, Church Road, in September 2018. We have felt warmly welcomed. It is a neighbourly community, respectful and peaceful.

Whilst I applaud Mr Selleck's commitment to providing tailored accommodation for disabled visitors, I object to the application on the following grounds:

- The garden of Men a Vaur is a microcosm of greenery and wildlife in a built-up area; an abundance of red-listed species (like house sparrows and starlings) feed there all year round, making the most of the varied food sources that the orchard and wild gardens offer. Linnets have nested locally; barn swallows feed over the garden in the summer; song thrushes sing from trees. Pipistrelle bats forage the area at dusk in the summer. In the autumn and winter, migrating warblers and thrushes make the most of the abundance of fruit and insects it provides. Whilst the ecological report highlights that many of the plants are non-native, this seems a little redundant: much of the islands (excluding the specifically-managed areas like Lower Moors SSSI) are dominated by non-native plants and yet the islands support a disproportionately high and thriving population of endangered UK bird species. It remains a valuable food source and provides a much-needed wildlife corridor for foraging species moving between Hugh Town and Old Town, and out towards Porthmellon and Jackson's Hill via the Chaplaincy gardens. Habitat fragmentation is one of the biggest risks to UK wildlife, and these little pockets deserve our protection.
- In light of the Covid-19 lockdown, nature and wild places have become more important to us than ever. Many residents, whilst isolated in their own homes, were consoled by the birds, flowers and trees that blossom from the Men a Vaur garden every spring. The importance of green spaces for our health and wellbeing must not be underestimated; we overlook the garden directly and many other properties can see it, too. In a built-up area, where many properties are lacking in gardens, it is a hidden gem.
- Whilst proposed disabled-friendly accommodation is admirable and the site itself suitable for landscaping, as a young family with an 82-year-old mother-in-law and a two-year-old toddler in a pushchair, I must emphasise that the local infrastructure does not exist here to encourage disabled visitors. There is no safe way for electric vehicles/buggies to access the site and there is no space on the road for more parking; the pavements are uneven, broken and, in places, steep; and as you get into town, they become narrow and sometimes disappear altogether. Pushing a light pushchair around Hugh Town is no easy feat, let alone accessing the Co-op, the tripper boats, the pubs and restaurants or many of the beaches. I worry about

building up expectations for visitors that would ultimately fall short, and that is not what the Scilly hospitality industry embodies. I would suggest that disabled access needs to be within town, with a full provision in place for supporting disabled visitors – this cannot be offered by an absentee landlord. Some of the hotels are already offering similar services and are much better placed for full, responsible provision.

- There are still huge inadequacies of accessing the site with building materials and equipment. There have been suggestions that Mr Selleck has been granted rights of way over council land, but the details of this don't seem to be available. Access isn't plausible from Rams Valley, due to local opposition on the private nature road. There is a substantial hedgerow in the way which must not be removed, due to its ecological importance. Branksea Close is narrow and unsafe; the houses there are residential with many young families and work would cause a huge amount of unnecessary disruption. Pedestrian access would be severely impeded. We also have concerns about the noise and disruption that the proposed development would cause.
- Many residents have also raised concerns over the sewage disposal from the site, which poses a health hazard already (including regular rodding of the drains in the immediate area and, on occasion, spillages onto residential roads); the additional strain on water provision, which caused a serious issue in summer 2018 and is likely to resurface in future years as our climate warms – the amount of bathrooms and wetrooms proposed for the property is disproportionately high; and the need for the fire brigade to access the narrow entrance to Branksea Close in an emergency, both during the build and after. Rams Valley cannot be relied upon to offer access, and nor should it have to be.
- Finally, Mr Selleck has told us, and many neighbours, that he intends to use resources and a workforce from his existing contacts in Cornwall, housing them in Men a Vaur throughout the build. This attitude shows a sad disregard for supporting local businesses and workmen, suggesting that his plans have little to do with the Isles of Scilly, our community and our local economy. There seems little benefit to anyone in the area, at a time when neighbourly support and community solidarity is more important than ever.

I cannot see the necessity of another holiday-let in the area; whilst the local economy is going to rely on tourism more than ever to recover post-Covid, our priorities should sit with supporting existing rentals (many of whom have suffered hugely in the past few months) and investing in local recovery. Housing for residents is in short supply; surely housing investment should focus on that. Should Mr Selleck truly want to invest in the community, might I suggest that he give the gardens over as a community orchard? Many of the trees, with a little tending, could provide a valuable food source for both humans and birds; and the gardens could provide a peaceful haven for residents.

Kind regards,

Lucy McRobert

Lucy McRobert

Communications & Marketing Consultant | Storyteller, Nature Author & Environmental Journalist |
Columnist, *Birdwatch* | Birder & Naturalist