

Introduction

Bell Cornwell represents the owners of Darts Farm. Darts Farm is a national award winning, unique retail destination with its own and locally produced food at its heart but is also a destination for wellness, the home and garden and the great outdoors. Darts Farm is home to 13 different businesses with 400 people employed on-site and it supports 500 suppliers, most of whom are located in Devon and across the West Country. With close to a million visits a year, it therefore makes a major contribution to the economy of the area.

As an important local stakeholder, Darts Farm has a considerable interest in the future direction of development in East Devon and therefore in the approach proposed in the draft East Devon Local Plan. They have therefore reviewed the draft policies set out within the document and notably *Strategic Policy WS15: Employment Land at Darts Farm* and *Policy SE02: Employment development in the countryside*. Our client has a number of observations on these policies and these are set out below.

Policy SE02: Employment development in the countryside

This policy sets out the circumstances in which existing business which are located within the countryside can be extended. In essence, it notes that for such businesses, expansion including building works will be allowed where the business is operating at, or close to capacity, and there is an clear need for the business to expand. Any expansion should be proportionate to the size and scale of the existing business and priority should be given the use of existing buildings where these are available.

Response

Darts Farm SUPPORTS the wording of Policy SE02. It is considered that the policy is positively worded and sufficiently flexible to assist the growth of rural businesses in line with the local plan's economic objectives and priorities set out at paragraphs 3.20 to 3.23 of the draft plan. This policy is therefore considered to be sound.