



CRANBROOK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Consultation Response - 15/1825/MOUT

To: Jenna George EDDC

From: Landscape Consultant

Date: 7th September 2015

Cranbrook Applications Will Harley - 08/09/2015

FILE

Subject: 15/1825/MOUT - Proposed Development to the South of B3174 Rockbeare

I have no further comments to add over and above the those made previously in respect of this site in application 15/0371 on 8th April 2015. For information I include those comments below:

15/0371 - Proposed Development to the South of B3174 Rockbeare

1) The Proposals and Impacts on Trees and Hedges

- The proposal is to construct up to 250 dwellings and additional infrastructure, alongside commercial and employment opportunities, public open space, a pond habitat area, and a country park. The site is located to the north-west, north and north-east of the village of Rockbeare, on land totalling 42.59ha in area. The development will take place alongside the B3174 London Road and will extend south into the countryside towards a low west/east ridgeline. Currently the application site is largely pasture, with some arable use to the west, and a designed parkland on and bordering the eastern field.
- The western part of the proposed Country Park is located within the Clyst Valley Regional Park. This area will be used for public access that will allow connectivity with the adjacent Cranbrook development. The remainder of the Country Park will provide public open access for the adjoining development and a buffer between the wider countryside to the south and the proposed residential development to the north.
- The site contains a number of trees and field boundary hedgerows, of which only the trees have been surveyed. It appears that there are no trees with Tree Preservation Orders, however, of the 180 trees surveyed there are 2 A grade, 51 B grade, 114 C grade, and 13 U grade trees.
- There are three proposed access points onto the site taken from the London Road, the eastern and western access points will be of a 'T' junction layout, and the central access point, which connects to the village of Rockbeare to the south will include a new roundabout.
- The proposed access routes in their current form will result in the felling of two category B trees (T169 and T170); the layout of the internal roads incur the removal of 1 category B tree (T21), and 3 category C trees (T24, T72 & T150); the built development layout will result in the removal of 3 category C trees (T138, T139 & T140), and 2

category U trees (T17 & T136). The Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report also identifies that there are another 2 category B trees and 10 category C trees that need to be removed to implement the submitted site layout. Category B trees are of a moderate quality and all steps should be taken to retain them. Significant sections of traditional native field hedging and hedgebank will need to be removed to facilitate the proposed development, but no assessment of these has been submitted.

2) Landscape and visual issues:

- The housing development is close to the ridgeline to the south and will be visible in views from the low ground beyond, albeit filtered to some extent by the existing field boundary trees. The coniferous element in some of the existing boundary vegetation will exacerbate the urban effect of the proposed development.
- The eastern housing area is located alongside the private driveway associated with the Grange Court Hotel and will have a detrimental effect on the designed parkland setting of the drive and the hotel.
- The position of the proposed café is close to the ridgeline, and being remote from the existing roads creates an illogical and potentially prominent intrusion into the landscape.
- The proposed development in its current form will be seen in a rural context:
 - The proposed western development area along the London Road, to the west of the minor road to Rockbeare, is visible from London Road behind mature hedgerows. However, it will be seen in the context of the existing built form with a backdrop of trees and farm buildings to the south and south west. There are no significant medium or long distance views of the development from the south. The impact of the development on the Grade II* listed Church of Blessed Virgin Mary will be limited due to the agricultural buildings associated with Rockbeare Court Farm, and from the buffer of proposed public open space/green infrastructure between the development and the church.
 - The central section of development is visible from along the London Road behind mature hedgerows, and through gaps in the hedgerow along the unnamed road to the south of the development, east of Rockbeare leading towards the A30 trunk road. The roadside frontage of the development will be seen within the context of the existing built form development of the Oriental Promise bar/restaurant. The southern section extends to the ridgeline, which allows views of the development on the skyline when viewed from the south.
 - The eastern section of the proposed development is visible from along London Road behind mature hedgerows; through gaps in the hedgerow along the unnamed road to the south of the development, east of Rockbeare leading towards the A30; and from the Driveway to The Grange Court Hotel to the south-east of the development. Poor quality conifers on the northern boundary of the Grange Court Hotel provide some obscuring of views to the eastern part of the development from the south. However, there are views more open views of the remainder of part of the proposed development area. The northern part is seen within the built form context of the Oriental Promise bar/restaurant and the agricultural buildings and dwellings towards the north-east corner. The south-western part extends into the countryside and is

close to the ridgeline. The south-eastern part is located within a designed parkland setting and alongside the lime avenue along the drive towards The Grand Court Hotel. Development of the field to the west of the access will totally change the rural setting and character of the access and hotel.

3) Conclusions and Recommendations

- The proposed development will have significant adverse impacts on the character and visual qualities of the landscape to the south of London Road to the north of the village of Rockbeare. The Cranbrook development is concentrated to the north of the road, but this has led to changes to the character of the London Road frontage, giving it a more suburban, rather than rural character. Beyond the road frontage the rural character of the landscape dominates. It is therefore recommended that:
 - The proposal in its current form is unacceptable and will have a detrimental impact on the west/east ridgeline to the south of London Road and will adversely impact upon the character of the area and its visual amenities.
 - The two fields to the east are isolated from the existing development form and will be seen as an urban intrusion into the landscape. There will be an adverse impact on the designed landscape which forms part of the setting of the Grange Court Hotel.
 - The location of the proposed café is remote and visually intrusive and should be closer to the existing developed areas.
 - A more limited road frontage development, as indicated on Figure 1, could be acceptable, as it will have a more limited impact on the character of the local landscape and would be visually much better contained. It would be more in keeping with the development form seen along this part of the London Road.
 - The development proposal includes commercial/mixed use residential space in two sites along the road frontage, either side of the road leading to Rockbeare from London Road. These locations form an uncharacteristic frame to the minor country land that leads to Rockbeare. It would be more beneficial to move the commercial space into the farm buildings associated with Rockbeare Court Farm, that have been proposed for demolition. This would allow for a more sympathetic road frontage development form and would make use of existing buildings.
 - The access to the site from London Road will need to be reviewed if the considerable reduction in house numbers recommended were to be deemed acceptable. This should result the retention of more of the roadside hedging.
 - A survey of affected hedgerows and hedgebanks will be required.

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Legend

Site boundary. Total area = 42.59 ha
Application for up to 250 dwellings

- Site Access
- i Access to Rockbeare Village
- ii Access to Cafe

Country Park (25.16ha)
A. Country Park West (19.15ha)
B. Country Park East (6.01ha)

Public Open Space/Green infrastructure (5.04ha)
(including play provision and buffer planting as necessary)

Pond Habitat Area (1.79ha)

Area for potential development

Area not to be developed

Area for commercial development using existing agricultural buildings
(change of use)

Figure 1. Potential development areas that have reduced landscape and visual impact