

Reference: 11/00909/FUL
Date submitted: 25.11.2011
Applicant: Ms L Young
Location: Vale House, Belvoir
Proposal: Mixed use of dwelling house to provide bed and breakfast/commercial
Provision of three camping pods in the grounds



Introduction:-

Vale House is a fine detached house in the heart of the Belvoir Estate. Formerly the home of the Estate Manager it is currently unused. There are some outbuildings associated with the dwelling. Although not listed it is within the Belvoir Castle conservation area and also within the Historic Park and Garden - as such is considered a heritage asset of some significance.

- The application has two components
- The change of use of Vale House from a dwelling to a mixed commercial/bed and breakfast use;
- The provision of three camping pods within the grounds

The applicants currently run a consulting and life coaching business which will offer a residential program for participants including leadership development workshops and strategy workshops for between 2 and 5 days duration. These will utilise the conference facilities at Belvoir Castle and the necessary overnight accommodation provided in four of the six bedrooms at Vale House on a bed and breakfast basis.

There will also be occasional weekend retreat workshops also providing accommodation at vale House with 'overspill' into the camping pods.

The Application is to be considered by Committee due to the fact that the camping pods are considered to be new buildings in a remote countryside location and therefore they are not in strict accordance with planning policy.

It is considered that the main issues relating to the application are:

- **Compliance , or otherwise, with planning policy relating to businesses in rural locations**
- **Impact upon the open countryside**
- **Impact upon the Designated Historic Park and Garden**
- **Impact upon the host historic building**
- **Impact upon highway safety**

Relevant History:-

There is no relevant site history

Planning Policies:-

PPS 1 ‘Delivering Sustainable Development’ - The guidance says that planning should promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of development. A key principle involves the need to reduce the need to travel by car and to identify land for development in locations where there is, or the potential for, a realistic choice of access by means other than the private car. The Government is committed to promoting a strong, stable, and productive economy that aims to bring jobs and prosperity for all. Planning authorities should ensure that suitable locations are available for industrial, commercial, retail, public sector (e.g. health and education) tourism and leisure developments, so that the economy can prosper.

PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth - contains advice on dealing with applications in rural areas and applies the principles of sustainable development.

With specific regard to tourist accommodation, the PPS advises that L.P.A’s should:-

- support provision of rural tourist accommodation in sustainable locations which benefits the rural economy
- weigh the objective of providing facilities with the need to protect the landscape
- should be located within existing buildings or sites close to villages
- support expansion of existing facilities where this helps their viability
- recognise areas of statutory designation

“Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism” – provides guidance on the role of planning in tourism development. It also underlines the importance of protecting and enhancing the visual quality of sites to ensure the development fits in well with its environs. Annex 1 addresses accommodation and advises:

- Planners should carefully weigh the objective of providing adequate facilities and sites with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites.
- New sites that are close to existing settlements and other services will generally be more sustainable as some local services may be accessed by means other than by car.

PPS5 – ‘Planning and Historic Environment’ which outlines the Government's policies for effective protection of all aspects of the historic environment. Planning has a central role to play in conserving our heritage assets and utilising the historic environment in creating sustainable places.

The Government’s overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. To achieve this, the Government’s objectives for planning for the historic environment seek to recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term and wherever possible, heritage assets are put to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation.

In particular Policy HE7.2 states that in considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset the particular nature and significance of the heritage asset must be taken into account. This understanding should be used by the local planning authority to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Policy HE9 of PPS5 states that when there is a degree of harm to a heritage asset from a proposal that the public benefit should be weighed against that harm

PPS7 – ‘Sustainable Development in Rural Areas’ – The principles for permitting rural economic development is now contained within the PPS4 however PPS7 is still relevant and contains advice on determining applications in rural areas and sets out national planning policy in relation to development in rural areas. All development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness.

Melton Local Plan (saved policies):

Policy OS2 - does not allow for development outside the town and village envelopes shown on the proposals map except for development essential to the operational requirements of agriculture and forestry, and small scale development for employment, recreation and tourism which is not significantly detrimental to the appearance and rural character of the open countryside.

Policy BE1 - Siting and design of buildings: Allows for new buildings subject to criteria including the design harmonising with the surroundings, no adverse impact on neighbouring properties by loss of privacy or outlook, adequate space around and between buildings being provided and adequate access and parking arrangements being made.

Policy BE9 - This policy refers to Historic Parks and Gardens and states that planning permission will not be granted for any development that would have an adverse effect on their character or setting.

Local Development Framework Core Strategy ‘Preferred Options’ seeks to support small scale attractions based on enjoying the countryside, historic town and villages, churches, events, festivals, waterways and food. Holiday accommodation (holiday lodges, caravans) linked to existing attractions may also be acceptable.

Consultations:-

Consultation reply	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
Highway Authority – Whilst the Highway Authority initially had concerns over the existing access to the Vale House site these have now been overcome following agreement with the Belvoir Estate to utilise the Belvoir Castle visitor car park for guest parking	Noted
English Heritage – do not wish to offer any comments on this occasion. The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of the Council's specialist Conservation advice.	Noted
<p>Belvoir Parish Council - The Parish Council suggest that the camping pods should be strictly limited to a maximum of 3.</p> <p>There were concerns raised about the use of an advertising banner on the boundary hedge of the property. This could serve as yet another distraction at this junction, as there are</p>	<p>Noted. The application is for 3 only and any additional would need a further application.</p> <p>Any advertising banner would be the subject of separate advertising consent.</p>

already numerous signs on Belvoir Castle car park	
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Representations:

A site notice was posted and the immediate neighbouring properties consulted by letter. At the time of writing this report no letters of objection have been received.

Other material considerations (not raised through consultation of representation)

Consideration	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
<p>Application of Development Plan and other planning policy</p> <p>Policy OS2 carries a general presumption against development outside town and village envelopes except in certain instances such as development essential for agriculture and forestry, small scale employment, tourism and recreation development.</p> <p>Policy BE1: This policy refers to the siting and design of buildings and amongst other things is concerned with buildings harmonising with their surroundings and any adverse effects on neighbours.</p> <p>Policy BE9: This policy refers to Historic Parks and Gardens and states that planning permission will not be granted for any development that would have an adverse effect on their character or setting</p> <p>PPS5 – ‘Planning and Historic Environment’ which outlines the Government's policies for effective protection of all aspects of the historic environment. Planning has a central role to play in conserving our heritage assets and utilising the historic environment in creating sustainable places.</p> <p>The Government’s overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. To achieve this, the Government’s objectives for</p>	<p>The use of Vale House for Bed and Breakfast facilities together with the provision of camping pods within the garden area is considered to be a tourism/small scale employment related use. It is anticipated that the equivalent of 4 FTE jobs will be created.</p> <p>The proposal also involves the re-use of Vale House - an existing building.</p> <p>The camping pods are constructed in timber with green felt tiling and are designed to blend in and harmonise with its surroundings. They occupy a maximum 3m. x 3m. base and are a maximum of 2.49m. to ridge and are similar in design to a mansard roof. They are to be located towards the rear of the site and will be nestled amongst a belt of boundary trees which will minimise their impact on the garden area. The remote location of the site also ensures that the proposal does not adversely affect neighbours. Accordingly the design and location of the pods is considered to be acceptable and will not adversely affect the character and appearance of the area.</p> <p>As stated above the pods are to be located towards the rear of the site and will be nestled amongst a belt of boundary trees which will minimise their impact on the garden area. Accordingly the proposal does not adversely affect the character or setting of the designated Historic Park and Garden</p> <p>Vale House, although not listed, is a substantial historic building situated both within the Belvoir conservation area and the Belvoir Castle Historic Park and Garden. It is of course an Estate Property which is related to Belvoir Castle by virtue of its former use. As such it is considered to be a heritage asset of high significance.</p> <p>The proposed re-use of the building for bed and breakfast accommodation has little effect on its current form and hence it will retain its character</p>

<p>planning for the historic environment seek to recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term and wherever possible, heritage assets are put to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation.</p> <p>PPS4 reflects the advice in PPS1 but supports small-scale economic development in rural areas particularly those adjacent or closely related to towns or villages, where the benefits outweigh the harm in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the potential impact on the countryside, landscapes and wildlife. • local economic and social needs and opportunities. • settlement patterns and the level of accessibility to service centres, markets and housing. • the need to conserve, or the desirability of conserving, heritage assets and, • the suitability of the building(s), and of different scales, for re-use, 	<p>and appearance. It will also ensure its longer term maintenance which is to be welcomed.</p> <p>The camping pods will be situated within the garden area which is within both the conservation area and Historic Park and Garden. However their design, construction and siting of the pods within the tree belt etc will minimise their impact on both, as well as on the host historic building.</p> <p>The benefits of maintaining and ensuring a new use for a significant heritage asset (Vale House) is seen to address the balance between perceived public harm and benefit (PPS5 - Policy HE9.4)</p> <p>The expectation in PPS4 is that accommodation should be ‘in or adjacent’ to towns and villages is specifically qualified to those “requiring new buildings”. This site is located immediately adjacent to Belvoir Castle but is some distance away from the nearest village. The development is likely to generate some economic benefits at a local level as visitors will spend more in the locality and at a general level will contribute to the quantity and choice of holiday accommodation available. However, it is also considered that the location is such that visitors would inevitably travel to and from the site to fulfill conventional visitor activities (including shopping, visiting attractions etc). In this respect the location is considered to perform poorly in sustainability terms given the limited range of facilities within the immediate vicinity.</p> <p>Supporting information submitted with the application states that the applicant will be running leadership development workshops and strategy workshops utilising the conferencing facilities at Belvoir Castle as well as providing overnight accommodation for workshop participants. These workshops tend to be anywhere from 2 – 5 nights in duration, with participants remaining static for their stay.. In addition, the proposal is to run monthly or twice-monthly (depending upon uptake) weekend retreat workshops with accommodation provision at Vale House.</p> <p>It is considered that a Bed and Breakfast use is acceptable as it will involve the re-use of the existing historic property. However, the proposed pods are perhaps more controversial as they are new buildings and are therefore not strictly in accordance with planning policy. Accordingly there is a balance to be struck in this case between encouraging tourism related uses and the sustainability of the site.</p>
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	<p>In this instance it is considered that the camping pods would not be prominent in the countryside and the buildings are in keeping with the character and appearance of the site. The pods are proposed to be moveable structures and are limited in number. The proposed useage would only be occasional and would support functions at Belvoir Castle. Accordingly any conflict with sustainability and the guidance contained in PPS4 is limited.</p>
<p>Impact on highway safety</p>	<p>An agreement has been reached between the applicants and the Belvoir Estate to enable visitors and guests to Vale House to utilise the existing Belvoir Castle car park, thus negating additional traffic movements through the current site access point. Additionally a new signposted footway will be provided within the car park area together with a new hand gate opposite the existing pedestrian hand gate to Vale House to allow visitors to cross directly between sites. This approach is considered to be acceptable by the Highway Authority given the level of usage anticipated.</p>

Conclusion

The proposal seeks to apply for full planning permission for the change of use of Vale House, a designated heritage asset, from a dwelling to a mixed bed and breakfast/commercial use, together with the provision of three timber camping pods within the curtilage of Vale House.

There are no longer any highway issues as the initial concerns of the Highway Authority have been overcome through the utilisation of the Belvoir Castle visitor car park for Vale House guests. The proposed buildings are considered not to cause any detrimental harm to the setting of Vale House, the Designated Historic Park and Garden, conservation area and countryside due to the construction materials proposed and the screening for the site from the highway.

The proposal is considered to comply with the objectives of the Local Development Framework, regional and national planning policies in terms of generating tourist accommodation and supporting the objectives of PPS4 by contributing to the rural economy and facilitating access to the countryside. Likewise the objectives of PPS5 are supported in terms of the benefits of maintaining and ensuring a new use for Vale House, a significant heritage asset, balanced against the minimal impact of the camping pods on the landscape

There is a lack of these types of facilities within the Borough and there are many rural tourist attractions within the Vale of Belvoir that would support this proposal. It is considered that the impact on travel patterns and other sustainability considerations would be very limited by its scale and location, such that no significantly harmful affects could be demonstrated.

The proposal is not therefore considered to be contrary to Policies OS2, BE1 and BE9 of the adopted Melton Local Plan and is accordingly recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:- Approval with the following conditions/reasons:-

1. The development shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

2. The external materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall be in strict accordance with those specified in the application unless alternative materials are first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved details
- 3 The camping pods hereby approved shall be subject to the following restrictions:-
 - (i) The camping pods shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and shall not be occupied as a persons sole, or main place of residence and
 - (ii) The accommodation hereby permitted shall not be let to the same person, group of persons or family for a period not exceeding 28 days in any one calendar year
 - (iii) The owner/occupier of the site shall maintain an up-to-date register of the names of all owners/occupiers of individual pods on the site, and of their main home addresses and shall make this information available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority.
- 4 Within 2 months of their installation on the site, the external surfaces of the camping pods hereby permitted shall be painted and/or stained in accordance with a colour scheme to be first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall thereafter be retained in the agreed colour.
5. No development shall commence on site until provision has been made for the satisfactory disposal of foul and surface water from the site in accordance with a scheme which shall first have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.
6. Before development commences the proposed car parking arrangements to utilise the Belvoir Castle visitor car park together with the proposed footpath access arrangements shall be fully implemented in accordance with the agreement with Belvoir Estate.
7. No more than 3 camping pods shall be positioned on the site in connection with the development hereby permitted, and their design shall be in strict accordance with those details specified in the application and no tents; caravans; mobile homes; or log cabins of an alternative design shall be located on the site unless alternative designs are first agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons

1. To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
2. To ensure a satisfactory standard of external appearance.
3. To ensure that the holiday accommodation hereby approved is not used for unauthorised permanent residential occupation.
4. To ensure a satisfactory standard of external appearance.
5. To ensure that satisfactory provision is made at the appropriate time for the disposal of foul and surface water.
6. In the general interests of Highway safety.
7. To ensure a satisfactory standard of external appearance in the interests of the preservation of the character of the Conservation Area.

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Date: 14th February 2012