

East Devon District Council
Planning Department
Blackdown House, Border Road
Heathpark Industrial Estate
Honiton
EX14 1EJ

Date:

Ref: Planning Application (address/number)

We wish to add our support as prospective letting agents to this planning application.

Sleeps12 have several large group holiday houses in rural locations throughout Somerset and other parts of the West Country. Our main area of focus is on family holidays and providing an opportunity for multi-generational groups to get together for special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries. A typical example would be Grandma and Grandad's 60th wedding anniversary celebrated quietly with children and grandchildren.

We place a lot of emphasis on our accommodation being access friendly to all; we have worked with one of the country's leading experts in this field who has advised us on all aspects of accessibility – not just for those who are wheelchair bound or less able bodied, but covering all kinds of impairments including cognition and learning, hearing, vision, and invisible disabilities such as cystic fibrosis, autism and mental health conditions.

Almost half a million British adults with an impairment state lack of accessibility as a reason for not going on holiday in the UK; this is wrong and that is why we strive to offer accommodation to everyone - so that people with disabilities, their families and carers are not missing out.

We are proud to offer large group holiday accommodation that meets the needs of the less able bodied and those with other conditions, and has much appeal to all generations. We have recently started working with www.mindforyou.co.uk, an organisation that specialises in dementia care and offers personalised support for UK holidays as an alternative to the traditional and somewhat limited respite for carers and those living with dementia.

Holidays for those with health conditions and impairments, and their travelling companions is worth an estimated 15.3 billion pounds per year in the UK, with 1 in 5 people having some kind of disability, be it physical, intellectual or related to mental health. We know from experience that demand for large group accommodation in this respect is high – we have on average 25 enquiries per week in this respect and our access friendly holiday houses are booked for more than two years in advance. This includes the applicant's existing property, Shires, which is our top access friendly holiday house. Sadly, we are having to turn away people wanting to book such accommodation on a daily basis due to lack of properties.

This demand is due to the type of holiday accommodation we provide – with a focus on large groups with exclusive use of facilities such as swimming pools, hot tubs, saunas and games rooms. It is a sad but documented fact that more often than not, people with accessibility issues don't like to use public facilities such as swimming pools and saunas because they feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. A private property with facilities that people can enjoy in a relaxing environment with friends and family, that also has the necessary provisions for carers is the perfect solution. This type of accommodation also reaches those with conditions such as autism or Tourette syndrome, as well as those with religious restrictions (for example remaining fully clothed in public bathing areas).

The applicant is very sensitive to the need for this type of accommodation, hence the considerations given to Shires and the fact that he donates two holidays each year to the Make A Wish Foundation for families with terminally ill children. The demand for even larger properties is strong, enabling such scenarios as a group with say 3 people with impairments and their carers to enjoy a holiday as part of a big family. The applicant recognises this and is looking to build a property that covers the entire spectrum of disabilities; leisure facilities will be accessible, there will be a lift to the first floor, large bedrooms and bathrooms for ease of movement and room for carers, mood lighting and a sensory garden. He is also sensitive to environmental issues and will be installing solar panels to generate electricity; there will be ground source heating and an on-site water source.

We are all about the quiet enjoyment of holidays; relaxing in a hot tub in beautiful surroundings, splashing about in the pool as a family, watching a film together, having a game of table tennis – the type of thing that brings so much joy to families who don't have the chance to get together in this kind of environment very often.

This proposed holiday let would also bring several benefits to the local community. Our website gives information on things to do in each local area – this includes pubs and cafes, family attractions, activities, and towns to browse, and we know from feedback that our guests use our suggestions and thus go out into the locality spending money.

We list local suppliers such as private caterers, florists, clay pigeon shooting tuition, farm shops, etc. Time and time again our guest use these businesses – they arrange pony treks with local stables, book shooting tuition, use local fisheries, shop at the farm shops, and something that's very popular, they hire private caterers who bring staff with them. Add to that the local pubs they dine at, the attractions they visit and the shops they use, then the input into the local economy is significant.

To summarise, we believe that this proposed development would be a very positive contribution to accessible holidays and to the local community.

Yours faithfully,

J. Vellacott, Director