

Planning Statements

Description_ Additional accommodation and tree planting

Address_ Kosel Treehouses, Old Mill Farm, Gweek, Helston, TR12 6UD

Applicant_ Mr P. Spink

Introduction

This proposal seeks to improve the existing holiday offer at Kosel Treehouses while aligning with national and local planning policies which encourage sustainable economic growth in rural areas.

Kosel Treehouses has already demonstrated good integration with the natural environment and achieved positive impact on the local economy with employment and guest reviews affirming its success.

Growing the business, fostering local employment and economic vitality, the proposed designs continue to aim for environmental sensitivity, with provision of ample green infrastructure to enhance the site's ecological values.

The proposal is rooted in sustainability whilst supporting the local rural economy and creates harmonious rural development that respects and integrates with the natural environment.

Specifically, these new designs will provide an inclusive holiday unit taking into account the needs of all user groups, and include features such as widened doorways and level entrances throughout.

Responding to local constraints, the proposal has been prepared following a professional Heritage Impact Assessment which accompanies the application.

By enabling the sustainable growth of this business within its rural community, the proposal aligns with key policies contained within the Development Plan for the area.

Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is entirely clear on its support of the rural economy. It states that planning decisions should **enable** sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas (**para.84**), especially rural tourism which respects the character of the countryside. The NPPF also recognises that sustainable business sites may need to be allowed beyond existing settlements.

Policy 5 of the Cornwall Local Plan (CLP) supports this approach to sustaining the economic vitality of rural communities. Policy 5 allows for the upgrading of existing tourism sites. It offers positive support where proposals are of appropriate scale and provide a well-balanced mix of economic, social and environmental benefits.



In 2023, Cornwall's Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (CEDPD) was adopted. Its policies aim to ensure resilience to the effects of climate change, seeking positive contributions to community health, wellbeing, and the natural world. It emphasises the need for efficient use of land and environmental growth. In particular, **Policy TC5** seeks to enable local employment opportunities and facilities that support the rural economy.

This proposal responds to these central government and local policy objectives.

Existing

The existing business has proven successful. It provides much needed purpose-built holiday accommodation which reduces the pressure on existing housing stock, and leads to local employment and small-scale economic growth.

Tailored to its context, the existing holiday units are sensitively designed and have demonstrated good integration within the character of the countryside. The units are set low and have no visible impact in public views. The former approved application has also led to natural enhancements with considerable tree planting.

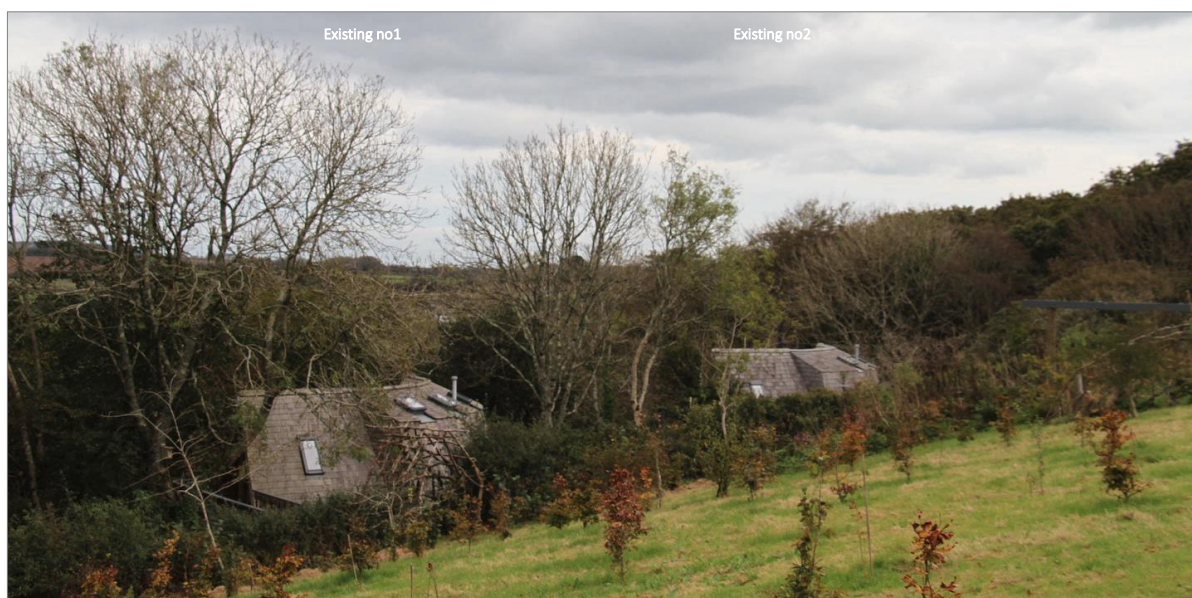


Fig 1 – Existing holiday units at Kosel Treehouses

Furthermore, the existing holiday site brings guests into close contact with nature, contributing positively to people's health, wellbeing and resilience, and also promotes income to the rural economy with guests spending in local shops and services which are located a short 600m walk away.

Below is a small snapshot of reviews showing how guests have enjoyed the seclusion, with use throughout the year, and while appreciating the proximity of local facilities:

5 Star Review (Oct 2023). *We felt at peace from the time we arrived. It was such an amazing experience and would love to return in the near future. The Hosts were extremely friendly and the property is very well maintained. This place will definitely be great all year round no matter how hot or cold it is. Great holiday and exactly what we needed :)*



shape of the building, and timber louvres further integrating glazed areas. Services will be connected to existing systems and any external lighting will be low level simply serving to illuminate the ground at pathways.

Meeting the demands of the climate emergency, solar panels will also be ground sited in a discrete location on the site, delivering an efficient and renewable source of energy.

Further tree planting will be provided at key vantage points, with the addition of a small bund at the west of the site to permanently obscure public sight-lines from the nearby road with immediate effect.

Woodland tree planting (existing and proposed) includes a diverse mix of Birch, Beech, Oak, Hawthorn, Hazel, Elder and Holly. A management plan is also to be implemented.

Growing rates in this location are estimated at approximately 60cm a year. Within 5 years newly planted trees will have reached of 3m in height, and the buildings across the site will be effectively contained within the new woodland.

The site is within an Area of Great Landscape Value and adjacent to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The design proposals have been sensitively conceived to complement these designated landscapes. The planting of native trees, plus the materials which echo the natural environment (green roofs plus wooden cladding which will 'silver' to a soft grey) mean that the designs will be well integrated.

Furthermore, the low-lying nature of the buildings means their visual impacts on the wider landscape will be minimal. Views demonstrated in the Heritage Impact Assessment accompanying this application show how the underlying topography screens out the proposed development site from nearby views, including those from Gweek towards Gweek Drive (where the AONB and AGLV meet).



Fig 3 – Proposed layout x2 new accessible holiday units at Kosel Treehouses within new woodland planting



The site is also near two heritage assets, a Registered Park and Garden and Gweek Round, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Responding to these assets, the proposal has been prepared with regard to their significance, and a professional Heritage Impact Assessment accompanies the application.

In public views outside of the site, the proposed buildings will remain unnoticed.



Fig 4 – Illustration showing the view of the woodland and the new accessible units from the existing car park

Local Employment

Operating costs currently include a team of 6 local people regularly supporting the business. This comprises 1 maintenance person, 1 grounds person, 1 manager, 3 changeover staff. All these posts are part time and collectively equal **1 to 1.5** Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

With an increase in the site's productivity, the proposal will achieve **2.5 to 3** FTE.

All posts are paid well above minimum wage rates (50-350%+)

The existing treehouses have proven to attract customers all year round and the business does not close over winter with employment sustained throughout the year.

Green Infrastructure

Planning Policy

In February 2023, the Climate Emergency Development Plan Document was adopted by Cornwall Council as a functional part of the development plan for the area. Its policies aim to protect and shape the future by addressing the impacts of climate change through appropriate management of the built and natural environment, whilst planning for a sustainable future.

Policy C1 (Climate Change Principles) sets out Cornwall's main priorities for minimising greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing resilience, supporting community well-being, conserving soil quality, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable transportation, preserving natural and historic environments, reducing pollution, enhancing carbon storage, and managing coastal and river processes effectively.



Policy G1 (Green Infrastructure Design and Maintenance) emphasises the importance of incorporating green infrastructure into development schemes to enhance biodiversity and create functional spaces. The policy outlines key principles for green infrastructure design, including creating a multifunctional network that connects natural features, ensuring accessibility, integrating sustainable drainage and blue infrastructure, promoting climate resilience, and prioritising pollinator-friendly planting. It highlights the integration of street trees and greening while respecting the historic environment. The policy also emphasises the provision of well-proportioned gardens or communal green spaces, long-term management and maintenance of green infrastructure, and the inclusion of bird and bat boxes and bee bricks which are tailored to habitat conditions.

While meeting these imperatives, the following statements demonstrate the way in which green infrastructure (GI) has been incorporated into the proposed development.

Background

Green infrastructure refers to the planned network of natural and semi-natural spaces, features, and systems within an urban area. Its purpose is to provide a range of environmental, social, and economic benefits to communities. When applied to a small development, green infrastructure can play a crucial role in enhancing the overall sustainability and liveability of the area by promoting ecological and biodiversity gains.

In the context of this proposal, green infrastructure can be implemented in various ways to support the ecological and biodiversity objectives, and contribute to the overall ecological health of the area.

Firstly, the majority of the site will be dedicated green space serving as habitats for local flora and fauna. By including large areas of planting, the development will attract and promote a diverse range of wildlife. Additionally, bird boxes and bat roosts could be installed to provide nesting opportunities, helping to enhance local bird and bat populations.

The conservation of existing trees, hedges, with the planting of additional trees in the development (see plans provided with this application), will create a more resilient and diverse environment. Trees provide vital ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, air purification, and shade, while also providing habitats for birds and insects. The presence of healthy trees will enhance the overall ecological balance of the site and contribute to the well-being of both humans and wildlife.

GI Opportunities

- New trees and shrubs planted in suitable areas, including along the boundaries and across the site.

- Underplanting and provision of new hedges across the site comprising species such as Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Oak, Willow, Rowan, Spindle and Crab Apple.

- Bat boxes can be installed on south, south-east and south-westerly aspects, to face the sun, at least 2m above ground level.



- Bird boxes can be installed between northern and eastern aspects, avoiding direct sunlight, at least 2m above ground level.
- Additional areas across the site can be sowed with flowering seed mix for a richer more diverse habitat.
- Additional pollinator plants provided in open areas and in the fringes of the site to attract invertebrates which will in turn attract other species which prey upon them.
- Hedgerows will benefit ongoing management which will conserve and support the existing dense, vegetation rich structures.

The proposal has been considered whilst following the '10 pillars for action', which aim to help nature regeneration, and to provide the natural foundations for a green recovery, as set out by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership. Integration of these green infrastructure measures within the proposed development will provide environmental benefits, fostering ecological and biodiversity gains, and enhance the quality of life for existing and future residents.

Through incorporating the green amenity spaces, the additional native planting, and other habitat features, the development creates opportunities for wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and contributes to the overall ecological health of the area.

Conclusion

This proposed extension to the existing holiday offer at Kosel Treehouses aligns seamlessly with the national and local planning policies which enable sustainable growth in rural areas.

The existing business has already demonstrated good integration with the natural environment, and achieved positive impact on the local economy with employment and guest reviews affirming its success.

The new units are specifically designed to enable access to the holiday site by all user groups with features such as widened doorways and level entrances throughout.

Growing the business, fostering local employment and economic vitality, the designs will continue to achieve environmentally sensitive construction, with green infrastructure that enhances the site's ecological values.

This carefully considered proposal is rooted in sustainability whilst supporting the local rural economy, and creates harmonious rural development that respects and integrates with the natural environment.

The proposal has been prepared in accordance with the Development Plan for the area, and provides a strategic response to planning policies which prioritise sustainability and enable sustainable growth of all types of business in rural areas.

Prepared by,
Andrew Golay MRTPI
Chartered Town Planner