

## **Refusal of planning permission for the erection of 4 holiday Bed & Breakfast “Airigh” rooms**

**Reference number 14/0009/LRB**

**Reply to comments by the Planning Authority.**

### Introduction - Original application

- The original planning application 13/010490/PP was for one business to provide the Isle of Tiree with a modern, purpose built Bistro with Bed and Breakfast Rooms.
- The planning authority has called the rooms “chalets” however the rooms are not self-catering holiday lets.
- The rationale for the individual rooms is that they are less intrusive on the countryside than one building with a larger footprint.
- The planning authority requested the reduction in the overall size of the Bistro, demonstrating that the provision of accommodation could only be achieved as separate rooms.
- The individual rooms are more affordable and cost efficient in achieving the overall objective for a ‘start-up/new’ business.
- Further, they will provide a unique visitor/guest experience for the Isle of Tiree.
- In December 2013 the planning authority’s advice was to split the original application (13/010490/PP) into two applications as follows:
  - the first application submitted for the Bistro (Approved, 24 January 2014)
  - the second application for four Bed & Breakfast “Airigh” rooms (Refused, 31 July 2014).

### Operational Link

- The Business plan and extra financial evidence supplied to this review show a direct operational link between the Bistro and accommodation.
- The planning authority have suggested that the principle revenue will be generated by custom from visitors staying in a range of locations across the Island, however due to the seasonality, declining population and uncertainty or inconsistency of that revenue the rooms provide foundational, consistent income to support the business throughout the year.
- The financial sustainability of the business depends on revenue from the rooms in order for the Bistro to survive.
- Professional Advisors have provided comprehensive guidance regarding the robustness of the business model.
- Banks will not provide funding for the business with only a Bistro because of the operational interdependence with the rooms.
- The planning authority has suggested searching for an alternative location for the holiday accommodation. However, the rooms are not self-catering holiday “chalets” the Bistro building provides the breakfast facilities for the guests staying in the rooms therefore it is not viable nor logistically practical to relocate the rooms to an alternative site.

### Location

- To locate and secure a suitable site on Tiree has taken in excess of three years.
- Financial constraints limit the ability to purchase one of the current businesses on the Island; therefore a new build was the only option.
- The local plan has very limited development land available on Tiree. Most of this zone is around Crossapol or within the derelict surroundings of the war time out-buildings at the airport. With no land for sale or appropriate for this type of business, other options had to be considered.
- Working in conjunction with Argyll Estates, they indentified the old agricultural market site could be for sale and importantly at a sustainable price to the business.
- The old agricultural market currently sites a derelict barn and concrete hard standing for heavy traffic between cattle and sheep pens.
- It is with **Policy Strat DC 5** in mind that this small scale redevelopment is entirely appropriate for this brownfield site. Given that **Strat DC 5** offers support for small scale redevelopment and this business clearly meets the criteria as described in **Policy LP Tour 1, Tourist Scales of Development**.
- This is the perfect location and opportunity to redevelop a brownfield site, as the entire business is contained within the curtilage of the site.
- Although situated within the sensitive countryside zone, delineated by the Argyll and Bute local plan (2009), note should be taken that this site is only 40 metres away from the island's Community Hall "An Talla".

#### Business Community Growth Plan & Tiree Design Guide

- Dualchas were specifically sought after as the architects for this project because of the many examples of their work and illustrations within the Isle of Tiree Sustainable Design Guide.
- It must be noted that although there is no direct reference in the design guide, every effort has been made to promote good design that is sympathetic with the Tiree design guide.
- One of the examples given is an existing, successful Bed & Breakfast business on the Isle of Skye.
- In the Tiree Design Guide there is no reference to small, modern "Pod" accommodation, therefore the architects have maintained the agricultural theme and character in reference to the heritage of the old agricultural market site.
- Most small crofts on the Island have small agricultural outbuildings. These are commonly constructed with corrugated sheet metal, which is acceptable building material within the guide. Therefore, it is with this in mind that they have designed an "Airigh" - a similar scaled, well-proportioned rural building. In their design, these have retained the agricultural heritage while using material carefully that will withstand Tiree's weather and climate.
- The larger window openings take the form of floor to ceiling openings traditionally found in agricultural buildings. They minimise floor to ceiling height at the gable entrance, while still giving an impression of space through clever use of section, thus creating the recommended strong roof shape. Open plan space with larger full height windows avoids a claustrophobic feel.
- Therefore the design of the "Airigh" is in keeping with **Policy LP ENV 19** and the **Tiree Sustainable Design Guide**. The buildings shall also be suitable adopted with minimising internal ground floor levels to meet the reasonable expectations for special needs groups.

- As with the site layout, the “Airighs” work with the landform and natural topography of the site boundary. From the sweeping road, only the gable entrance ends are visible avoiding significant visual intrusion onto Tiree’s shoreline. An architect’s visual impression from the shore can be seen in the business plan.
- It has to be noted that the total square metre footprint for all the rooms (128m<sup>2</sup>) is still less than half the size of a tennis court (132m<sup>2</sup>). This is a small business re-development.

### Summary

As a result of the interdependency of the two parts of this business, one cannot function without the other, funding will not be achieved and the bistro application that has been granted will not come to fruition.

The tourist industry plays a significant part in the future economic prosperity of the island of Tiree and this completed project in its entirety with the rooms aims to regenerate a brown field site sensitively and provide a boost to the local economy.

**Policy LP Tour 1** favours new or improved tourist facilities and accommodation. The planning authority appears to have a very negative and subjective view. I believe that this small scale business is totally suitable for this site.

The location has been diligently thought about and designed to provide the highest quality that works successfully with the environment.

At no time have the planners considered the undisputable benefits that this business will bring to the Island. These are highlighted within the business community growth plan section of the project’s business plan.

Dualchas have shown innovation to design a high quality, energy efficient solution to the accommodation.

It respects the local environment which will promote the business and increase revenue for the community in general. Good design will result in less environmental impacts, increase safety and generate greater civic pride. Most importantly it will lead to quality economic and social benefits to Tiree.