

Tourist Accommodation

Planning Guidance Note

Introduction

The aim of this Guidance Note is to encourage the development of well designed tourist accommodation in appropriate locations, which protect residential amenity and East Dunbartonshire's outstanding natural and built environment.

As long as it is not overdeveloped, tourism can be essentially a sustainable industry and has considerable potential for growth in East Dunbartonshire. Tourist accommodation can take many different forms including hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast premises, self-catering, touring and static caravans and camping. All of these can potentially make significant contributions to the local economy of the areas in which they are located.

They must not damage the qualities that bring tourists to the area in the first place. Tourism related development, including accommodation, must be carefully located, sited and designed to provide high quality facilities which fit successfully into the environment. Any economic benefits will therefore need to be assessed alongside other issues such as suitability of the location, environmental impact and sustainability. The issues that will need to be addressed in considering planning applications for tourist accommodation will vary depending on the type, size and nature of the accommodation being provided.

Format of Guidance

All planning guidance notes are material considerations in the assessment of planning applications and shall be afforded significant weight in the decision making process. Failure to comply with Guidance Notes may be a reason for refusal of consent.

Planning Framework

National Context

National policy is provided by the consolidated Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). Paragraph 47 recognises the tourism industry as one of Scotland's largest business sectors and states that *"planning authorities should support high quality tourism related development, including the provision of appropriate facilities in key locations"*.

With regard to rural development, Paragraph 93 of the SPP also makes it clear that economic activity and diversification in all small towns and rural areas should be promoted, including development linked to tourism. However, it is important that the distinctiveness of rural places, the service function of small towns and the natural and cultural heritage are protected and enhanced.

Strategic Context

The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan states that tourism is a sector where growth is required in growing the city-region's economy as a whole.

Local Context

The Local Plan 2 (Policy TO1) is supportive of new or enhanced tourism facilities and accommodation proposals which, amongst other things, have regard to the Plan's other

policies and are accessible and sustainably located. This Note provides more detailed guidance on some of these requirements and is intended to assist developers.

Policy Guidance

In assessing applications, the emphasis will be on identifying the most sustainable locations, having regard to national planning policies. The Council will take into account relevant provisions of the Development Plan and other material considerations as set out below.

Hotels and Serviced Accommodation

Major new proposals for hotels, such as those with conference and banqueting facilities, should be directed to areas designated for commercial or leisure purposes, especially in or around town centres and on major transport corridors in the urban area. This will make best use of the transport network, reducing the need to travel and strengthening town centres.

The Planning Authority does, however, recognise that the particular market being met by the accommodation may influence the nature of the location chosen. For example, accommodation catering for those seeking to enjoy the natural environment through walking and outdoor recreation may be better located in a rural area, in or at the edge of the centre of a village or small town, rather than in a major town centre some distance away from the attractions it serves.

All hotel or serviced accommodation should:

- fit well with its surroundings, having regard to its siting, scale, design, materials and landscaping; and,
- be in harmony with the local environment (taking account of, residential amenity, noise, traffic and parking in the vicinity).

Car Parking

For those hotels where a substantial part of the parking needs are attributable to public rooms used mainly for functions which attract non-residents, the availability of public parking in the vicinity of the hotel will also need to be taken into account.

The Council will also take account of the proposed arrangements for service loading and unloading and setting down space for visitors. Organised tours demand adequate loading and unloading facilities for coaches. Access and waiting areas should be designed with this in mind. Access points should be sited so as to minimise turning movements across traffic and to avoid congestion of the highway caused by vehicles queuing to pick up or drop passengers. Developers should discuss proposed access arrangements with the Planning Service at the earliest possible stage.

Residential Areas

The development of new, or conversion of existing houses to, small hotels or boarding houses will be encouraged if the following criteria are met:

- it is in character with its surroundings in terms of siting, scale, design, materials and landscaping;
- it has no adverse effects on the surrounding residential amenity; and,
- adequate arrangements are available for safe access and parking.

Permitted Change of Use

It is worth noting that the Use Classes Order permits the limited use of houses (not including flats) as a bed and breakfast or guesthouse. The use is permitted for this purpose, to a

maximum of one bedroom where the house has less than four bedrooms, and a maximum of two bedrooms where the house has four or more bedrooms.

Modernisation and Extensions

There are many redundant or semi-obsolete buildings that can lend themselves well to adaptation and modernisation as hotels, other forms of serviced accommodation, or restaurants. Finding an appropriate use for redundant buildings can bring life back to an otherwise unused asset – thus conserving a useful and often attractive building, improving a neglected site and benefiting the local economy. Therefore, the conversion of such buildings to tourist accommodation will be sympathetically considered if the following criteria, and those set out in the green belt policy GB 2F, can be met:

- the building(s) should not have become so derelict that they could not be brought back into use except by complete or substantial reconstruction;
- the building(s) are of permanent and substantial construction and their form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings;
- proposals should be modest in scale, so as to avoid any adverse impact on the economic vitality of nearby town and village centres, and to avoid excessive additional traffic growth; and,
- it does not materially alter the character or historic features of the building.

The conversion of more modern farm buildings to a non-agricultural use is unlikely to be appropriate if the resulting development would be out of keeping with its surroundings, or generate significant volumes of traffic onto roads with limited capacity.

Caretaker accommodation may be permitted where the scale of the use justifies a full time presence on site (a business plan justification may be required) and where living space is in balance with the requirements of the operation. A Section 75 Agreement may be required to link its occupancy to the operation of the tourism business.

Similarly, moderate-sized extensions to an existing hotel or public house, including the addition of bedroom accommodation, can help to ensure the future viability of such businesses. This may satisfy a local need as well as a tourism need, by fully utilising the potential of the site but without any disproportionate increase in scale. In all cases, careful consideration should be given to ensure that the size of the extension proposed is not disproportionate for the location concerned.

Budget Hotels, Motels and Travel Lodges

Budget hotels and similar types of development such as motels and travel lodges can cater more for car-born travellers, often for a single overnight stay, e.g. business travellers en-route to a destination. In such cases, the preference of developers is likely to be for sites on major traffic routes outside of the centre of large towns or tourist centres. However, the aim should be to make any development as sustainable as possible, and it will not normally be appropriate for such developments to be located in open countryside away from major settlements. If a town centre location is not available, a sequential approach will be applied. Edge of town centre locations, for example on a major route out of the town centre, will usually be the most appropriate locations.

Outwith the Urban Areas

Unless there is a strongly justified locational need, out of town locations will generally be more suited to lower density or smaller scale accommodation. For out-of-centre locations, the design and layout of the development is likely to be of considerable importance in deciding whether it is acceptable in planning terms. New tourist accommodation developments will be sympathetically considered if the following criteria can be met:

- where there is a specific locational need, e.g. where there is a tourist attraction at the site;
- if it is an extension to an established tourist accommodation complex (evidence may be required which backs up the vibrant nature and viability of the existing complex);
- where there are no existing properties capable of being converted; and,
- the facility is within easy reach of the main tourist transport corridors.

Where a proposal includes other new facilities, such as a petrol station or shop, these will have to be considered on their own merits. If they raise concerns in themselves, the fact that they are combined with a hotel will not necessarily obviate these issues. Restaurants, fast food outlets, leisure, fitness and other facilities open to the general public as well as residents are also sometimes combined with hotel proposals, in which case the extra traffic they are likely to generate and its effect on the access network and local amenity will also be taken into account.

Holiday, Caravan and Chalet Parks

Tourist accommodation can also comprise holiday chalets, caravan holiday homes, pitches for touring caravans, motor-homes and tenting and all types of self-catering accommodation. It will be important that the desire to encourage such facilities is balanced 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 local services may be accessed by means other than by car. Similarly, caravan storage facilities that are close to existing settlements may have a less adverse impact and be more sustainable. New sites should be effectively planned and screened so as not to be visually intrusive. In all cases developers should have regard to the following landscape and environmental considerations:

- the scale of a development must respect its surrounding environment;
- in view of their environmental impact, larger developments will generally only be permitted within or adjacent to settlements;
- proposals in more rural locations must be relatively small scale and sensitively developed;
- proposals should be sited in unobtrusive locations, and should avoid skylines, prominent hillsides or exposed sites;
- proposals in open countryside locations should normally be set against a backdrop of semi-mature/mature trees or within woodland settings. Sites which require extensive screening through new planting will not be appropriate;
- proposals should respect the topography of the site and existing site levels should be retained wherever possible; and,
- all planning applications should be accompanied by a comprehensive landscape scheme.

Small sites will be considered sympathetically where:

- they will not be unduly intrusive; and,
- they satisfy a genuine need for provision that cannot be met elsewhere in the urban areas.

There may also be valid reasons for extending or improving existing facilities that are not located close to existing settlements, such as Badenheath Farm at Mollinsburn and Bankell Farm by Milngavie, by virtue of their support for successful local businesses and the provision of employment.

Occupancy Restrictions

Restrictions may be imposed to limit occupancy for holiday purposes only. This is primarily to ensure that chalets and static caravans are not used as residential accommodation.