

20 March 2023

Re: P/23/006/FUL Land at Trethagan, St Martins Isles of Scilly

Dear Lisa

Thank you for your email of 16 March – I have responded to your points raised in red font below. For clarity, your points are copied here in black.

“Although the applicant anticipates that the larger store would increase direct sales by 50% (conservatively estimated based on the larger sales floor and having two members of staff assisting customers), I am still concerned that a shop of this nature, which is primarily aimed at retail sales for a limited summer period, would not be proportionate to the size of St Martins.”

Answer: other retail outlets on St Martin’s have been a similar size. For example, Glenmore shop (which St Martin’s has now lost to residential) used to sell clothing and gifts, and was approximately 40m<sup>2</sup> – the same as our proposed shop floor. Also The Locker, was approx 42m<sup>2</sup>, which has also been lost. So this new shop would only be replacing about half of that total retail area lost. Also the Gallery in Highertown is in the area of 45m<sup>2</sup>.

Lucy-Tania shop on Tresco is approx 42m<sup>2</sup> plus an even larger stock room out the back. The 2-storey gallery shop on Bryher - a smaller island than St Martin’s – is 50m<sup>2</sup> per storey, so 100m<sup>2</sup> of floor space in total; considerably bigger than we are requesting.

As this is a tourist economy, as well as a shop being proportionate to the physical size of the island/population, consideration needs to be given to the volume of visitors coming through. Not counting tourists staying in accommodation on St Martin’s, the following gives an idea of the numbers visiting from other islands: Firethorn carries 100 and does two trips a day on Monday, Wednesday & Friday. Spirit of St Agnes carries 80 and does at least one trip a week. St Mary’s does at least two trips a day, sometimes bringing up 4/5 boats in the peak season, each average about 100, which can mean 800 visitors per day on St Martin’s.

Like most businesses in Scilly that are tourist dependent, it is only economically viable to open during the tourist season. Given this, it’s even more important to have fit-for-purpose business premises to maximise productivity and sales during the season. Added to this, the extra space would allow diversification and reutilisation of the space for business activity such as screen printing our own garments out of season, as described in my previous document.

“This anticipated increase in sales appears to be based on 1 year of post-covid analysis of retail sales. So although there is narrative about being a draw to the islands for visitors it is unclear how this business would actually increase visitors to the islands as it would seem to rely on the visitors already being on St Martins rather than the reason they visited.”

Answer:

Although we have not undertaken any official survey information, we do have anecdotal evidence to suggest that some visitors have chosen to come to St. Martin’s for the day to attend the Scilly Billy shop.

It is our understanding that increasing visitors to the island is not a stipulation of the planning process, so we have not chosen to collect any specific data to back this up.

“ I am sorry if I have misunderstood the case being made in this respect. If I understand the case being made, if you have more items on display with more sizes, more items would sell and if you have more space in the shop people wouldn’t have to queue and would buy items.

Answer: Yes, unfortunately there is some misunderstanding here. At present, there is not enough room to display the items we have for sale OR allow customers to move freely through the shop. So customers cannot see what garments they can buy. We also need to allow people in wheelchairs and mobility scooters to access the shop and move around.

*On top of this*, there is no room for the 7+ new designs that we have sitting waiting to be added to our range, plus Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust merchandise. So if we were unable to increase the size of the shop to a similar size to other retail outlets, customers would have limited access to products, preventing increased employment opportunities for island residents, and blocking funds to the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. This would also mean our planned public/community nature education programme with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust would not be able to go ahead.

Please see more detail in Appendix 1 on shop floor display space needed, if you need further information on this point.

“And if you had a dedicated stock room you would be able to provide an alternative size which would mean people customers wouldn’t have to wait, and would buy (and it would mean stock wasn’t being stored in the house).

Answer: The shop is in great need of a stock room. Stock needs to be accessible from the shop, systemised for quick and efficient access, secure and protected from damp/insects/sun. Currently we use 3000 Litres of storage which requires 15m of shelf space, and more space is needed for the new designs and products we have waiting to be produced.

Minimum order quantities plus significant delays with DPD and other couriers means large quantities of stock needs to be purchased and stored.

If the person working in the shop has to leave the shop to go to the house and hunt around the house for a garment, not only are customers left waiting, but the shop is left unattended. This poses a security risk to the business, as well as inefficient functionality and poor customer service.

‘Do you know if those people who queued and were put off or weren’t able to wait for an alternative size, actually came back later when the shop was less busy or when more sizes were bought up to the shop?

Answer: We see visitors on the webcam come in the gate and turnaround and leave because they can’t get in. They generally don’t come back later as the island is linear, we are in the centre, and most people work their way from one end to the other to maximise their precious few hours on the island and cover as much as possible. This usually ties in with boats too – arriving at one end and leaving from the other end of the island.

From what has been provided I am not convinced that an adequate case has been made to support a retail store of this scale.”

Answer: This scale is a similar size to retail stores that have already been in existence on St Martin’s. I’m sorry if the information provided hasn’t illustrated the need for more space for the business to operate and function properly. Clothing certainly does take up a lot of space!

Perhaps the photos and 3-D modelling below will help shed more light on the proposed size with space taken up for displaying garments and allowing movement of customers. Remember the internal shop floor area is approx. 6.4m x 6.4m.



Garment rack sticks out 90cm from wall and is 240cm wide.



Small Gondolas display takes up 165cm x 180cm of space each, Large Gondolas take up 240cm x 150cm





3-D modelling showing possible shop interior with garment displays and customers in place.

In retail store design and layout, it is vital that there are gaps to allow customers space to think and move around freely, this includes enough space for customers in wheelchairs.

An aisle space of approximately 1.5m for the customer pathway is necessary for customers including those in wheelchairs to be able to comfortably move past each other.

I note you have previously mentioned the possible use of Middletown Barn honesty shop. This is not appropriate for our use. It sells products at a completely different scale, the inside is no bigger than our current premises (it is just a tiny corner section of the building), it is unmanned, and there is no space for our garments.

It is unsustainable to carry on the business with the current set up of no stockroom and an extremely tiny shop that is not able to fit the business's goods for sale or adequately accommodate customers. We would not be willing to make a considerable investment in a project like this if it was not evident there is a solid need for it.

Without this expanded retail and storage space, the business will be put in jeopardy as we cannot continue with the current set up.

**The Isles of Scilly Local Plan 2015 – 2030, Building a Strong Working Community (5) Policy WC1,** states

308. Where businesses grow and intensify their activity, support will be given to extend or provide new premises, provided there is no unacceptable impact on the appearance and character of the landscape and other special island qualities. The aim of the Local Plan is to enable successful businesses to expand appropriately without causing harm. Encouragement

will be given to home-based businesses, the expansion of existing businesses, as well as new development in response to economic opportunities.

The proposed small site satisfies the requirements of the Duchy of Cornwall, the terms of our house lease and is right next to the house curtilage, so doesn't overshadow any other properties; and with the present hedgerows plus some extra landscaping, the building cannot be seen from anywhere on St Martin's.

The Council is aiming to grow the economy and enable businesses to expand, and is partnering with the Good Growth Fund, therefore if this application is refused, it would be great to hear suggestions for another way forward.

It would also be helpful to know what support is being given to provide new premises, and what encouragement is being given to the expansion of this existing business, as stated in the Local Plan point 308 above.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Perkins

### Appendix 1

More detail on the products we need more space for displaying on the shop floor.

- Bee Scilly design – Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust fund raiser garments – currently only space for adult vests, tees and sweats. Need to also display Bee Scilly bags, adult hoodies and kids tees in a range of colours, need a further 1m x 1m of display space.
- New nature-related design – another Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust fund raiser garment – ready for release. To be printed on adult and kids tees, sweats and hoodies. Need a further 90cm x 240cm of display space.
- St Martin's Daymark design sweatshirts and hoodies for kids and adults – popular demand following the release of this design on T-shirts last year – these will need an additional 90cm x 240cm of display space.
- A further 6 new designs are prepared, each needing at least 1m x 1m of display space.