

Expert: 500-home holiday park “comes with enormous risks”

The concept developers behind Møns Klint Holiday Park aim to build 500 holiday homes by the shoreline of Hjelm Bay and 13 km from Møns Klint. But Anne-Mette Hjalager, a professor and tourism expert at SDU, has expressed scepticism about the project.

“There’s already so much capacity in the market for holiday homes and holiday cottages , so regardless of the business model, you’re going to end up facing competition - fierce competition,” said Hjalager.

She believes that the demand for more overnight accommodation capacity among tourists isn’t necessarily high enough.

“I generally have a hard time seeing how to make a profitable business out of it. It certainly comes with enormous risks if they want to go with a hotel or holiday resort model,” Hjalager said.

If, on the other hand, they were to opt to sell the homes as holiday cottages to Danish buyers, that would eliminate the risk for the investor. Regardless, Hjalager’s impression is that the location in and of itself will make this a risky project.

“The one billion [Danish kroner] they intend to spend on this is an amount that I would assume could be better spent on the harbour in Vordingborg,” she said.

According to Hjalager, that would end up being a better investment for the investors as well as the local community.

“If the project goes out of business, it’s a better idea to have something that looks like flexible, useable residences in an urban area. Municipalities have the right to make requirements of investors. There’s ample reason for Vordingborg Municipality to carefully consider this matter,” she said.

Nothing set in stone yet

Michael Larsen, chairman of Vordingborg Municipality’s Planning and Technology Committee, believes that the tourism basis is strong enough for the holiday park.

“Our tourism industry has regularly called for more overnight accommodation options on Møn, and that’s what this project will result in,” Larsen said.

However, nothing has been decided yet, and the municipality is certainly using this time to carefully consider the matter, he emphasised.

“We have set this process in motion now, and as we move forward we’ll have to consider whether we believe it’s a feasible and realistic project,” he said.

Currently, the environmental and infrastructural implications of the project are being examined. Once that assessment has been completed, the project will be sent back to the municipal council, which will be faced with the choice of approving a local zoning amendment as well as a further planning process, which will include a report with input from the local tourism industry.

“The assessment will be collaborative in practice, as our entire tourism organisation will be given a say and allowed to provide input,” said Larsen.

“But clearly, when someone knocks on your door and presents a project like this with such a large number of holiday homes and a large amount of financing to back it up, we have to at least take a look and consider it. That’s what we’re doing now,” said Larsen.

Financier: 150 enquiries

John Bengt Møller, the financier behind the holiday park idea, also believes that there will be a high enough demand among tourists, especially those coming from Sweden, Norway and northern Germany.

“The reason behind my involvement with the holiday park on Møn is that it’s a good investment. Our hedge fund has a variety of investments in the hotel industry, which has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, and diversification into a holiday park that would be appealing to a domestic market as well as neighbouring countries such as Sweden and Norway and the wealthy northern Germany is as sensible as it gets,” he wrote.

Møller added that they have already received about 150 enquiries from interested private buyers for the holiday homes, but that their preferred solution is to keep the 500 homes and rent them out. However, the final business model - i.e. whether the homes should be sold or rented out - has not yet been established.

“Our advisors and my team are working on a number of alternatives. We are keeping all options on the table,” he wrote, adding that the final business model will be announced before the end of the year.