

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 September 2016

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 05 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/J9497/W/16/3151497

Land at Court Gate Farm, Harbournford Cross, South Brent, TQ10 9DT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Michelle Benney against the decision of the Dartmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 0058/16, dated 25 November 2015, was refused by notice dated 22 March 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of outbuildings, comprising loose boxes, tack and feed storage for equestrian and farm stock.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed outbuildings on the character and appearance of the Dartmoor National Park.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a small field situated immediately to the north of the intersection of a group of narrow country lanes known as Harbournford Cross. The land falls from south to north and the proposed outbuildings would be situated in the lowest corner of the field, at the north of the site. There are large banks and hedgerows bounding the roads to the south and west; a mature hedgerow boundary to the north; and an open field to the east which contains relatively newly planted small trees. Access to the site is from the lane bordering the field to the west, at the north-western corner of the site. At the time of my visit, there was a temporary building sited in the south-western corner of the site, and the field was divided into sub-plots with wire fencing.
 4. The proposed development would involve the erection of an L-shaped, tantalised wood structure with a box-profile metal roof. It would be around 12 metres wide with an 11 metres maximum depth on its south-western side, and 5 metres depth along its north-eastern facing elevation. Its construction would involve the excavation of a significant amount of the north-eastern corner of the field to accommodate the building and a yard. There would be a compacted and rolled hardcore access from the existing entrance to the area around the building and, from the details on the application form, the site would be expected to provide 3 car parking spaces and space for a loose-box/trailer.
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5. The site lies within a landscape character area defined as Inland Undulating Elevated Land, which is influenced by Moorland Edge Slopes. Key features of these landscapes include an intricate patchwork landscape of farmland, having a pastoral character with scattered villages, hamlets and farmsteads. Policy DMD 5 of the Authority's Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document (DMD) indicates that development proposals should conserve and/or enhance the character and special qualities of the landscape. This will involve, amongst other things, avoiding unsympathetic development and respecting the tranquillity and sense of remoteness of Dartmoor. In addition, Policy DMD 33 concerns horse-related development and indicates that such development will be permitted where it does not harm local character, and that new buildings should be well related to existing buildings and local features.
6. In this case, the proposed building would be large enough to accommodate 3 loose boxes as well as a tack room and feed storage room. The field is fairly small in extent, and the building, together with its access roadway, parking and yard areas, would occupy a relatively substantial part of it. There are no other buildings with access and associated arrangements on this scale in the vicinity. As such it would represent a somewhat incongruous feature in the overall landscape of the area. It would not be well-related to any other buildings or local features in the area, and the level of activity associated with it would not respect the tranquillity or sense of remoteness of Dartmoor. It would therefore conflict with Policies DMD5 and DMD 33 of the DMD.
7. The appellant contends that the building could be screened by the creation of a new Devon Bank and planting close to the entrance to the site, and I accept that this could potentially be achieved. I also acknowledge that the building, by virtue of its siting at the lowest part of the field, would not be readily visible from any other nearby location due to existing banks and planting in the vicinity. However, this would not outweigh the harm to the landscape character of the area that would be caused by a building and associated developments on this scale in this location.
8. The appellant also makes note of the existence of a bird hide in close proximity to the appeal site and other isolated structures elsewhere in the area. However, a bird hide, by its very nature would be inconspicuous and generate relatively small-scale activity when compared with the proposed building. Also, there would appear to be no other buildings of the proposed type or scale anywhere in the immediate vicinity, and the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the character of the surrounding landscape, which is of a largely open, pastoral nature with a patchwork of fields and only isolated farmsteads.
9. In conclusion, I find that the proposed outbuilding, with its associated works and developments would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the Dartmoor National Park, and that it would conflict with Policies DMD 5 and DMD 33 of the DMD and with Policies COR 1, COR 3 and COR 4 of the Authority's Core Strategy document, which require in general terms that developments should conserve or enhance the special qualities of the Dartmoor landscape and environment.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR