

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 November 2016

by J F Powis BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 3 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J9497/W/16/3155254

Land formerly part of Greenhill Farm, Sticklepath, Okehampton, Devon EX20 1QL

- 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 Miss Kelly Cook against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 0082/16, dated 7 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 2 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of stable with hay store and change of use of land to equestrian.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of stable with hay store and change of use of land to equestrian at land formerly part of Greenhill Farm, Sticklepath, Okehampton, Devon EX20 1QL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 0082/16, dated 7 January 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Elevations and floor plan (Dwg Exe/1); and, Site layout and levels block plan and section (Dwg Exe/2).
 - 2) The development hereby approved shall be used for private equestrian purposes only and shall not be used for livery, riding lessons, commercial equine breeding or commercial equestrian use of any kind.
 - 3) No jumps, enclosures, other equestrian paraphernalia, including mobile field shelters, or exterior lighting shall be sited on the land without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Procedural Matters

2. The application was made retrospectively and I note from the application form that the development was started in November 2015 but had not, at the time of the application, been completed. At the time of my visit, the proposed stable was installed on the appeal site and appeared to be consistent with the submitted plans, although construction of the hay store element did not appear to have been completed. External lighting appeared to have been installed, but does not form part of the proposal before me.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of Dartmoor National Park.
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Reasons

4. The appeal site sits within an area of open countryside to the north west of the village of Sticklepath. The site, formerly an agricultural field, lies to the south of the B3260 road between Sticklepath and Okehampton. The appeal proposal involves the change of use of the field to equestrian and the erection of a stable and attached hay store in the northern part of the site.
5. Policies COR1 and COR3 of the Dartmoor National Park Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2006-2026 (adopted June 2008) (CS), and Policies DMD1b, DMD5 and DMD33 of the Dartmoor National Park Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document (adopted July 2013) (DMDDPD), together seek to conserve and enhance the characteristic landscapes and features that contribute to Dartmoor's special environmental qualities.
6. Policy DMD33 states that development related to horse keeping will be permitted subject to certain criteria. Amongst other things, these criteria require that where new buildings are needed they are well-related to existing buildings and other local features. They also require proposals to demonstrate that the development, on its own or cumulatively with other nearby horse related development, would not harm local landscape character.
7. Taking the first of these requirements, the stable building is not located close to other existing buildings. Another stable building of a similar scale is located approximately 50 metres to the east of the appeal building and accessed via the same track, but I would not consider the two to be well-related. I note that the appeal site once formed part of the land holding of Greenhill Farm, although it appears to be some distance from the main farm buildings and therefore not well related to them in a physical or visual sense.
8. Notwithstanding this, I have had regard to the siting of the stable building within its landscape context. The structure is set close against the established hedgerow that marks the northern boundary of the field. It is of a modest size and simple design that is subservient to the scale and form of the hedgerow. As such, I consider that the stable structure is well-related to this important local landscape feature.
9. Turning to the second of the policy requirements, the site and surrounding area display some of the typical characteristics of Landscape Character Type 2D which is described within the Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor National Park (June 2010) as 'moorland edge slopes', where the land falls away from the high moorland core of the National Park in a series of slopes and rolling hills.
10. The appeal site slopes uphill from north to south, such that from the southern part of the site, the rise of the land allows long-ranging views north to the surrounding countryside, some of which sits beyond the A30 dual carriageway and outside of the National Park. The stable building is sited at the foot of the slope in the northern part of the field, facing south. It is a simple, timber-clad structure with a monopitch roof design.
11. Due to its siting close to the existing hedgerow, and the rising level of the land, the stable is screened from views from the direction of the access track that runs along the northern edge of the field. Beyond the track to the north, a

second line of mature trees and planting shields the structure from views from the highway and the countryside to the north.

12. Furthermore, the field is bounded on its western, eastern and northern sides by hedgebanks and substantial trees which, together with the topography of the land, restrict views into the site. As a result, I consider the structure to integrate well into its surroundings and have minimal impact within its wider landscape setting.
13. In addition to the built form of the stable and hay store building, there is some post and wire fencing and horse tape used around the perimeter of the site and running from north to south to sub-divide the field. Due to their modest appearance, I find the visual impact of these enclosures to be limited to only the most localised of views. Furthermore, I do not consider that they fundamentally alter the medieval field pattern of the wider site, which the Council submits has been retained as shown on the Tithe map.
14. I note the Council's submissions that moving the built form of the stable and hay store to the east within the appeal site could provide a more acceptable form of development in terms of the effect on local landscape character. I accept that this revision would bring the stable building closer to the existing approved stable block to the east of the appeal development. However having viewed the site, and having regard to its topography and natural features, I do not consider that the proposed relocation would result in a material difference in terms of the development's impact on its landscape setting.
15. I have had regard to submissions that part of the existing access track running along the north of the site does not have planning permission and is the subject of an outstanding enforcement notice, although I have not been provided with full details in this regard. Whilst part of the access track falls within the appeal site, the application form states that no new or altered vehicular or pedestrian access forms part of the application before me. Furthermore, I note the appellant's submissions that the appeal development is not contingent on use of the access track.
16. Taking account of all of the above matters, I consider that the layout, scale and design of the appeal development does not, on its own or cumulatively with other nearby horse related development, harm the special and locally distinctive landscape character of the area. As such, I conclude that the proposal conserves the natural beauty of the Dartmoor and has an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of National Park.
17. I therefore find no conflict with Policies COR1 and COR3 of the CS, or Policies DMD1b, DMD5 and DMD33 of the DMDDPD, all of which seek to protect Dartmoor National Park's special qualities including its landscape character. The proposal is also consistent with the advice contained within the English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 and the National Planning Policy Framework insofar as they assign great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks.

Conditions

18. The Council has suggested imposing a time limit condition for commencement of the development. Since development has already been started, as confirmed on the application form, I do not consider it necessary or reasonable

to impose such a condition. However, because construction appears not to have been completed, I have imposed a condition specifying the drawings as this provides certainty about the approved scheme.

19. In order to protect the character and appearance of the local landscape setting within this part of the National Park, I have imposed a condition restricting the use of the development to private equestrian purposes only. For the same reason, and in light of the potential cumulative effects of horse related development on local landscape character, it has been necessary to impose a condition stipulating that no jumps, enclosures, other equestrian paraphernalia, including mobile field shelters, or exterior lighting shall be sited on the land without the prior written approval of the Council.

Conclusions

20. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

J F Powis

INSPECTOR