

Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 5 April 2017

Site visit made on 5 April 2017

by Alexander Walker MPlan MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4th May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P1133/W/16/3158365

Exminster Golf Centre, Exminster Hill, Devon, Exminster EX6 8GA

- 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 Mr Richard Candy against the decision of Teignbridge District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00605/FUL, dated 17 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling with annex for staff use. Main dwelling for site manager and family. Basement storage and workshop.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council's delegated report and the reasons for refusal set out in their decision notice make reference to the appeal site being located within the Undeveloped Coast and cite Policy EN2 of the Teignbridge Local Plan (the LP) 2013-2033. During the Hearing the Council confirmed that the site is not within the Undeveloped Coast and therefore Policy EN2 is not relevant to the proposal.

Main Issues

3. In light of the above, I consider that the main issues are:
 - The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area including the Area of Great Landscape Value; and,
 - Whether there is an essential need for the dwelling which outweighs the general presumption against isolated new dwellings in the countryside.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site is located within the open countryside in an area designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value. In particular, the site falls within the landscape character area of 'The Exe Estuary and Farmlands', which encompasses the Exe Estuary and rising farmlands to the west. The undulating ridges and elevated slopes facilitate dramatic views east towards the estuary coast and west towards the imposing Haldon Ridge providing a strong sense of

place. Outside the main settlements, development is informed by the topography of the landscape with sporadic development generally being positioned within the lower folds.

5. The appeal site forms part of an existing golf centre, which mainly comprises a single-storey club house, a smaller workshop/storage building and a large car park all set within the grounds of the nine hole course. The topography of the course rises and falls, typical of the surrounding landscape. The club house is positioned on the side of a large slope that rises from south to north. Directly to the north of the club house is the large open car park. The proposed building would be positioned to the north east of the club house and to the east of the car park on an area of land close to the brow of the slope.
6. The building would be partially subterranean with the basement comprising a workshop and buggy storage area. The ground level would mainly comprise a staff annex, a large lounge/meeting area and a kitchen/dining room. The first floor would comprise four bedrooms for the use of the occupants of the dwelling. During the Hearing it was confirmed that the ground floor facilities would be shared by the occupants of the dwelling, staff and club members and that there would be no domestic curtilage associated with the building.
7. The Council state that the building would likely be visible from the other side of the estuary. However, from the observations I made on site, the undulating landscape, in particular the sloping ground to the east of the appeal site which forms part of the driving range, would significantly restrict views of the building from the estuary. Furthermore, due to the topography of the surrounding landscape, the building would be well screened from public vantage points. There would be other public views of the building from outside the site. However, these are likely to be in the form of glimpsed views through gaps in the hedgerows along Exminster Hill and through the entrance gates to the site. Due to its proximity to the car park and the existing club house, it would be read as part of the overall building complex rather than an isolated building.
8. I acknowledge the various uses that would take place inside the building and the facilities it would provide. Above ground level, the elevations of the building would be dominated by the large pitched roof, which would reduce its visual impact more than if it were a full two-storey building. Whilst it would have a low profile, the design of the building is very linear with a large expanse of unbroken ridgeline resulting in it having a substantial bulk. Although it would be well screened from public views outside of the site, as a result of its prominent position near the brow of the hill the substantial building would dominate the landscape when viewed from within the site. I have had regard to the use of planting to reduce the visual impact of the building. However, such planting would take an unacceptably long time to establish and given the size of the building I am not satisfied that it would be sufficiently effective in any event.
9. I note that the balconies would provide a domesticated appearance to the building. However, these would be on the eastern elevation and would not be readily visible from public views. Furthermore, whilst the glazed balcony doors may produce glare that could highlight the building from distance views, such an effect would be only minimal.
10. Whilst the building would not be readily visible from public vantage points, it would nevertheless affect the landscape and appear unduly prominent from

within the site. Due to its size, design and prominent position, it would represent an inappropriate form of development that would significantly diminish the landscape value of the area. Consequently, it would fail to comply with Policies S2, S22 and EN2A of the LP, which, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that new development protects the distinctive character of the local landscape, in particular in Areas of Great Landscape Value, and minimise adverse visual impacts through high quality building design.

Essential Need

11. In supporting sustainable development, the Framework seeks to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside other than in particular circumstances. These are set out in paragraph 55 of the Framework and include reference to situations where there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.
12. Similarly, Policy WE9 of the LP allows for dwellings for rural businesses in the open countryside provided, amongst other things, that there is an essential functional need arising from the business for a full time worker to be housed on the site.
13. The golf centre has been the subject of a number of break-ins since it opened in 2004. These break-ins have caused damage to the existing property resulting in significant repair costs. There are existing security measures in place including the use of CCTV around the existing club house and an alarm system. Other security measures have been used in the past including a private security company that would carry out routine visits to the site. However, these were considered to be ineffective and no longer take place. In addition, removing money from the premises overnight has also been considered. However, this would require certain insurance and security burdens on the member of staff who would take the money home.
14. Currently, if the alarm does go off the manager is notified and travels from his home, approximately one mile away, to the site to investigate. The appellant argues that having the manager live on site would provide an effective deterrent to potential wrong-doers and the siting of the dwelling would provide a vantage point for the surveillance of the entrance to the site.
15. The existing club house opens at 7:30am, with staff arriving at approximately 6am, although this is later in the winter months. The club house remains open until approximately 9pm. Generally at weekends there are functions which can go on until as late as 2am, when the club house closes and staff vacate the premises.
16. During the Hearing it was confirmed that the break-ins in the past have occurred late in the evening/early morning when no-one is present on the site. The appellant agreed that it was during these hours that the manager would provide security cover whilst occupying the dwelling, acting as both a deterrent by having someone permanently on the site and carrying out site surveillance.
17. I acknowledge the appellant's apprehension that there are security issues on the site due to its isolated location and as evidenced by the previous break-ins and the risk to valuable stock and equipment stored in the club house. However, it seems to me that alternative security measures have not been fully explored that would not require a dwelling on the site. For example, a security

guard could be present on site during the hours that the club is closed, acting as both a deterrent and providing site surveillance.

18. The appellant also states that due to the recent construction of a large number of houses and even more in the near future, the business needs to expand to accommodate the growing population. However, I am not convinced that it is necessary for the manager to live on the site in order to serve this expansion. In addition, whilst club member meetings may take place in the evenings, I see no reason why the manager must live on site in order to attend these meetings.
19. Much of the evidence submitted has been focused on the need for the manager to live on site in order provide improved security and due to their knowledge and understanding of the management of the golf centre. From the evidence presented to me, both written and orally, there is a compelling case that the proposed building would provide a dwelling that would improve the security of the site and facilitate the growth of the business. However, I am not satisfied that it has been demonstrated that there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently on the site. As such, it fails to comply with Policy WE9 of the LP and paragraph 55 of the Framework.

Other Matters

20. I have had regard to the level of support for the proposal from local residents and acknowledge the service the golf centre provides to the area. However, these reasons do not outweigh the harm I have identified above. Furthermore, there is no evidence presented to me that indicates that without the proposed building the business would cease operating.
21. I acknowledge the appellant's frustration regarding the Council's correspondence during their determination of the planning application. However, these matters have not had any bearing on my consideration of the planning merits of the proposal.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above, having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Alexander Walker

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Paul LaNauze, BSc Hous Blg.	PL Planning Ltd.
Lucinda Lacey	General Club Manager
Peter Lacey	General Club Manager

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Anna Mooney	Planning Officer, Teignbridge District Council
Mrs Christine Bolton	Appeals Officer, Teignbridge District Council

INTERESTED PERSONS:

Rosemary Sanders	Local Resident
S Darke	Local Resident
Ellen Grindley	Dawlish Gazette