
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 May 2017

by Andy Harwood CMS MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 08 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W1145/W/17/3167177

Everlong, Lane to Highstead Farm, Bucks Cross, Devon EX39 5DX

- 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 Shelley Barnes against the decision of Torridge District Council.
 - The application Ref 1/0606/2016/FUL, dated 21 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 21 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is the removal of a barn and replace with a wooden holiday lodge.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The first main issue is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The second main issue is the suitability of the location for holiday occupancy taking account of accessibility to facilities. Lastly, the third main issue is whether any harm in relation to the first and second main issues is outweighed by any economic or other benefits.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is a raised grassed area beside the driveway that leads towards 'Everlong' and also includes a simple single storey barn which is constructed of timber and corrugated metal. This existing building is positioned close to the road that leads through the group of other buildings nearby. An informal hedge along the front of the site, next to the road screens the existing building from that direction. Given its modest size, the dull rusty surface of much of the corrugated metal and its very basic form, the building does not stand out. The dwelling 'Everlong' is set back from the road and is not prominent. The existing building gives the site an informal, rustic appearance close to the road.
 4. Surrounding the site there are some other residential developments loosely scattered along the rural road as well as large agricultural buildings. On the land next to the appeal site, I also saw an existing lodge building which the appellant has referred to as being holiday accommodation. This is discretely positioned behind a hedge although the front gable elevation is in view from
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the road. This goes against the more traditional and functional buildings in the immediate area. I am also aware of the nearby 'Bideford Bay' holiday park but this is not visually prominent near to the appeal site.

5. The proposal would involve the demolition of the existing barn and its replacement with a more substantial, modern chalet. This would have a similar appearance to a single storey dwelling, close to the rural road along the front of the site. Some of the hedge along the front of the site could be retained and possibly enhanced and the other line of trees alongside the driveway into the site would help to screen the chalet from the north. However the chalet would have a much more strident, suburban appearance than the existing barn. The use of the site by a further residential unit even if this is on a holiday occupancy basis would also intensify the use of the site which would add to the suburbanising impact. This could be through the increased use of the grassed area as well as the positioning of additional vehicles and domestic items near to the chalet.
6. The site is not within a designated settlement as defined within the Torridge Local Plan as adopted in September 2004 (LP). For the purposes of the LP, the site is within the countryside and the appellant has referred to LP Policy DVT2C, stating that the derelict barn would be re-used and enhanced. I disagree. The barn would not be re-used even if the proposed chalet would be on the same site. Furthermore, making the site look more suburban would not be an enhancement of its appearance in my opinion.
7. In relation to the first main issue, the development would detract from the character and appearance of the countryside which would not comply with LP Policy DVT2C. The proposal would suburbanise the rural area where generally the existing buildings interspersed with spaces reflect spacious informality of the AONB. The proposal would have a harmful impact upon landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB limited to the local area. However paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) confirms that the highest status of protection should be afforded to the AONB and I give great weight to that harm. For these reasons, the proposal would also fail to comply with LP Policy ECD6.

Location

8. The appeal site is close to existing buildings but as I say above, it is in the countryside for the purposes of the LP and is not within a village. The location is downhill from the limited facilities within Bucks Cross, along a narrow un-lit rural lane without footpaths. The nature of the road would not encourage people staying within the proposed chalet to walk or cycle to those facilities or the bus services that are referred to by the appellant. Paragraph 30 of the Framework seeks to encourage solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and the reliance upon private vehicles. I recognise that holiday makers will in part be coming to the area to enjoy the rural surroundings but they will also need to obtain provisions as well as reaching other services and attractions. The proposal in this remote location would encourage private vehicle use although I acknowledge that the impacts would be limited given that it is a small scale proposal.
9. In relation to this main issue, the proposal is not well located in relation to facilities and would lead to reliance by occupiers upon private vehicle use. This would not comply with the Framework.

Economic benefits

10. The Framework looks to support economic growth in rural areas and this can include well designed new buildings. LP Policy ECD6 is broadly consistent with this. Given my reasoning above, I do not consider that this would be a well-designed new building and it is not supported in that way by the Framework.
11. Given that the site is close to the impressive North Devon coast, I am sure that a holiday chalet would be popular with potential holiday makers. However the scale and extent of economic or other advantages for the appellant and the wider community is not made clear through any submitted evidence. I can only give very limited weight to those benefits.
12. I give great weight to the harm caused to the AONB and additional modest weight to the unsuitability of the location. In relation to this main issue, the harm in relation to the first and second main issues is not outweighed by the very limited weight that I can give to the economic advantages. The proposal does not comply in these respects with LP Policy ECD6.

Other Matters

13. I am not aware of the circumstances that resulted in the nearby developments such as the chalet on adjoining land or the 'Bideford Bay' holiday park. Those do not seem to be recent developments and I must reach my decision based upon the current development plan and material considerations.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andy Harwood

INSPECTOR