



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 October 2019

by M Bale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J9497/W/19/3233279

South Warne Farm, Mary Tavy, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9PQ

- 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 Kim Langley against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 0043/19, dated 17 November 2018 was refused by notice dated 22 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is to station 3 holiday sheds and 1 shepherds hut.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The description of development on the application form includes the word retrospective. However, as that is not an act of development, I have not included it in my above description.
3. Part of the development described has already been carried out and the 3 holiday sheds are in place on the site. At my site visit, they appeared to me to be in the locations shown on the submitted drawings. The shepherds hut was not present. In light of these matters, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the submitted plans.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park.

Reasons

5. The Dartmoor National Park Authority Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2008 (CS) and Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document (2014) (DMP) set out a host of policies designed to meet the purposes of the National Park. National Parks are amongst those areas that have the highest status of protection in terms of their landscape and scenic beauty and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out at Paragraph 172 that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty.
6. The appeal site is mainly on part of a former railway line within a relatively steeply sloping valley with notable tree cover. As such, it is shielded from mid and long distance views. However, it can be clearly seen from a bridge

crossing the former railway line close to the site access. In particular, the roadside boundary on approach to the bridge heading towards Mary Tavy is open affording clear views into the site.

7. The ability to see a development does not automatically translate into harm to the landscape or its scenic beauty. However, from this vantage point, the camping sheds appear as ad hoc built form spread along part of the valley floor in the largely undeveloped landscape. They do not relate to other built form and have a somewhat domestic appearance. I have little information about the proposed shepherds hut, but there is no substantive evidence to suggest that it would not appear in a similar way. Whilst painting the sheds and shepherds hut would reduce their stark appearance and so may enable them to better blend in to the landscape, it would not hide them so as to avoid the incongruous appearance and sporadic siting.
8. Accordingly, I find that the development causes harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of this part of the National Park. It is, therefore, contrary to those aspects of CS Policies COR1, COR3, COR4 and COR19, and DMP Policies DMD1b and DMD5 that seek to ensure respect for and enhancement of the character, quality, distinctiveness and tranquillity of local landscapes, and the conservation of natural beauty.
9. It is clear that the development plan does not place an embargo on development within the National Park. Indeed, there are permissive policies relating to both tourism development and farm diversification. In terms of the latter, it is clear from the appellant's evidence that South Warne Farm is not a financially viable enterprise and is in need of considerable support from outside sources if it is to continue. CS paragraph 5.12.6 that indicates that farming is the principle land use in the Dartmoor National Park and is vital to sustain its special qualities. With this in mind, I have nothing to suggest that maintaining agriculture at South Warne Farm would be anything other than beneficial. However, the paragraph goes on to clarify that the main aim of diversification proposals should be to supplement, not supplant the core farming enterprise.
10. Accordingly, CS Policy COR20 sets out that the principle aim of farm diversification proposals should be to maintain the core agricultural business. DMP Policy DMD35 goes further, setting out detailed criteria for farm diversification proposals. Whilst there may be no suitable buildings available in the main farm complex, the proposal may be small in scale and located on land directly associated with the operation of the farm, the third criterion requires that it should be based upon the scope to add value to the agricultural output of the holding.
11. The appellant has advised me that grant schemes on which the farm is dependent are set to reduce over the coming years. The additional income from the camping sheds and shepherds hut could make the land and buildings at South Warne Farm profitable overall and allow the agricultural activities to continue. However, whilst the appellant contends that this could lead to increased financial stability enabling longer term business decisions to be made, it is not clear what future development would be planned at the farm as a consequence of the additional income, especially as the land is said in the appellant's reports to be severely disadvantaged and unable to be farmed intensively. Nor is it clear how the income stream would add value to the agricultural output as required by DMD Policy DMD35. As the projected income

- from the holiday accommodation would far outstrip any income from the agricultural activities, I find that it would not be a diversification scheme as intended by CS Policy COR 20 nor is there any robust evidence that it would maintain the core agricultural business.
12. Even if I am wrong, CS Policy COR20 also requires diversification schemes to conserve natural beauty and in light of my earlier findings, this objective would not be met. CS Policy COR19 relating to tourism development has similar requirements and that part of DMD Policy DMD44 that permits camping pods or similar structures is conditional on there being no harm to the landscape.
 13. I note that the proposal is intended to have a low environmental impact, be aimed primarily at walkers or those cycling in the area and that there is some local support for the proposal. Indeed, the relatively secluded nature of the site could make use of opportunities that the National Park has to offer for quiet, informal, open air recreation, as required by CS Policy COR20 and suggests some support from part of CS Policy COR1b. It could also offer some benefit to local services if they were used by visitors.
 14. The two statutory purposes of National Parks¹ are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public. However, where there is a conflict between the two purposes, greater weight is to be attached to the conservation purpose². Therefore, these benefits, do not outweigh the harm to the landscape and scenic beauty that I have identified.
 15. The Authority's reasons for refusal also cite conflicts with DMD Policies DMD7 and DMD9, but these appear to be concerned with the effect on the built environment of the National Park and the re-use of existing buildings, so I do not find them directly relevant. The appellant has suggested that a number of the policies with which the Authority found conflict are concerned primarily with the restriction of development, including general housing, in the countryside. However, I find that the policies that I have referred to are applicable to all forms of development. In any case, there are other policies relating to tourism and farm diversification with which I have also found conflict and they are decisive in this case.
 16. I note that the appellant was not aware of the need for planning permission before beginning the development. However, this has little to do with the planning merits of the case. I have also considered the appellant's suggestion that permission could be granted for a temporary period of time to allow long-term control over the appearance of the various structures. However, this would not overcome harm that would occur now.
 17. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Bale

INSPECTOR

¹ National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Section 5(1)

² *ibid.*, Section 11(2)