



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 October 2019

by David Wyborn BSc(Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J9497/W/19/3230741

Sky-Star Paddocks, Jordan Lane, Horrabridge, Devon PL20 7QY

- 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 Ms Julie Oliver against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 0552/18, dated 6 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 13 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is the erection of stable block with attached hay barn and tack room.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. At my site visit, I observed that a stable and a separate store were sited within the wider field. They do not seem to appear in any of the photographs of the site, the appellant's statement does not refer to these structures and I have no planning history related to them. While I acknowledge their presence because I saw them, I have made no judgement on the status of these structures in my consideration of the appeal proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The site lies within the Dartmoor National Park. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. Development Plan policies have a similar approach to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the National Park.
5. In relation to equestrian development, Policy DMD33 of the Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document (July 2013) (the DDP) indicates, amongst other criteria, that where new buildings are needed they are well-related to existing buildings and other local features, and that proposals should reflect the principles set out in the Dartmoor National Park Design Guide (the Design Guide).

6. The Design Guide was adopted in 2011 and explains, in respect of equestrian development, that the Authority has increasingly become concerned about the cumulative effect of collections of isolated stable blocks, field shelters and structures, and works connected with jumps and schooling. In relation to new buildings, the design guidance is that they should generally be sited within, or adjacent to, existing buildings.
7. In this case, the site forms the corner of a field. The wider field is located on a sloping hillside which has clearly defined boundaries and is typical of the other grazing fields in the area. Some groups of farm buildings, groups of dwellings and individual dwellings are visible in the open countryside. The appearance of these buildings within the countryside is often softened by trees and woodland. Typically, the fields within the landscape are open and laid to pasture. The evidence indicates that the field boundary system, which the appeal site forms a small part of, is likely to be mid to late medieval.
8. There are views from the site out towards parts of Horrabridge and the elevated sections of Roborough Down, and reciprocal views back from these locations where the field forms a component within an expansive landscape. Broadly to the west, is a public right of way which allows some views into the field. The group of dwellings near to the access are set down adjoining the sunken lane and are screened from the site such that they are not experienced in general association with the field.
9. The proposal would introduce a building into the field corner where there are presently no other buildings. While the proposed building would not be skyline it would appear isolated, from a visual point of view, because it would not be associated with any other built development, including the structures elsewhere in the field. The reasonably short length of hedgebank that is proposed along the broadly south-western side could, to some extent, help to screen the building. However, as this would not follow the historic field pattern, and be unconnected at the broadly north-western end, the hedgebank would appear a somewhat incongruous and alien feature.
10. In wider views within the landscape, the building and related hedgebank would be perceptible as a small encroachment into the corner of the field away from the clearly defined and historic boundaries. While a minor incursion it would diminish the contribution this undeveloped corner of the field makes to the overall character of the field and thereby the contribution the field makes to the wider landscape quality of the area. In this way, the proposal would harm the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park.
11. Policy DMD33 of the DDP requires that new equestrian buildings are sited so that they are well-related to existing buildings and other local features. In this case, the building would be separated from other buildings, including the other structures now within the field, and would not comply with this policy, nor the similar approach and advice set out in the Design Guide.
12. I note that the building would stable an elderly horse and an Arab both of which require shelter and this would help protect the land from poaching in wet weather and allow it to rejuvenate. The size of the building would be commensurate with the size of the holding and typical of the appearance of other equestrian buildings. However, I am not satisfied that these are sufficient justifications for the building, given the landscape harm and conflict with Policy DMD33 that I have identified above.

13. I have taken into account the support to the proposal from Horrabridge Parish Council and the representations from local residents, including those that support the proposal. I have no doubt that equine uses are an important part of the activities taking place across the National Park and they can add to the enjoyment of the special qualities for horse owners, residents and visitors. However, the development plan policies do not prohibit equestrian development, but seek to direct it to those locations where it will conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of Dartmoor. In this case, I have identified that there would be a conflict with the policies of the development plan and there would be harm to the landscape quality of the National Park.
14. In the light of the above analysis, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore not comply with Policies COR1, COR3 and COR4 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2006-2026), Policies DMD1b, DMD5 and DMD33 of the DDP, the Framework, the advice in the Design Guide and the general approach in the English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 which seek, amongst other things, that development will conserve and enhance the characteristic landscapes and features that contribute, in this case, to Dartmoor's special environmental qualities.

Other Matters

15. My attention has been drawn to other stable buildings in the National Park which are said to be comparable and help to justify the proposal. I do not have full details of these sites, the detailed background which justified their approval or whether they have been permitted under the present planning policy regime. I therefore attribute these other examples limited weight and their presence and influence on the area does not outweigh the harm I have identified above which would result from the proposal.
16. The additional section of hedgebank which forms part of the proposal may provide some additional ecological benefits, and that the occupation of the site could assist with the ongoing management of the existing field boundaries. However, the additional hedgebank will be limited in size and I have no substantive evidence that the existing field boundaries would not be managed in the future in the absence of the appeal building. Consequently, I attribute these benefits limited weight and they do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
17. The Framework also identifies that decisions should enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments, however, this is on the basis that they respect the character of the countryside. Accordingly, given the harm I have found, the Framework does not lend support in this respect.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Wyborn

INSPECTOR