
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 November 2019

by J Gibson BUEP MPIA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W3330/W/19/3236069

The Barn, Ayton Fields, Hillfarrance, Taunton TA4 1AN

- 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 and Mrs Strickland against the decision of Somerset West and Taunton Council.
 - The application Ref 27/19/0009, dated 3 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 26 July 2019.
 - The development is originally described as the "retention of caravan as ancillary to agriculture for use as a rest and office space in connection with the agricultural use of the site".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr and Mrs Strickland against Somerset West and Taunton Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The above description of development has been taken from the appellants' application form. The caravan is currently on site and being used for the purpose described by the appellants. I have therefore treated the development as already having occurred. Following the formation of the Somerset West and Taunton Council, the development plan of the former Taunton Deane Borough Council remains extant.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the development is appropriately located within the open countryside.

Reasons

5. The appeal site includes an existing mobile home, attached decking area, a vehicle manoeuvring area and the access linking the development to the road. It forms part of a larger agricultural site referred to as 'The Barn' which includes two large sheds, paddocks, some orchards and other ancillary structures which would reasonably be anticipated as part of an agricultural use. The site falls within the open countryside and is reflective of the distinctly rural character of the surrounding area, with a sporadic pattern of development.

Neither the mobile home nor attached decking currently benefit from planning permission.

6. Policy DM2 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (CS) (adopted September 2012) provides detailed criteria outlining the forms of development that are considered appropriate in the open countryside. Under this policy a new building relating to an agricultural use would be considered appropriate, provided it was non-residential and commensurate to the agricultural use.
7. The mobile home and attached decking area represent a distinctly residential feature on the site, which appears in contrast to the surrounding agricultural use of the wider property. The appellants have described their use of the mobile home as amounting to office space, staff respite area and for the preparation/storage/sale of jams and preserves. Notwithstanding this, the appearance and internal configuration of the mobile home is that of a residential building and could readily be used as such contrary to the objectives for development in the open countryside. This is particularly evident as the submitted plans of development show a different internal layout for the mobile home than I observed during my site visit, with the office, water closet and cupboard being in different locations.
8. I note that the appellants' have highlighted the need to provide appropriate facilities, including a break area, toilets and kitchen facilities, to meet the needs of staff working on site. Whilst this is acknowledged, it is considered that such facilities could more appropriately be accommodated within the existing agricultural buildings on site, or as part the future proposal for a new building as described in the appellants' expansion plans for the site. Based on the information provided and in its current state, the retention of the mobile home and attached decking area would be contrary to the policy objectives for the open countryside.
9. The appellants argument regarding the chutney/jam business diversifying the economic viability of their agricultural business are noted. As are their concern over the potential increase of vehicle trips to and from the site should the mobile home be removed from the site. However, these considerations would not outweigh the conflict I have identified.
10. Both parties make reference to previous appeal decisions as support for their respective arguments. No specific details of either case have been put forward to me for consideration. As such I cannot be certain of the particular circumstances relating to those cases nor the policy context under which they were made. As such, I have considered the appeal before me based on the information provided and my observations during my site visit.
11. Accordingly, the mobile home and attached decking area would not be appropriately located within the open countryside. It would therefore conflict with Policy DM2 of the Taunton Deane CS. This policy, amongst other things, seeks to protect the open countryside from inappropriate development.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Gibson

INSPECTOR