
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 June 2021

by C J Ford BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K1128/D/21/3272383

Wild Apple Barn, Muckwell Barns, Muckwell, Beeson, Kingsbridge TQ7 2EW

- 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 & Mrs Phillips against the decision of South Hams District Council.
 - The application Ref 3392/20/HHO, dated 7 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is alterations to existing outbuilding including mezzanine floor, 1 no. dormer window, new wall and roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. A revised plan was submitted at the appeal stage which would alter the windows in the proposed rear dormer by increasing the number of mullions and adding vertical timber louvres to the outer sections. As the revised plan does not materially alter the nature of the application and does not prejudice the interests of any party, it has been taken into consideration.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area and whether it conserves and enhances the landscape and scenic beauty of the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is consistent with and conserves the special character of the Heritage Coast and conserves the character of the undeveloped coast.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located in the countryside and forms part of an historic farmstead in a valley of largely agricultural fields that fall within the designated South Devon AONB, Heritage Coast and undeveloped coast. Wild Apple Barn is the residential conversion of a traditional stone barn which has a single storey rear garden room extension that incorporates significant levels of glazing within its flanks and gable end.
5. Attached to the south side of the house is a more modern barn with a dual pitched roof which is primarily used for ancillary domestic storage. It has a lower ridge and eaves level than the house, consistent with the land falling towards the south. Despite its sizeable bulk, the barn's simple utilitarian form ensures that it reads as a subordinate outbuilding to the house and this visual

relationship is important to the character and appearance of the two buildings, the farmstead and the wider rural landscape.

6. The proposed scheme involves adding a mezzanine floor to the outbuilding to accommodate a gym and home office. There would be a large rear dormer and two rear rooflights, along with four front rooflights. The centrally positioned rear dormer would extend across around two thirds of the width of the roof and interrupt the eaves line. Given its width, bulk and general design which does not reflect a local rural vernacular, it would appear as an alien and incongruous feature that would have a significant detrimental impact on the simple form and character of the building.
7. Moreover, given the dormer would be wider than the garden room extension to the house and broadly align with the depth of the garden room's rear projection, the building would no longer clearly read as being subordinate to the house. Consequently, it would undermine the important relationship between the two buildings and in combination with the incongruous appearance of the dormer, it would harm the character and appearance of the buildings, the farmstead and the wider landscape. The harmful impacts would be visible in a public view from a field gate alongside the road to the north-west, although even if there were no public view, it would not be a determinative consideration.
8. The level of glazing would be less than the garden room extension but the cumulative impact of the night-time illumination would harmfully erode the intrinsically dark skies of the surrounding landscape. While it is acknowledged the submitted revised plan aims to mitigate this impact, the appellants' description that the vertical timber louvres would seek to reduce the perceived scale of the glazing, as opposed to reducing its general scale, would indicate that the mitigation in terms of reduced light spill would be nominal. In any event, the proposed revision would not overcome the substantial harm arising from the width, bulk and overall design of the dormer.
9. In light of the above, it is concluded the proposed development would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would not conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, would be inconsistent with and would not conserve the special character of the Heritage Coast and would not conserve the character of the undeveloped coast.
10. As such, the development would conflict with Policies TTV29, DEV10, DEV20, DEV23, DEV24 and DEV25 of the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2019. Amongst other things, these policies require good standards of design having regard to the pattern of local development and wider development context and surroundings in terms of style, scale, massing and local distinctiveness. Furthermore, they seek to ensure development conserves and enhances the natural beauty of protected landscapes with particular reference to their special qualities, distinctive characteristics and valued attributes.

Other Matters

11. The private benefit to the appellants of the proposed scheme in relation to the social, health and well-being improvements derived from the provision of a gym and home office are acknowledged. It is also recognised that notwithstanding the proposed dormer, there would be a visual improvement to

the quality of the building resulting from the enhancement of the external materials. There would also be the prospect of a net biodiversity gain through the proposed new bat and bird boxes. Nevertheless, in combination, the benefits only attract moderate weight. They do not outweigh the identified harm and the great weight that paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), specifies should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs.

Conclusion

12. The proposed development would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.
13. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

C J Ford

INSPECTOR