



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 December 2021

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/W/21/3280776

The Stables, East Bowerland Farm, Okehampton EX20 4LZ

- 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 L Langman against the decision of West Devon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 1653/21/HHO, dated 27 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 2 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of boundary fence in garden.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies at the south western end of a fairly level, close mown grass field. To the north west of the site is a large steel-framed agricultural style building that is used in connection with a dog training business, and to the north east there is a range of barns that have been converted to residential use. Despite the presence of these buildings, the site lies some distance from the nearest settlement, and the wider area comprises undeveloped agricultural land with isolated pockets of buildings. The field is segregated from the adjacent buildings by hedges, and retains an open character that is in keeping with its countryside setting.
4. Although the field is surrounded by hedgerows and trees, they do not provide a complete screen. When approaching the site from the east, the field is visible through the gaps between the trees on the north eastern boundary. It is also visible over the hedge from the track running alongside the south eastern boundary. In both of these views it has a closer visual association with the open agricultural land to the south and east, than with the dog-training building and barns. Although it has planning permission for garden use, its undeveloped grassland nature results in it appearing as an integral part of the surrounding countryside.
5. In this context, the proposed close-boarded fence would have a domestic appearance, that would be out of keeping with the hedgerows and post and wire boundary fences that characterise the field boundaries in this area of countryside. It would be some distance from the cluster of converted barns,

and would be separated from them by a considerable expanse of open grassed field, so would be visually isolated from the residential paraphernalia associated with these buildings. I saw that there is a short length of similar fencing near the north western corner of the field. However, at approximately 50 metres in length and almost 2 metres high, the proposed fence would be of a much larger scale, and, consequently, would be a far more noticeable feature in the landscape. Its location, scale, and domestic character would result in it being an incongruous feature, that would be harmful to the natural character of the countryside.

6. The appellant contends that the fence would provide greater privacy for occupants of the land from users of the footpath to the south west. However, I saw that the existing boundary hedge provided a reasonable screen at the time of my site visit in early winter, and would be more effective when in full leaf in the summer. There is no evidence to indicate that the required level of privacy could not be achieved through a means that would be more sympathetic to the character of the countryside, such as additional planting. In any event, I saw that the field would still be overlooked from the track to the south east. Consequently, the personal benefits to the appellant in improved privacy would not outweigh the harm that I have identified to the character of the countryside.
7. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the scale, design, and location of the fence would be harmful to the natural character and appearance of the countryside. The development would, therefore, be contrary to Policies DEV20 and DEV 23 of the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014-2034, and Policy EH1 of the Bridestowe & Sourton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2034. Taken together, these policies seek good standards of design that conserve and enhance the rural nature and visual landscape character of the area. The proposal would also fail to meet the aim of the National Planning Policy Framework to conserve and enhance the natural environment by, amongst other things, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Conclusion

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

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR