
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 December 2021

by Neil Pope BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 December 2021

Appeal A Ref: APP/J9497/W/21/3275493

Elfordtown Farm, Station Road, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 6HY.

- 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 Mark Kemp against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA).
 - The application Ref. 0368/20, dated 20/7/20, was refused by notice dated 23/11/20.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of a single storey store, construction of new single storey accommodation, conversion to residential of existing storage barn and to carry out associated internal configuration.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/J9497/Y/21/3275497

Elfordtown Farm, Station Road, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 6HY.

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Mark Kemp against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA).
 - The application Ref. 0369/20, dated 20/7/20, was refused by notice dated 23/11/20.
 - The works proposed are the demolition of a single storey store, construction of new single storey accommodation, conversion to residential of existing storage barn and to carry out associated internal configuration.
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application and appeal forms specify the applicant/appellant as Mr Mark Kemp. I understand that Mr Kemp is the architect appointed by the owners (Mr and Mrs Woolcock) of the property. Appeals must proceed in the name of the original applicant but a permission/consent would run with the land. I note that landownership Certificate B was submitted with the applications/appeals.
3. Since it determined the applications, the Dartmoor Local Plan 2018-2036 (LP) has been adopted and now forms part of the development plan. I understand that the LP supersedes policies in the DNPA Core Strategy (2008) and the Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document (2013).
4. Previous applications to demolish a lean-to stable and various internal works to the farmhouse and shippin, as well as some re-roofing, were approved (refs. 0692/04, 0693/04, 0344/08, 0345/08, 0355/11 and 0356/11). I have been informed that none of these approvals were implemented and all have now lapsed. They are not fallback positions available to the appellant. In any

event, since these approvals there have been changes to the development plan and national planning policies. I attach very little weight to these approvals.

Main Issue

5. The main issue in both appeals is whether the proposals would preserve the Grade II listed building at Elfordtown Farm (listed as Elfordtown Farmhouse) or its setting or its features of special architectural or historic interest.

Reasons

6. I note the LP policies that have been referred to by the DNPA. The most important policy¹ to the determination of appeal A² is Strategic Policy 2.7 (heritage assets). I also note the provisions of the Dartmoor National Park Design Guide 2011. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is aimed at securing high standards of design. Amongst other things, it contains advice relating to the historic environment and traditional farm buildings. (Appendix IV includes longhouse shippens within a list of buildings that are likely to be unsuitable for conversion.) This SPD can be given moderate weight.
7. Elfordtown Farm is a circa 17th century former farmhouse with an 18th century shippon (now in use as ancillary office and storage) attached to the southern end. There is a 20th century lean-to shed on part of the eastern elevation. I understand that this lean-to was previously used as stables. The significance (heritage interest) of this stone rubble and slate roof (part 'Turnerised') listed building is derived primarily from its special architectural and historic qualities.
8. These special qualities include the longhouse/longhouse derivative plan of Elfordtown Farm, its surviving 17th and 18th century fabric, uninterrupted roof slopes, hall and passage, window arrangement, granite mullioned window, chimney stacks, hall ceiling, fireplace and 'arrow slit' openings in the shippon.
9. The lean-to shed is of an inappropriate design/finish and is at odds with the mainly linear plan form of the listed building. Some 20th century internal walls also disrupt the continuity of space inside the shippon. Nevertheless, Elfordtown Farm remains largely unspoilt. This listed building is a very pleasing example of a traditional Dartmoor farmhouse with attached shippon.
10. The proposed demolition of the lean-to shed would remove a somewhat unsightly 20th century addition to the listed building. If a new addition was not added to this part of the building, the linear plan form of this former farmhouse and its attached shippon would be reinforced. This would enhance the ability to appreciate the significance of this listed building.
11. However, it is rather unrealistic to expect the owners/occupiers of this listed building to remove this lean-to shed without being able to erect something else in its place. In this regard, the proposed extension would have a smaller 'footprint' than the existing lean-to and would be lower in height. The large areas of glazing proposed on the eastern and southern elevations would also allow these two walls of the shippon to be discerned from the garden/paddock.

¹ Amongst other policies, attention has also been drawn to Strategic Policy 2.8. As the appeal building is already used for purposes incidental to the residential enjoyment of Elfordtown Farm I consider that it does not comprise a non-residential building in the open countryside.

² The provisions of section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 are not engaged in appeal B.

12. The new sitting room, kitchen and utility would provide the owners/occupiers with enhanced living accommodation and this increase in habitable space would not harm the special qualities of the building. Compared to the existing situation/lean-to, the above noted works would, on balance, outweigh the continued disruption to the linear plan form of Elfordtown Farm.
13. The proposed extension would also include widening two existing openings in the eastern elevation of the shippon. An internal doorway into the proposed lobby would also be enlarged together with a window in the eastern elevation of the former farmhouse. These works would be likely to involve the harmful loss of important building fabric and would detract from the heritage (historic) interest of the listed building. In the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, this would amount to less than substantial harm to the significance of this listed building. However, great weight must be given to conserving designated heritage assets. When these works are also weighed in the balance, this tips against granting permission and consent for the extension.
14. The proposal would also provide further habitable space inside the shippon³, including, in part, a first floor bedroom and en-suite. This would 'extend' living accommodation into a part of the building that was previously used for agricultural purposes and would involve an unfortunate loss of agricultural character. I have noted above, the provisions of the SPD which discourage this type of development in longhouse shippons. The new internal walls would also continue to disrupt the continuity of internal space within the shippon.
15. However, it is very unlikely that agricultural activities/uses would resume from all of the shippon. Given modern day living standards, such activities/uses would almost certainly be deemed inappropriate in such close proximity to the existing residential accommodation in the house. A different use is necessary to avoid the risk of this part of the building falling into disrepair.
16. Provided that overall, the works to the shippon were sympathetic to its character and appearance, it would be difficult in this instance to justify reusing this part of the building as ancillary living accommodation. In all probability, the upper floor in the shippon would, in part, have been used in the past for hay/fodder storage for livestock below. Given also the existing partitioning of space, the new internal works could not reasonably be described as adverse.
17. To provide adequate light and ventilation for the proposed first floor living accommodation, three rooflights would be inserted into the eastern facing roof slope of the shippon together with some patent glazing. The rooflights would be of a very modest size and, if flush fitting with the roof slates, would result in a small adverse impact upon the appearance of the building. However, the proposed patent glazing would introduce a sizeable new opening into the roof slope. This would be overtly domestic in character and at odds with its special architectural qualities. This new opening would considerably erode the appearance of this part of the listed building.
18. The overall impact of the proposed works to the shippon would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset. This further weighs against granting permission and consent.

³ I note the appellant's argument that this would comprise permitted development.

19. I conclude on the main issue that the proposals would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of Elfordtown Farm.

Other Matters

20. The proposal would conserve the natural beauty and wildlife of this part of the national park and would not detract from the scenic qualities of the area. However, the harm that I have identified above to the significance of this nationally important building would fail to conserve the cultural heritage of the area. This harm would not be outweighed by the very small enhancement to the social wellbeing of the occupants of Elfordtown Farm that would ensue and the previous approvals.

Overall Conclusion

21. Given all of the above, I conclude that the less than substantial harm to the significance of Elfordtown Farm that I have identified would not be outweighed by the public benefits. The proposed development conflicts with the provisions of LP Strategic Policy 2.7 and the objectives of the SPD. Both appeals fail.

Neil Pope

Inspector