



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2023

by **S Harrington MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/W/22/3302963

Land at Thorndon Cottage Farm, Thorndon Cross, Okehampton EX20 4NF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Keith March against the decision of West Devon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 1735/22/PAA, dated 21 December 2021 was refused by notice dated 12 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is a new barn.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A(a) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO) permits works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building or any excavation or engineering operations which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, subject to a number of criteria.
3. As set out in Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A.2(2)(d)(i) of the GPDO, the developer must, before beginning the development, apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the siting, design and external appearance of the building. The Council confirmed that prior approval was required¹, the refusal of which is the subject of this appeal. For the purposes of the banner heading above, I have used the description of development as detailed on the 'Prior approval application form' which adequately describes the proposed development.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area having regard to the siting, design and external appearance of the agricultural building.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is to the northwest corner of an agricultural field with existing hedgerows to the north and west. The wider landscape is characterised by its rolling topography and linear field patterns, with views of Dartmoor to the southeast. The site is located on a reasonably flat area near the top of a hill,

¹ 4282/21/AGR

which falls away steeply to the south. The proposed building would be aligned along the existing northern hedgerow with a broadly southwest to northeast alignment.

6. I observed that although the appeal site is not particularly visible from nearby viewpoints to the north due to the topography and intervening hedgerows, it is clearly visible from public viewpoints from Cowsen Lane to the south, where it is seen across the valley. The proposed design and appearance of the building is that of a modern agricultural building and is similar in appearance to other agricultural buildings I witnessed in the wider area. However, given the proposed height and scale of the building it would be very prominent when viewed from the south and, due to its siting unrelated and divorced from any other buildings and located to the top of the hill, would be very evident and visually harmful within the rural landscape.
7. I note that the appellant has suggested that extra screening could be provided. Given the position to the top of a hill and the steeply falling topography to the south, any landscaping would itself appear somewhat incongruous and at odds with the existing linear field patterns, such that it would not overcome the identified harm and would also be likely to draw attention to the appeal development in the proposed location.
8. I also note the appellants reasons for selecting this particular site, and the scale of the building which include the storage of agricultural machinery, the benefits of the level nature of the site, reduced travel time for agricultural machinery within the holding and associated savings in fuel, future plans for forestry machinery to be stored on the holding, and a requirement for hay storage in this location preventing the need for wrapped silage.
9. Notwithstanding these reasons, the proposal before me relates to an agricultural building as opposed to any future proposals for forestry development. Furthermore, even if the location of the appeal site does result in benefits to the operating of the agricultural unit as has been stated, and the scale of the building is necessary for the purposes of agriculture within the unit, this does not negate the harmful effect of the proposed development on the landscape due to its siting as identified above.
10. The Council's reasons for refusal (RoR) make reference to Policy TTV23 of the Plymouth and Southwest Devon Joint Local Plan (LP). This Policy relates to the Dartington Hall Estate which does not relate to the matters of prior approval at the appeal site. However, the Council's Officer Report is clear that the RoR should have referred to Policy TTV26. Consequently, while not the basis of my findings, I have had regard to LP policies DEV23 and TTV26 which seek to conserve and enhance landscape character so far as they relate to the matters of the prior approval.
11. To conclude, I find that due to its siting, the proposed building would be prominent and intrusive within the rural rolling landscape and harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Therefore, prior approval should not be granted.

Conclusion

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

S Harrington

INSPECTOR