



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2022

by C Rose BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/22/3302862

Willow Farm, Long Barrow Lane, Stoke Abbott DT8 3JL

- 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 Thomas Gibbs against the decision of Dorset Council.
- The application Ref P/FUL/2021/02160, dated 3 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 February 2022.
- The development proposed is for the siting of container for use as a shower/toilet block.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development used in the banner heading above is that given by the local planning authority in its decision notice. I have used this description as it more succinctly describes the development proposed than that given on the application form.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

4. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB's. This guidance is reflected in Policy ENV1 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015 (LP) that states that development which harms the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the AONB, including its sense of remoteness, will not be permitted.
5. The site lies within the AONB which in this location is characterised by undulating pastoral fields divided by hedgerows and areas of woodland. The appeal site is an open parcel of land near to five hard surfaced caravan pitches benefitting from a hard surfaced access. The site and the pitches are visually and physically separated from the main farm buildings which are located further down Long Barrow Lane at a lower level. The site is therefore visually remote from the main farm complex. The site is highly visible and prominent from a public footpath that runs across the field to the south of the site in very close proximity. The site is also highly visible from Long Barrow Lane.
6. Due to the separation and visual detachment from the pitches and main farm buildings, the proposed shower/toilet block would not integrate with them. I

recognise that the building would be partly screened in some more distant views by existing trees and hedgerows, but nonetheless it would be very prominent from Long Barrow Lane and the public footpath and reduce the sites current impression of remoteness from the farm.

7. Whilst the building would be finished with feather edge boarding, by reason of its functional design and flat roof form, it would have a stark appearance that would be at odds with the character and appearance of this rural landscape.
8. Although the appeal block would be relatively small, and I note that a previous building was granted (reference: 1/W/2000/0508) adjoining the site but later removed, its isolated location and prominence would result in a considerable incursion into the countryside in a highly visible position. I appreciate that the building may not be in use all year round, however, any lighting in the building would add to its visual incursion and prominence at night in this otherwise dark environment severed from other buildings.
9. I acknowledge the benefits to farm diversification and to the economy from tourism. I acknowledge the need for the block to meet the Freedom Camping Club requirements. I also note that the hire of a toilet/shower block is not viable, and that there have been procedural and communication issues between the parties. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have identified above to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
10. I therefore find that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the Dorset AONB to which I have given great weight. As such, the proposal would conflict with the requirements of Policies ENV1, ENV10 and ENV12 of the LP and section 15 of The Framework. Amongst other things, these stipulate, that development proposals will only be allowed where they do not harm the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the AONB, conserve and enhance the local landscape character and scenic beauty of the AONB and, are of a high-quality design.

Other Matters

11. I note the willingness of the appellant to discuss a revised location and/or design of building. However, given Annexe M of the Procedural Guide, Planning Appeals, England (2022) and the National Planning Practice Guidance which advise that the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme to overcome the Council's reasons for refusal, I must consider the appeal on the basis of the plans before me.

Conclusion

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

C Rose

INSPECTOR