



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2022

by C Rose BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J9497/W/22/3300521

Copplestone Farm, Heath Road, Bridford EX6 7HQ

- 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 Mrs Paula May against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 0603/21, dated 30 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as "retain an area of hardstanding used as a farm yard".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. At the time of my site visit the development had been carried out and appeared to accord with the submitted plans. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal on the basis of those plans.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the proposed hardstanding would conserve or enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Dartmoor National Park and whether any need for the development would outweigh any harm.

Reasons

Landscape and Scenic Beauty of Dartmoor National Park

4. Part of the hard surfaced area and associated fencing can be seen from the public highway at the farm entrance. It can also be seen from the internal access road. This runs alongside the site and is used by those visiting the farm and people travelling to and from the other residential properties located further along the access road.
5. There are no harmful views of the proposal from more distant roads or public viewpoints. However, by reason of its size, combined with the materials that give an unfinished appearance, the yard provides a harsh visual contrast to the surrounding landscape that is characterised by fields enclosed with hedge banks in a pastoral setting. As a result, the proposal fails to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park. This is the case despite the proposal respecting the historic field pattern, benefitting from good access, and using the existing topography of the land.

6. The size of the area, and location immediately adjoining the access road, would mean landscaping to screen the yard would be likely appear to as an unnatural feature in the landscape. In any case, given the width of the access to the hard surfaced area and need for suitable visibility to ensure that vehicles entering and exiting the site would be visible to other road users, the area would still remain visible from the internal access road.
7. For these reasons, the proposal fails to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), this carries great weight. As such, the proposal conflicts with Policies 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 2.1 and 5.8 of the Dartmoor Local Plan 2018-2036 (LP) and fails the first purpose of Dartmoor National Park which, amongst other things, seeks to conserve and enhance its natural beauty and landscape character.

Need

8. Policy 5.8 of LP states that agricultural and other rural based development will be permitted where its scale is proportionate to a proven functional need which cannot be met by an existing building, or one recently disposed of.
9. At the site visit I was able to view an existing hard surfaced area located opposite the appeal site between the farmhouse and annexe which did not appear heavily used. This area was free from obstruction and wide enough to accommodate a tractor and other equipment. It was adjacent to other farm buildings and the appellant has not provided evidence of why these buildings could not be used. In addition, the appeal site was being used for limited storage at time of my visit. This comprised of a tractor, trailer and 3 other pieces of small farming equipment plus small stores. These covered a very small proportion of the yard forming part of the appeal and as a result do not demonstrate the need for such a large area.
10. Whilst I appreciate there is limited space on the existing access road for the turning of larger vehicles, limited evidence has been submitted to support the need for such a large area of hardstanding. The Site Plan shows a swept path for a typical 7.5T horsebox but a smaller turning circle using less land would allow a vehicle of this size to enter and leave in a forward gear. The aerial photographs of the site within the Design and Access Statement, that were taken prior to it being hard surfaced, do not evidence the historic use of such a large turning area or hardstanding.
11. For these reasons, I conclude that a proven functional need for a development of this size and scale has not been demonstrated. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policy 5.8 of the LP which, amongst other things, requires that agricultural and rural land-based development is of a scale proportionate to a proven functional need.

Other Matters

12. The appellant states that the area was previously hard surfaced with grass having grown through. However, little evidence has been provided to support this.
13. The Design and Access Statement includes reference to policies in a Core Strategy and Development Management and Delivery Plan. I have not been provided with copies of these policies and it is not clear that they form part of

the development plan. As such, these do not outweigh my concerns relating to the main issues.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above I conclude that the proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the need for the hardstanding, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

C Rose

INSPECTOR