



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 June 2023

by R Morgan BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/W/22/3305642

Limestone Meadows, Meadow Lane, Millers Dale, Buxton SK17 8QH

- 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 Martin Burns against the decision of Peak District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref NP/DDD/0222/0189, dated 8 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is agricultural building to house and feed livestock and to store fodder and implements.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Peak District National Park (PDNP).

Reasons

3. The proposed agricultural building would be located in an area of upland, rolling limestone countryside within the White Peak. Approaching the site from Millers Dale along Meadow Lane, the wooded valley side quickly opens up to a wide, open landscape of rolling upland pasture with scattered trees, bounded by drystone walls. Meadow Lane itself is a narrow road with little traffic, and this, combined with the absence of built development, contributes to the area having a tranquil, timeless character.
4. The site and surrounding area is typical of the 'Limestone Village Farmlands' character area. The Peak District Landscape Character Assessment 2009 describes the Limestone Village Farmlands as an historic landscape, of narrow strip fields enclosed by drystone walls and a strongly nucleated settlement pattern, with discrete limestone villages and clusters of stone dwellings.
5. The appellants inherited the holding of around 83 acres several years ago, but it was in poor condition. The submitted information describes the extensive work that has been carried out to enable the land to be used for grazing, and I could see when I visited that a considerable amount of effort has been spent in repairing drystone walls and stiles. However, with no existing building on the holding, the appellants are unable to reintroduce livestock, and instead lease the land to a local farmer for grazing. By constructing the proposed agricultural building on the site, the appellants would be able to farm the land themselves.

6. Policy DME1 of the Peak District Local Plan Part 2 (2019) allows for new agricultural buildings, provided that it is demonstrated that the building at the scale proposed is functionally required for that purpose.
7. In this case, the proposed steel framed building would be around 27.4m long by 13.7m wide, with a maximum height of approximately 5.5m. The appellant has explained in some detail how the proposed building would provide for the welfare of cattle and sheep, with space to store equipment and materials. On the basis of the information provided, I have no reason to doubt that a building of the scale proposed is necessary to enable the appellants to farm the land in the manner described.
8. The proposal meets the functional requirements contained in part A of Local Plan Policy DME1, but to be acceptable the development must also meet the criteria set out in Part B of the policy, which are concerned with the visual impact of agricultural development.
9. The lack of existing buildings in, or adjacent to, the holding, means that the proposed barn could not be located near to a farmstead or other buildings, as encouraged by Local Plan Policy DME1 B.(i). I note the appellant's comment that the site is the least obtrusive position on the holding, and that the proposed siting, adjacent to an existing field gate and track, would avoid the need for a new access to be provided. That may be the case, but the proposed position of the building, near to the top of the hill, would mean that the large structure would appear as a highly prominent and isolated feature in the landscape.
10. The open character of the area, with few trees, means that the proposed building would be seen in near and distant views from many vantage points along nearby footpaths and Meadow Lane. Furthermore, the elevated position of the site means that the building would be seen against, and would interrupt, the skyline from many vantage points.
11. Despite the proposed use of Yorkshire boarding and local rubble stone, the building would still have the appearance of a substantial modern shed. Even though it would be clearly agricultural, the building would appear out of place in this historic rural landscape, in which large scale, modern buildings are generally absent. The presence of other, poorly designed and isolated buildings elsewhere in the vicinity does not give a reason to allow further harmful development in the PDNP.
12. The proposed siting adjacent to a drystone wall would make use of an existing landscape feature, but it would only provide screening for the lower part of the building. Over time, the additional landscaping proposed would provide additional screening, but this would only ever be partial. Even if more trees were planted, they would take a number of years to become established.
13. By providing storage for bales of hay and straw over the winter, the proposal would reduce the need to store them outside in plastic wrapping. In this way, the proposal would help to conserve the valued landscape character of the area. However, whilst this would be a benefit of the scheme, it would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm to the character of the rural landscape, which would be caused by the building itself.

14. In accordance with Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) I must give great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks. A building of the size proposed may be needed to enable the appellant to farm the land in the way they would like to, but this does not outweigh the considerable visual harm which would be caused.
15. I conclude that, owing to its siting, appearance and scale, the proposed building would result cause harm to the character and appearance of this area of the PDNP.
16. As it would fail to respect, conserve and enhance the valued characteristics of the area, the proposal would conflict with the Development Management Principles set out in Core Strategy Policy GSP3. For similar reasons, there would be conflict with Core Strategy Policy L1, and with Part B of Local Plan Policy DME1.
17. Core Strategy Policy DS1 sets out the development strategy for the area, and allows for agricultural development in the countryside. Whilst I have identified no conflict with Policy DS1, the proposal would fail to meet the detailed requirements for the siting and design of development, contained in Local Plan Policy DMC3.
18. The principles set out in Core Strategy Policy GSP2, concerned with enhancing the National Park, are of limited applicability to the proposed scheme, and I have identified no clear conflict with Policy GSP1 of the Core Strategy 2011, which sets out broad strategic principles for securing National Park Purposes. Even so, as a whole, the proposal conflicts with the development plan. It would also conflict with Framework paragraph 174a), which requires that developments should contribute to protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons set out, the proposal would conflict with the development plan and the Framework. No other considerations outweigh this finding. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR