



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 October 2024

by C Cresswell BSc (Hons) MA, MBA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/J9497/W/24/3341104

**Teigncombe Farm, Road from Batworthy Farm to Southill Cross,
Chagford, Devon, TQ13 8ET**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Stanbury against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is 0291/23.
 - The development proposed is described as “change of use of land for the siting of two glamping pods”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a development described as “change of use of land for the siting of two glamping pods” at Teigncombe Farm, Road from Batworthy Farm to Southill Cross, Chagford, Devon, TQ13 8ET, in accordance with the terms of the application, 0291/23, subject to the conditions set out in the Schedule at the end of this Decision.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are:
 - whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed glamping pods, having particular regard to planning policies which seek to control new development in the countryside.
 - the effect of the proposed glamping pods on the character and appearance of Dartmoor National Park.

Reasons

Location

3. Policy 5.5 of the Local Plan¹ indicates that new tourist accommodation in the countryside will only be permitted if it involves the conversion of redundant historic buildings. As the proposal does not involve the conversion of a building, it cannot be justified on the basis of this policy.
4. However, in this case, the glamping pods are being proposed as a way of diversifying activities on an existing farm rather than representing an entirely new business in the countryside. As such, Policy 5.9 is of more relevance to the appeal as it concerns farm diversification. Part 1 of the policy supports proposals which contribute to farm diversification where they comply with criteria a) to e). I consider each of these in turn.

¹ Dartmoor Local Plan 2018-2036.

5. The first criterion (a) says the development must be located on an established and active farm. There is no dispute that Teigncombe Farm meets this description. Criterion (b) says the proposed enterprise needs to support and add value to a farm business which contributes to the conservation or enhancement of the park's Special Qualities. In terms of added value, the proposal would enable the farm to receive additional income from guests, which the appellant estimates to be £100 per night. Although little has been provided in the way of market research, I have no reason to doubt this estimate, or the demand for such accommodation in this area.
6. The Special Qualities of the National park are listed in paragraph 1.1.8 of the Local Plan. This list includes references to both farming and characteristic ways of life. As such, it seems to me that Teigncombe Farm makes a direct contribution to these Special Qualities. I share the Council's view that diversification can help build financial resilience into farming businesses and, in the process, help to safeguard these qualities. The proposal would therefore be compliant with criterion (b) of Policy 5.9.
7. According to criterion (c) the proposed enterprise should be ancillary and subordinate in scale to the farm business. While little financial information has been provided, the Council says that Teigncombe Farm contains 150 acres of pasture and woodland with a newtake of approximately 300 acres. I am also informed that the appellants run a herd of suckler cows as well as 400 sheep. Given the size of the farm, it seems to me that the income from two glamping pods would be subservient to the farming operation. Hence, the proposal would comply with criterion (c).
8. Criterion (d) says that redundant buildings should be used before any new buildings are proposed. Yet while there are other buildings on the holding, they are either in active use, or in such close proximity to farming operations that they would not be suitable for guest accommodation. Furthermore, the price of converting a barn to serve as holiday accommodation would be unlikely to be cost effective, thereby defeating the objective of farm diversification. Given the absence of any suitable buildings, I am therefore satisfied that the provisions of criterion (d) would be met.
9. Finally, criterion (e) requires that new buildings and structures are clustered with existing building groups. While the glamping pods would be built on an open field, they would nonetheless be in relatively close proximity to agricultural buildings and other properties. Although few details of boundary features or means of enclosure have been provided, it would be possible to secure this by way of a planning condition. The proposal would therefore meet the terms of criterion (e).
10. This leads me to conclude that the proposal would comply with the first part of Policy 5.9. However, for the proposal to be justified on this basis of this policy, it would also need to comply with part 2. This only applies to proposals for holiday lets or local needs dwellings and stipulates that they must be provided through the *conversion of a suitable redundant historic building*.
11. In this case, the proposed glamping pods would be small in comparison to most new homes and their design and positioning in an open field would reflect some elements of camping. Nonetheless, they would be permanent buildings containing a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living space as so would be more characteristic of holiday lets than tents.

12. Hence, as the proposal does not involve the conversion of a redundant building, it would fail to comply with part 2 of Policy 5.9 and so would fail to comply with the policy as a whole.
13. That said, farming forms an important element of the Special Qualities of the National Park and it is the clearly the intention of the Local Plan to support appropriate farm diversification schemes, including holiday lets. I am also mindful that paragraph 88 of the Framework² indicates that planning decisions should enable the diversification of agricultural businesses.
14. Teigncombe Farm is a long established business that is facing a reduction in income due to the withdrawal of government financial support. There is little to suggest that this is likely to change in the future. Overall, I find the appellants' portrayal of the farm's financial circumstances to be to be compelling. The business has limited options for diversification because the existing buildings are unsuitable for conversion to holiday lets. Although the proposed glamping pods cannot be justified on the basis of Policy 5.9, they could clearly play a role in helping to keep the farm financially diversified.
15. My attention has been drawn to Policy 1.1 of the Local Plan, which permits development that furthers the National Park purposes. This includes conserving and enhancing the cultural heritage of the area. I have already determined that by improving the financial sustainability of the farm, the proposal would help to preserve the Special Qualities of the park, including those which relate to farming and characteristic ways of life. I therefore find that the proposal would comply with Policy 1.1. The proposal would also comply with Policy 1.3 which allows development in the open countryside where there is a need for farm diversification.
16. I therefore conclude on this issue that the site is a suitable location for the proposed glamping pods. The proposal does not comply with Policy 5.9 but can be justified on the basis of Policies 1.1 and 1.3.

Character and appearance

17. Teigncombe is a very small hamlet in the open countryside. It consists of the farm and its associated agricultural buildings, plus private residences. The wider landscape here is characterised by narrow rural lanes, open fields, woodland and leafy, mature hedgerows. Development is mainly clustered around farms and small hamlets.
18. The appeal site is an open field and contributes to these rural characteristics. The proposed glamping pods would introduce development and so increase the prevalence of building over openness in this location. However, the glamping pods would be relatively modest in size and positioned next to an existing barn, which forms part of the cluster of buildings that defines the hamlet. Hence, they would be seen in the context of other buildings.
19. Although the proposed buildings would be of a different style to the more traditionally designed buildings in the hamlet, they would not be easily seen from outside the confines of the field. There are trees and mature hedgerows along the field boundaries and these largely obscure views into the site from the lanes that run to the south and east.

² National Planning Policy Framework, July 2023.

20. While the proposed car parking area would be visible, its position directly next to the road would not be obtrusive. There is already an entrance gate here and an informal layby where vehicles can pass. The small capacity of the glamping pods would limit the number of vehicles at any one time. The pedestrian route to the huts is unlikely to be conspicuous and the glamping pods themselves would not be easily visible from the car parking area as they would be obscured by the intervening buildings and trees.
21. Apart from there being a residential presence on the site, there would also be an increase in activity with guests coming and going. However, the extent of this would be limited by the small size of the glamping operation. It would be unlikely to diminish the tranquillity or dark skies of the National Park, given that the site is near a working farm and existing dwellings.
22. I therefore conclude on this issue that the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the National Park. There would be no conflict with the landscape protection elements of Local Plan Policies 1.1, 1.5, 2.1 and 2.6.

Other matters

23. The separation distance between the proposed glamping pods and the nearest dwellings would be sufficient to prevent mutual overlooking, especially considering the intervening vegetation. Given the limited capacity of the pods and their physical separation from other properties, they would be unlikely to generate noise or disturbance sufficient to undermine the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. As the accommodation would be self-contained and separated from the agricultural operations, I do not consider the development would pose a serious risk to the health and safety of guests.
24. In my view, the parking provision would be sufficient for a development of this scale. I appreciate that the roads in this area are narrow and vehicles may have problems manoeuvring when they meet. However, this is a feature of the wider road network. The level of additional traffic generated by the proposal would not notably worsen this situation.
25. My decision is based on the specific circumstances of this case and the nature of evidence before me. It does not establish a general precedent for development elsewhere in the National Park. Differing circumstances and the potential for cumulative harm would represent matters to be considered were other similar proposals to be advanced in the future.

Conditions

26. In the interests of clarity, standard conditions requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the plans and within a time limit have been imposed. To protect the character and appearance of the area there are conditions requiring further details of external materials and landscaping. For similar reasons, there is also a condition controlling external lighting and a condition which removes certain permitted development rights. In the interests of highway safety, there is also a condition requiring the parking and access to be provided before the development is brought into use. Finally, to ensure the development is used for its intended purpose, there is a condition to ensure that it is only used for short-term holiday accommodation associated with Teigncombe Farm.

Conclusion

27. The appeal is allowed.

C Cresswell

INSPECTOR

(Schedule of conditions attached)

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan, Site Section, Plan 1:50, West Elevation, East Elevation, North Elevation, South Elevation.
- 3) Notwithstanding Condition 2, prior to their installation, samples of all proposed external facing and roofing materials for the buildings and surfacing materials for the parking area shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. Thereafter, only approved surfacing, external facing and roofing materials shall be used in the development.
- 4) Details of a proposed landscaping and planting scheme, including means of enclosure, shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval prior to the construction of any external walls of the dwelling hereby approved. The landscaping and planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme within twelve months of the commencement of the development, or such longer period as the Local Planning Authority shall specify in writing. The landscaping and planting shall be maintained from the date of the commencement of the development, such maintenance shall include the replacement of any trees or shrubs that die or are removed.
- 5) The accommodation hereby approved shall not be occupied until the access, parking facilities, visibility splays, turning area, access and access drainage have been provided and maintained in accordance with the application drawings and retained for that purpose at all times.
- 6) No external lighting shall be installed or used in association with the development hereby approved.
- 7) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification, no material alterations to the external appearance of the buildings shall be carried out and no extension, building, enclosure, structure, erection, hard surface, swimming or other pool shall be constructed or erected in or around the curtilage of the buildings hereby permitted, and no windows or roof lights other than those expressly authorised by this permission shall be created, formed or installed, without the prior written authorisation of the Local Planning Authority.
- 8) The development hereby permitted shall not be used or occupied other than for the provision of short let holiday accommodation in association with the farming enterprise at Teigncombe Farm and shall not at any time be used, let, sold or otherwise occupied separately. No person, couple, family or group shall occupy or use the accommodation hereby permitted for a single period or cumulative periods exceeding 28 days in any calendar year.