



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2024

by S Harrington MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/J9497/W/24/3347851

SX 53497 72696, Land to the West of Gees Farm, Sampford Spiney, Tavistock PL20 6LH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant approval required under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Mr L Lawson-O'Neil against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is 0061/24.
 - The development proposed is a polytunnel.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Background and Main Issue

2. Schedule 2, Part 6, Class 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. Paragraph A.2.(2)(i) to Part 6 requires the developer to apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether prior approval is required for the siting, design and external appearance of the building. The Authority confirmed that prior approval was required, the refusal of which is the subject of this appeal.
4. Therefore, the main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, having regard to the siting, design and external appearance of the building.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is within Dartmoor National Park and is within an attractive rural rolling landscape which features strong medieval field patterns, prominent Devon hedge banks and has visual links with open moorland. Agricultural buildings in the immediately surrounding area tend to be well located to farmsteads, with limited examples of isolated buildings. Being an undeveloped part of the rolling landscape and field pattern, the appeal site positively contributes to the pastoral character of the area.
6. Whilst it is screened from longer distance views such as Pew Tor due to the topography and boundary screening and has an enclosed feel due to being

within a depression in the landscape, I observed that the proposal would be visible from viewpoints along the directly adjacent highway through the hedge bank boundaries, particularly during winter months.

7. Furthermore, although there is a netted enclosure in the field adjacent the appeal site, the proposal would not be readily seen in conjunction with this enclosure due to further intervening hedge bank boundaries, whilst a nearby stone structure is of a modest scale and not widely visible in the landscape. As such the appeal site is not read in conjunction with the main cluster of buildings at the farmstead.
8. Polytunnels are not an uncommon feature of farmsteads and that proposed is of a standard design and appearance commensurate with its purpose. However, even if the proposed siting is operationally optimal and would support sustainable agricultural practices, it would nevertheless be read as a conspicuous isolated building from nearby viewpoints, incongruous and intrusive in the local landscape of the designated National Park.
9. My attention has also been drawn to other agricultural buildings which the appellant contends have been permitted by the Authority but are not clustered. The example provided by the appellant relates to a planning permission, as opposed to a prior approval application. Nevertheless, in finding that the proposed building would not have a negative visual impact or harm on the local landscape character, the officer report states that the site for that permission had been established over the years as a parking and storage area. Therefore, that proposal is materially different to the scheme before me.
10. I therefore conclude that due to its siting, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Consequently, prior approval should not be granted.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

S Harrington

INSPECTOR