



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 October 2025

by **O Marigold BSc DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/F9498/W/25/3368975

Sloecombe, Timberscombe, Minehead, Somerset

- 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 David Gurnett against the decision of Exmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is 6/43/23/011.
 - The development proposed is erection of 3 No. farm sheds (10.5m x 5m tractor shed, 10x4m implement shed and 10 x 2m log shed) (retrospective).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have used the description of the appeal development as set out in the Decision Notice, which is more concise than that used in the application form. Insufficient information was provided with the application to clearly identify the site. Further detail was sought from the appellant. However, interested parties have not been able to comment on the additional plans provided. I have therefore based my determination on the plans considered by the Authority. I am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced as a result.
3. The appeal development is located within the Exmoor National Park, and I have had regard to my duties under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and the Environment Act 1995, as amended, to further the purposes for which the National Park has been designated. These include conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
4. The application is described as being retrospective. That said, during my visit, I observed that the form and shape of the buildings erected on site do not accord with the submitted plans. As such, I have made my determination on the basis of the plans considered by the Authority, as a proposal, rather than for the development as built.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposal would comply with the spatial strategy of the Development Plan, including in respect of its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site consists of two parcels of agricultural land, located in attractive countryside. Locally, settlement is limited to scattered farms and houses, giving it a

remote character. I understand that the land is being used as a farm and as a base for forestry and woodworking. It is accessed via a steeply-sloping track. One of the proposed buildings, adjacent to the site entrance, would be for a log store. Two other buildings, a tractor shed and an implements shed, would be located further into the site close to another barn, which is outside the scope of this appeal, and which contains living accommodation.

7. Policy SE-S4 of the Exmoor Local Plan (ELP), adopted July 2017, only permits new buildings for agricultural or forestry purposes where its size and scale is commensurate with the demonstrated need, and where they have been designed for these purposes. The policy also requires that their siting and design is appropriate to the landscape. ELP policies GP1, CE-S1, CE-D1 and CE-S6 make similar requirements, including that proposals conserve and enhance the landscape.
8. The structures as built are described by the Authority as being ramshackle in appearance. However, for the reasons already given, I am considering the proposal based on the submitted plans. These show buildings with a simple design and a relatively low profile. The buildings would be seen against a backdrop of rising land and dense vegetation, and the tractor and implements sheds would be located close to an existing barn.
9. That said, even if not visible from publicly obtainable viewpoints, the buildings would have a utilitarian appearance, and would add to the amount of built form in the surrounding rolling and open landscape. As a result, they would undermine and diminish the remote, undeveloped character hereabouts.
10. Moreover, ELP policy SE-S4 requires a functional need for each of the buildings to be demonstrated. The agricultural use is said to have been established for many years. The machinery kept on site and used as part of the operation includes tractors, trailers and loaders, and equipment for timber moving and cutting. The sheds are said to be necessary to farm the current holding, for machinery that would not fit inside the old barn.
11. Nevertheless, I have little substantive evidence of the size, extent or type of agricultural and forestry enterprise here, or what has changed to mean that the proposed buildings are now required. Consequently, on the evidence available to me, I cannot be satisfied that there is a sufficient functional justification for them, necessary to comply with policy SE-S4.
12. The proposed buildings may well be smaller than those used for other intensive agricultural businesses, but such enterprises are not under consideration here. Reference has been made to other approved buildings in the area, but I have few details of these or their justification, preventing me from making any useful comparison.
13. The appellant has suggested that the development could be amended so that the log store, which as built is formed of two livestock boxes, could be put back on their trailer axles, to be mobile. Even so, this is not the proposal before me, which relates to permanent structures, and as shown on the plans.
14. For the reasons given above, the proposal would not comply with the spatial strategy of the Development Plan, and would have a harmful effect on the

character and appearance of the area. As such it would conflict with ELP policies SE-S4, GP1, CE-S1, CE-D1 and CE-S6. I give this harm and conflict great weight.

Other Matters

15. The Authority states that ecological enhancements would need to be formalised, but have not been forthcoming. However, I understand that measures including bat and bird boxes have been or could be installed at the site, secured by the suggested planning condition. I have little evidence of harm to species, and the Wildlife Conservation Officer did not object to the planning application. For these reasons, the proposal would not be unacceptable in respect of its ecological effects, but this does not overcome my concerns above. In the absence of further details of the enterprise, I can give the economic benefits of the development only limited weight.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given, there would be conflict with the Development Plan, read as a whole. No material considerations have been shown to have sufficient weight to warrant a decision other than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

O Marigold

INSPECTOR