

# House for Exmoor farming family gets the go-ahead

A NEW house claimed to be "excessively large" and to have an "unacceptable impact on the scenic beauty of the landscape" can be built on an Exmoor farm.

At its meeting on Tuesday, Exmoor National Park Authority went against officers' advice and approved a planning application from Mr and Mrs David Vellacott, of Springfield Farm, Draydon Lane, Dulverton, to build a second house on their farm for younger members of the family.

The application had been deferred from the February meeting for further discussions with planning officers about the size of the proposed development, which officers claimed was too large.

The park authority's head of planning and sustainable development, David Wyborn, told the committee in a report that the 270-acre farm had been owned by the Vellacotts since 1942 and was run by the applicants, now in their sixties.

Outline planning permission for a new house was granted in 2016 on the understanding that the floor area would be 90 square metres or less.

But the proposed building had a total floor area of 175 square metres and included three bedrooms, an en suite bathroom, a main living area, an office, a covered walkway, a workshop and a water-treatment area.

Mr Wyborn said the house was considered too large, and planning officers had urged the applicants to make their plans smaller to conform with regulations, but they preferred to submit the original plans, although the floor area had been reduced by 0.4 metres.

As a result, planning officers recommended that the application be rejected.

"The building was considered to be excessively large in size and beyond what would be affordable for the need in perpetuity," said a report on the meeting.

"By virtue of its scale, siting, design and landscaping, the proposed dwelling was judged to cause an unacceptable visual impact on the scenic beauty of the landscape."

Mr Wyborn said there was scope to reduce the landscape harm caused by the new development through a fresh planning proposal with a revised siting, but the applicants were not willing to pursue that option.

The planning committee heard that a study by Acorn Rural Property Consultants (ARPC) on behalf of the applicants argued that there was a need for 3.2 full-time workers on the farm before allowing for the bed and breakfast business carried out in the main farmhouse.

The farm had a flock of over 400 breeding ewes and more than 80 head of cattle and the applicants, living in the existing farmhouse, were increas-

ingly unable to carry out the physical farming work without help.

The new house would allow younger members of the family, now partners in the business, to live on the farm.

ARPC concluded there was a proven need for a full-time worker and a second dwelling, but consultants Landsense Professional (LP), for the park authority, claimed the need for a second worker "for most of the day and night for most of the time" had not been established.

LP estimated that there was only a need for from 1.74 to 1.88 extra manpower on the farm.

The committee heard that Dulverton Town Council and Withypool Parish Council had supported the scheme and letters of support claimed the two-storey building would not have a negative effect on the landscape and that planning approval would enable a young couple to live and work on Exmoor.

Mr Wyborn told the committee: "In this case there is no compelling proof that there are exceptional circumstances involved, nor that the existing building does not meet the needs of the holding."

"Planning officers are therefore not convinced that the dwelling can be considered on a fully justified agricultural basis."

The committee disagreed and voted to approve the application.