
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 November 2016

by Colin Cresswell BSc (Hons) MA MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 21 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/16/3152139

Land at Cowloe House, Sennen Cove, Cornwall TR19 7BZ.

- 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 & Mrs Richard and Tina Bettison against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA15/06735, dated 27 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 15 February 2016.
 - The development proposed is erection of extension to workshop/store.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. Stone Chair Lane ascends from the centre of the village and narrows to form a public footpath which transverses the hillside. Although some parts of the hillside are occupied by dwellings, much of the area remains undeveloped and is covered by natural vegetation. Due to its elevation, the hillside also benefits from expansive views of Whitesand Bay and the surrounding coastline, making this part of Stone Chair Lane an especially scenic route. The landscape forms part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). According to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) such landscapes have the highest status of protection in relation to their scenic beauty.
 4. The appeal concerns a small storage building which adjoins Stone Chair Lane near the point at which it narrows to become a footpath. It is constructed of stone, simply proportioned and is partly built into the hillside. As the land to the immediate south and east is open and undeveloped, the building is clearly seen when users of the footpath approach the site from the east. However, due to its modest proportions, it is not a particularly conspicuous feature. Similarly, it is not very noticeable when ascending Stone Chair Lane from the village centre as it is substantially smaller than surrounding dwellings and is partly obscured by its neighbour, Wave Crest.
 5. The appeal proposal would effectively result in the construction of a new building which would adjoin the existing one. Although orientated at right
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angles to the existing building, it would have a relatively traditional design, with a pitched roof and simple proportions. The use of natural granite and weatherboarding would be compatible with the appearance of the existing building and nearby properties. When considered in isolation, the proposed extension would therefore be in general keeping with the architectural style of other properties in the vicinity.

6. However, the Council raise concerns that the extension would occupy a larger footprint than the existing building and would also be taller, featuring an additional first floor storage area. I agree with the appellant's assessment that the extension would not be very prominent in longer distance views from within the village and other parts of the AONB. Whilst I appreciate that this assessment was based on the Council's published methodology, the extension would nonetheless be noticeable at closer quarters within Stone Chair Lane which becomes a public footpath in the vicinity of the site.
7. The ridge lines of properties on the hillside tend to increase in height in accordance with the contours of the land and, in this respect, the extension would be no different. However, despite being dug into the hillside, the extension would be notably larger than the existing building. Consequently, the existing building would be almost completely obscured when approaching the site from the footpath to the east. The extension would also be seen when approaching the site from the west as the roof would project above that of the existing building. Hence, the development would appear relatively conspicuous within its local setting. The overall effect of the proposal would therefore be to increase the prominence of built development over open space in this location. In this regard, I am particularly mindful that the scenic beauty of the hillside is partly derived from the vegetated areas of open space to the south and east of the existing building. By occupying part of this space, the proposed extension would erode a distinctive feature of the hillside.
8. Nevertheless, since the application was originally determined by the Council, planning permission¹ has been granted for an alternative extension. This would be lower in height than the appeal proposal as the first floor storage area has been omitted from the plans. However, the approved scheme would occupy the same footprint as the appeal proposal and is of a generally similar design in terms of its form, orientation and use of materials. I have not been made aware of any reasons why the approved scheme could not be implemented and therefore consider it highly likely that it would be constructed in the event of the current appeal being dismissed. It is therefore a material consideration to which I attach substantial weight.
9. When approaching the site from the east, the approved scheme would obscure the existing building in a similar manner to the appeal proposal. However, due to its reduced height, the approved scheme would present a rather less prominent side elevation to users of the footpath. Approaching the site from the west, the pitched roof of the approved scheme would be mostly obscured by the existing building. In contrast, the roof of the appeal proposal would come into view sooner and be quite clearly seen. Furthermore, as the approved scheme would result in a single storey unit, it would more closely reflect the modest form of the existing building. As such, it would continue to be read as a small outbuilding in keeping with what exists presently. Even

¹ Council Ref: PA16/05528

though the difference in height would be relatively slight, the appeal proposal would contrast more vividly with the appearance of the existing building, making it appear somewhat more conspicuous.

10. Overall, the appeal proposal would be noticeably larger and bulkier than the approved scheme and would therefore increase the perception of built development on a part of the hillside where the scenic beauty is derived from its more open characteristics. Hence, the appeal proposal would result in a more harmful development than the approved scheme. I appreciate that there are close similarities between the approved scheme and the appeal proposal. However, in reaching this decision, I am particularly mindful that pedestrians walk directly past the site and that the Framework advises that 'great weight' must be attached to the protection of scenic beauty within the AONB.
11. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. There would be conflict with the overarching objective Framework to promote local distinctiveness through appropriate standards of design. There would also be conflict with paragraph 115 of the Framework which aims to protect scenic beauty within AONB designated landscapes.
12. For the above reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Colin Cresswell

INSPECTOR