
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January 2017

by CD Cresswell BSc (Hons) MA MBA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 31 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/16/3159565

Cambridge Barn, New Portreath Road, Redruth TR16 4QL

- 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 Hitchen against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA16/06706, dated 19 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as “erection of a 3 and 4 bedroom holiday home to further expand North Coast Holiday Cottages”.
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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. North Coast Holiday Cottages is an established tourist enterprise which contains a number of holiday units arranged on a hillside. These can be seen from much of the surrounding area, including parts of Old Portreath Road and the B3300. However, as the hillside immediately above the main grouping of holiday units remains undeveloped, the site maintains a rural backdrop. Although there are separate developments on the hillside to the west of the holiday units, the wider landscape is generally rural in nature with hedgerows, trees and open fields dominating the surrounding area. Whilst the landscape does not benefit from any particular designations, it nonetheless contributes to the intrinsic beauty of the countryside in a popular visitor location.
4. It is proposed to construct two additional holiday units. These would be single storey buildings of permanent construction and similar in appearance to the majority of other units within the site. Although they would be built close to the other units, they would be situated further up the hillside and beyond the hedgerow boundary which currently marks the northern extent of the main grouping of development. This would represent further encroachment into an undeveloped part of the hillside and I am conscious that a previous proposal for development in the same field was dismissed at appeal¹ on the basis that it would harm the character and appearance of the area.

¹ Appeal Decision: APP/D0840/A/13/2200071

5. However, the previous appeal concerned a proposal for six holiday units which were to be arranged one behind the other rising up the hillside. The current proposal is for two units in a linear arrangement which would be situated low in the field, being dug into the hillside just above the existing hedgerow bank. In longer distance views from the B3300 and Old Portreath Road, the new units would be seen with the existing units in the foreground and much of the undeveloped field in the background. The hedgerow bank would also provide a small amount of screening. Therefore, while the new holiday units would add incrementally to the quantity of built development on the hillside, they would not be easily discernible when seen at distance. The rural backdrop of the hillside would be maintained. In this particular respect, the revised proposal addresses the concerns raised by the previous Inspector.
6. Nonetheless, I recognise that if the amount of development on the upper part of the hillside continued to increase, it may reach a point at which the cumulative effects would become harmful. The existing hedgerow serves as an established boundary marking the northern extent of the field in which the majority of existing units are located. In contrast, the field in which the new units would be located remains largely open as it slopes further up the hillside to the north. With this in mind, I note that the site area marked on the plans (as denoted by the red line) extends well beyond the confines of the proposed units and encompasses a large part of the undeveloped field which forms the green backdrop to the site. I share the Council's concerns that this area would technically form the curtilage of the holiday units and the granting of planning permission could subsequently enable various ancillary developments to take place within the undeveloped space. Hence, there is potential for the undeveloped backdrop of the hillside to be undermined, thereby harming the character and appearance of the area. Although I note that landscaping and planting that has taken place within the holiday park, it is not clear how this would help to mitigate the impact of the appeal proposal.
7. I am aware that the Council has previously approved holiday units on the site where the areas shown on the plans included large sections of undeveloped space. However, the parts of the site further down the hillside are less visually exposed than the more elevated land included within the current proposal. I note the appellant's request for me to modify the plans in the course of determining this appeal. Unfortunately, the appeal procedure only enables me to assess the development as proposed. Alteration of the site boundaries would represent a material change to the proposal, thereby requiring an additional period of consultation.
8. My attention has been drawn to a number of applications for holiday units and other development which the Council has recently approved. Apart from the various permissions that have been granted further down the hillside, other proposals have been approved to the west of the appeal site in the general vicinity of Cambridge Barn. This includes the approval of a two-storey building in close proximity to the holiday units being proposed in this appeal. Nonetheless, the planning permissions granted further to the west do not appear to cover such a large area of land as the appeal proposal or extend as far up the hillside. Hence, they would appear to have a less harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area.
9. Whilst I also recognise that development has been approved further up the hillside in the vicinity of Bridge Cottage, this also covers a smaller area than

the appeal proposal and benefits from a reasonably good deal of screening from surrounding trees. Although the appellant also refers to permissions granted in other holiday parks, there is little before me to indicate that the circumstances of those cases are directly comparable with the proposal under consideration in this appeal. Overall, I do not consider that a convincing precedent in favour of the appeal proposal has been established by the previous decisions of the Council.

10. The National Planning Policy Framework indicates that the overall purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development, of which there are three dimensions; economic, social and environmental. The Council suggest that the principle of new dwellings in this location is not supported by the Cornwall Local Plan (the Local Plan). Whilst this may be the case, the proposal specifically relates to holiday accommodation and the Local Plan recognises the contribution that tourism can make to the local economy. Although I have not been provided with detailed information regarding the tourist demand in this area, the evidence before me suggests that North Coast Holiday Cottages can make a make a contribution to the Local Plan objectives in this respect. Weighing against these economic benefits is the effect of cumulative harm to the character and appearance of the area. These would be matters for balancing in any subsequent proposals to expand the site. However, for reasons given elsewhere, I have determined that the appeal proposal would not represent sustainable development in this instance.
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 Policies 13 and 24 of the Local Plan which require proposals for development to respect local characteristics. For the above reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

CD Cresswell

INSPECTOR