

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2017

by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

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

Decision date: 28 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/17/3171329

Adjacent to Park House, Crantock Plains Touring Park, Crantock, Newquay, Cornwall TR8 5PH

- 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 John & Katherine Gibbes against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA16/09403, dated 27 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 31 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is construction of a 3 bedroom bungalow with provision for a future full time carer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Cornwall Council against Mr & Mrs John & Katherine Gibbes. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposed development would be in a sustainable location having regard to access to services and facilities; and
 - whether other considerations including the occupation of the dwelling in association with the caravan storage business, the provision of facilities to allow for the provision of care and employment opportunities for the appellants' son, and the current use of the site indicate that planning permission should be granted.

Reasons

Location

4. The appeal site is a field used for the storage of caravans, it lies opposite the main entrance to the Crantock Plains Touring Park which is a caravan site and also includes a house for the managers. A small number of other dwellings are located in the immediate vicinity. There are no services or facilities that would meet the daily needs of residents located near to the site. Some facilities are provided in Crantock which is located 1.5km or so away from the appeal site with a greater range provided in Newquay, around 2km distant. There is no dispute that the site is located within the countryside.

5. Pavements are generally absent from the local roads, which are narrow in places, often bounded by high hedges, and with restricted forward visibility of approaching vehicles being common. The propensity to walk or cycle is governed not just by distance but also by the quality of the walking environment. The limitations of the local road network, when taken with the distances, are such that it would not be a favourable walking or cycling environment to reach facilities and services to meet daily needs. I therefore conclude that the location of the site is isolated from services and facilities. Future occupiers would be predominantly reliant on private vehicles to meet their daily needs and therefore the site is not sustainable in transport terms for the provision of a dwelling.
6. I do not consider that because the Council has found the site to be suitable for caravan storage, it necessarily follows that it is suitable, or sustainable in terms of its location, for a home. The nature of caravan storage will require a trip to and from the facility to collect and drop of the caravan at the beginning and end of each use. All trips, by necessity, will be by private vehicle. The location of a dwelling would influence the tendency for walking, cycling, and the use of public transport to reach services, facilities, employment and so on. Without an overriding reason it is not appropriate to locate a dwelling where there is little realistic prospect that the majority of journeys will be made other than by private vehicle.
7. I therefore conclude that the proposal is contrary to Policies 1 and 7 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies (the LP). These seek to secure sustainable development including in terms of its location and restrict new homes in the countryside other than in special circumstances. It would also be contrary to the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) to avoid isolated homes in the countryside and seek to manage growth to make the fullest use of public transport, walking, and cycling.

Other considerations

8. Presently the storage business is operated as part of the Crantock Plains Touring Park business but it is the appellants' wish to separate the two. There is however no evidence that there is an overriding need for there to be full time occupation of the site to allow the storage use to continue. It appears that arrangements could be made to ensure a worker is present for the depositing and collection of caravans and that various means for providing security and monitoring could be put in place without the need for a dwelling to be provided. The development itself would also effectively reduce the amount of available storage area by around half, further reducing the justification for there to be a worker living on site. Inevitably it would be convenient for a member of staff to reside close to the business, but as this is not essential I give this very limited weight.
9. Although scant information has been provided, it is clear that the proposal and the design of the dwelling have come about, at least in part, to make provision for the care of the appellants' son. It would currently allow for him to be cared for by his parents and operate the caravan storage business with their supervision. In the longer term the dwelling would also be of a sufficient size to accommodate a live-in carer. There would be some social and economic benefits associated with the on-going care of the appellant's son by his parents and the ability to support him in employment. I have taken this into account in

the consideration of the appeal. However I have no evidence that there are not alternative means for the appellant's son to be cared for and assisted with employment opportunities and I therefore give this only limited weight.

10. There is dispute between the parties as to whether the site falls within the definition of previously developed land in the Framework. The Council considers it falls outside this because the site does not contain permanent structures. The site is predominantly laid to grass; however there is a storage building and carport of modest proportions and some fixed surface infrastructure in the form of an access road within the site. There is encouragement within the LP and the Framework to re-use previously developed land.
11. If I were to reach the view that the site should be considered as previously developed land, this would weigh in favour of the development. However the weight would be tempered by the requirement in Policy 21 of the LP that sites are suitably located, which, for the reason set out in the first main issue, I consider that it is not. It is also necessary to consider development in light of the development plan and the Framework each taken as a whole. And for the reasons given above there would be conflict with both. As such I would give this factor very limited weight and it would not outweigh the harm that would arise from the development in terms of its location.
12. There would be some economic benefits associated with the construction of the dwelling; these would be short lived and modest in scale and so I give this limited weight. The appellant also highlights that there would be limited visual impact from the development as the site is screened by vegetation and I note the Council did not refuse the application due to an impact on the character of the area. This however would indicate a lack of harm but it does little to weigh in favour of the development.
13. The evidence before me shows the Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and there is nothing to suggest that the development plan is silent in respect of the relevant matters or that the relevant policies are out-of-date. The 'tilted balance' in the final bullet point of paragraph 14 of the Framework does not therefore apply.

Conclusion

14. The adverse effects of the development are sufficient to mean that it fails to accord with the development plan when it is considered as a whole. Although some social and economic benefits would arise, due to the isolated location of the dwelling there would also be conflict with the environmental and social aspects of sustainable development as set out in Policy 1 of the LP. The benefits associated with the development, when considered alone or in combination, do not outweigh this harm and therefore they do not amount to material considerations which are sufficient to indicate that planning permission should be granted. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR