
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 September 2019

by Andrew Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/19/3226681

Water Storage Tank East of Quarry Farm, Kerley Downs, Chacewater TR4 8LQ

- 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 Mrs L Brannan against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA18/09542, dated 11 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is conversion of disused water store into lifetime home.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the Gwennap area of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site (WHS).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is in an area of open countryside. The existing structure is a water storage tank that occupies a parcel of land in one corner of a field, adjacent to a belt of trees. The structure is large and easily viewed from the well-used road to the east and southeast. Although it could not be considered to contribute positively to the character or appearance of the area, at my visit to the site I found it to have a neutral impact owing to its mute appearance and its current utilitarian form with its well weathered concrete finish. This is aided by the tree belt to the north, which does contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area. This serves as a natural backdrop that reduces the building's prominence in the landscape. The same belt of trees also screens the building from the north.
4. The proposal is to convert and substantially extend the structure to form a large dwelling. Significant two storey wings would be introduced to either side and a single storey addition added to the building's north side. A prominent lantern structure would be erected at the top to provide daylight to the building's core, which would be used as a large double height living area.
5. The well weathered utilitarian appearance of the existing building and its simple singular form would be entirely lost. It would take on a much broader scale, with a rather sprawling and irregular arrangement of extensions, which would be particularly apparent when viewed from the south. Large areas of glazing

would be inserted into its blank walls. Additional elements such as the wide glazed balcony, solar panels and the sizeable central lantern structure, in combination with the scale of the extensions and other changes to the site such as the introduction of domestic paraphernalia, would significantly increase its prominence. The converted building would be clearly viewed from the entrance to the site and when travelling north along the adjacent road from the southeast, where it would appear quite out of place in its isolated countryside setting. At night, owing to the extent of glazing including elements such as the glazed lantern, the building would be very visible when lit internally, taking into account the lack of light sources in the locality.

6. The tree belt, which provides some landscape benefits to the existing structure, would be dwarfed by the additional scale and increased prominence of the converted and extended building, to the extent that its role as a natural backdrop would be significantly diminished. The parties disagree over whether the tree belt marks the location of a mining feature or quarry feature. The appellant is of the view that the feature is an elvan dyke, which would have been valued for providing building stone, serving as a quarry rather than a mine. Historic Environment Record Number 40917 (HER) is based on a visit to the site, with the premise that the site was a quarry as depicted on the 1877 OS map. The visit revealed the feature to be an open cast mine, probably for tin, and is therefore directly related to the WHS interests.
7. I find the information set out in the HER entry to be compelling as it refers to on site investigations rather than map study alone. However, even if the feature is a quarry that provided good quality building stone rather than an open mine, building stone was in great demand locally given the scale of construction associated with the development of mining in the area. Elvan stone is a hard material that would have been particularly desirable. Its development as a quarry for building stone would still be of significance to the WHS.
8. The area of the feature has been left to develop into a woodland. The site is within the Redruth, Camborne and Gwennap area of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study (LCA). There are numerous references within the LCA description to such areas of disturbed land, mining relics or abandoned mine workings that have developed into natural habitats including woodland. I am therefore of the view that the current feature relates to the characteristics of the LCA.
9. I have considered the proposal against the Site Assessment Record, which is an appendix to the LCA. I found that the site has some characteristics in common with the LCA and that there would be a moderate level of change. This would result in a moderate sensitivity of the landscape character to the development, where the site would suffer an adverse change due to the development. The development is screened from views from the north, but prominent from views from the south and east. It would therefore be partially visible from the surrounding landscape. This would result in at least a moderate overall sensitivity, where there would be some negative change to the landscape character. For the reasons above the proposed design does not demonstrate that this would be mitigated through appropriate scale, siting, design or screening.

10. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset, and the more important the asset the greater the weight should be¹. World Heritage Sites are designated heritage assets of the highest significance². They are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value³ (OUV).
11. Paragraph 3.2 of the WHS Management Plan sets out the statement of OUV and significance, with reference to the radical reshaping of landscape. Amongst other things the remains of mines and industries aligned to mining reflect an extended period of industrial expansion and prolific innovation. Seven attribute types of the WHS are set out on page 24 and 25 of the WHS Management Plan. These express the OUV of the WHS, and their protection should be a key consideration in the management of the site. Of the seven, one is mine sites and one is ancillary industries.
12. Therefore, whether the existing feature is an elvan dyke or an open cast mine evidence submitted suggests that it would relate to one of the attribute types of the WHS as either a mine site or an ancillary industry aligned to mining. In addition to the contribution the tree belt makes to the character and appearance of the area, the landscape feature is an attribute of the OUV of the WHS.
13. The 2012 WHS Monitoring Report identifies development pressures within the WHS to include, amongst other things, the inappropriate introduction of buildings or structure of different scales, character, massing, materials or colour into mining landscapes and the introduction of non-locally distinctive architecture. Although the proposal would not remove or result in the loss of any part of the feature to the north of the site, it would be of a scale that would significantly reduce its current prominence as a landscape feature. It would be dominated by the converted and substantially extended building, which would have a scale and massing that would be entirely different to traditional buildings in the area and could not be considered locally distinctive architecture. As a result, the OUV of the WHS would be harmed.
14. In terms of the Framework the harm is less than substantial, however permission should only be allowed if clear public benefits outweigh against this harm. The appellant suggests that the proposal would be outstanding and innovative, that it would enhance the site and would represent an exemplar re-use of an existing building. There is no evidence before me to suggest that it would be truly outstanding or innovative as per the high test set by paragraph 79 (e) of the Framework. For the reasons set out above I am not satisfied that the proposal would represent an appropriate response to the context, taking into account its prominent and isolated location and relationship to the existing WHS feature. I am therefore not satisfied that such matters can be considered a public benefit.
15. The Parish Council has expressed support for the proposal and suggests that it could represent a positive gateway into the village of Chacewater. Whilst it is on one of the main routes into the village it is too distant from the developed area of the settlement to be considered a gateway, and for the reasons set out above I am not satisfied that it would have a positive impact. I am therefore

¹ National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 193.

² Planning Practice Guidance paragraph 032 Reference ID: 18a-032-20190723

³ National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 184.

not satisfied that there would be public benefits arising from the proposal that would outweigh the level of harm identified.

16. In summary the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area and the WHS, which would not accord with Policies 1, 2, 7, 12, 23 and 24 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010 – 2030 adopted 2016, Policies C2 and C7 of the WHS Management Plan 2013-2018 and the Framework, which together seek to ensure that development proposals respect local character, reuse buildings in a way that leads to an enhancement to the immediate setting, are appropriately scaled and maintain the historic character and distinctiveness of the mining landscape.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Tucker

INSPECTOR