



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 March 2020

by Tobias Gethin BA (Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/19/3242840

Trevalgas Farm, Stamford Hill, Stratton, Bude EX23 9EX

- 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 and Mrs Richard Smith against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA19/02596, dated 24 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 2no 4 bedroom chalet style dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would be in an appropriate location, with particular regard to safe access to services and facilities and its effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. Forming one corner of a field, the undeveloped appeal site contains grassland and is bounded by hedging and trees on two sides. With the exception of the relatively small stable buildings nearby, the site is well separated both visually and physically from existing built form and provides a clear break between the scattered dwellings in the surrounding area. The site's undeveloped nature, the generally generous spacing between dwellings in the locality and the predominating presence of farmland, fields and hedgerows means that the area surrounding the site has a spacious character and a rural appearance.
4. The degree of separation to the holiday lets at Trevalgas Farm and the holiday park to the north means that their presence has limited influence on the setting of the site. Although the settlements of Stratton and Poughill are not a significant distance away, the extent of built form along Stamford Hill and Poughill Road becomes sparser and increasingly scattered the closer one gets to the site. Even if those settlements could be described as having a linear and loose-knit form, they also have a markedly denser development pattern and are clearly more built up than the setting of the site, which includes a notably looser built environment. Consequently, the site reads as being within the countryside and its undeveloped quality, combined with the existing hedgerow providing an established, verdant boundary along the highway, contributes to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

5. Although existing vegetation would provide some screening, topography and the highway access through the hedgerow means that the proposed development would be visible in the surrounding area. Introducing residential development into an undeveloped parcel of land, the appeal proposal would extend built form into the rural landscape. This would erode the site's undeveloped form, which contributes positively to the surrounding area's spacious character and rural appearance. It would also reduce the spacing between built form in the locality and the new access would create a break in the established hedgerow. Consequently, the development would have a suburbanising effect on the countryside and would appear as an incongruous feature that would detract from the open and undeveloped rural landscape in the surrounding area. In coming to this view, I have taken account of the dwellings' set-back, that their scale, design and external materials would reflect built form in the vicinity, and that views of them may only be glimpsed in a similar manner to other nearby dwellings.
6. The site is not a significant distance from local services and facilities in surrounding settlements and there is a bus stop within a reasonable distance of the site. However, the highway in the vicinity of the site is unlit, relatively narrow and contains no separate footways or cycle lanes. Accordingly, walking or cycling to nearby settlements and the bus stop would not be particularly appealing or safe.
7. The Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030 (CLP) sets out the Council's approach to delivering housing, with a focus on delivering development in Cornwall's main towns. Amongst other aspects, CLP Policy 3 seeks to manage housing delivery through site allocations and neighbourhood plans for specified settlements, including Bude with Stratton, Flexbury and Poughill, with housing in the remainder of the Community Network Area (CNA) being delivered through sites identified by neighbourhood plans, rounding off of settlements, infill schemes and rural exception sites. Policy 3 of the Bude-Stratton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2030 (BSNDP) indicates that planning permission will be granted for schemes of up to 30 dwellings on sites within or adjacent to the settlements of Bude, Stratton, Flexbury and Poughill where, amongst other things, the development will be linked to local facilities by safe walking and cycling routes.
8. The site is within the Bude CNA, and Bude, Stratton, Flexbury and Poughill are not far away. However, given its location and the separating presence of fields, the site is visibly beyond Poughill's eastern extent, is not located within any of the other listed towns, and is neither adjacent nor visually or physically well-related to them or their form and shape. The site is not linked to local facilities by safe walking and cycling routes. The available evidence does not indicate that the proposal would constitute rounding off of a settlement, an infill scheme or a rural exception site. While the BSNDP does not preclude development elsewhere nor state that development not complying with BSNDP Policy 3 will be refused, it also does not identify the site for housing development.
9. It has been put to me that Bude, Stratton, Flexbury and Poughill are effectively treated as a single settlement/town by the CLP. However, while the CLP does refer to them together, they are clearly separate towns, both physically and visually. They are also described by the BSNDP as settlements rather than as a singular entity. Accordingly, and given the site's connection to its rural setting and the undeveloped landscape in the locality, CLP Policy 7 – covering housing

in the open countryside – is applicable to the appeal proposal. However, it has not been put to me that the proposed development would meet any of the policy's special circumstances, and the evidence before me and my observations from my site visit do not indicate otherwise.

10. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not be in an appropriate location, with particular regard to safe access to services and facilities and its harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. I therefore find that it conflicts with CLP Policies 1, 2, 3, 7, 21 and 23 and BSNDP Policy 3. Amongst other aspects, these set out the Council's spatial strategy and approach to accommodating new housing, and require development to respect and enhance quality of place, take account of the character of the surrounding area and access to services and facilities, sustain local distinctiveness and respect landscape character.
11. The proposed development would also be inconsistent with the provisions in the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) in relation to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. However, the site could not reasonably be described as isolated and therefore the development would not conflict with the provisions in the Framework in relation to avoiding isolated homes in the countryside. Nevertheless, this does not indicate that the appeal proposal is acceptable in relation to the adopted development plan, which is broadly consistent with the provisions in the Framework.

Other matters

12. Given the highway conditions indicate that walking and cycling would neither be safe nor particularly appealing, the location of the site is not conducive to accessing the proposed development except predominantly by private car. I accept that this may be the case for rural areas in general, and the Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas. However, in this case, residents would be likely to be highly reliant on one mode of transport – the private car – for many of their journeys and to serve their daily needs. This weighs against the proposal, while the lack of safe walking and cycling options conflicts with BSNDP Policy 3.
13. The Council identify that the proposed shared access to the highway would be acceptable and that the living conditions of adjoining occupiers would not be harmed. The evidence before me indicates that the new dwellings would not be subject to any flooding or drainage issues and would provide off-street parking and a sufficient living environment for future occupiers. New landscaping is also proposed on the site and could be secured by condition, along with ecological measures including timing of works and habitat enhancement. Be that as it may, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have identified nor provide justification for development that conflicts with the development plan.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Tobias Gethin

INSPECTOR