



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 June 2020

by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/19/3242883

Land South of Sennen Heights, Maria's Lane, Sennen Cove TR19 7BZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr G Jones against the decision of Cornwall Council.
- The application Ref PA19/03400, dated 16 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 June 2019.
- The development proposed is the erection of a dwelling.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The planning application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved. I assessed the appeal as such, having regard to the attendant drawings on an illustrative basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the suitability of the site for housing, with particular regard to the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a narrow strip of hillside set above and to the south and south west of the historic harbour and beach at Sennen Cove, within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB)¹. The access road Maria's Lane is at the site's south boundary. The apartments at Sennen Heights are directly to the north, with the detached dwellings Peter's Cottage and Omen aside the site to the west and east respectively.
5. Policy 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030 (adopted 2016) (CLP), amongst other things, supports development within settlements if the scheme would infill a small gap in an otherwise continuous built frontage. Sennen Cove is a settlement, albeit it is somewhat dispersed². The appeal site is within a short row of dwellings within the settlement and, despite the varietal heights and designs of the properties here, logically reads as a small infill plot. Given such, the proposal would be infill under the terms of Policy 3³.
6. That said, Policy 3, and Policy 23, also seek for proposals within the AONB to conserve its landscape character and natural beauty. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that great weight is given to

¹ Specifically, Landscape Character Area No CA02 - West Penwith - North and West Coastal Strip

² As identified in Appeal Ref APP/D0840/W/19/3230990

³ Having regard also to the Chief Planning Officer's Advice Note on infill/rounding off

conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in these regards.

7. This part of the AONB is dominated by its dramatic coastline. Whilst Maria's Lane is fairly developed for much of its length, it becomes markedly more rural as one reaches the appeal site, with the housing eventually giving way to a spectacular panorama of the coastal landscape. As the site drops away sharply from Maria's Lane, it submits to this vista. Moreover, due to the site's steep topography and vegetative coverage over granite, it contributes positively to the coastal landscape in its own terms, particularly its exposed upper reaches.
8. Given its location at the bottom of the site, the dwelling would sit closely with adjacent buildings and would be partially concealed behind Sennen Heights in views from the harbourside. Whilst it may break the skyline when viewed from below, it would do so in a manner consistent with its neighbours. However, the drawings suggest that a parking area would also extend from Maria's Lane in an engineered manner which, in my view, would erode the site's natural fabric and topography at its most exposed and sensitive point. Together with its parked vehicle, it would add incongruous urbanity to the fine coastal character and views which predominate above the site. As such, the AONB's landscape and scenic beauty would not be conserved. Moreover, there is nothing before me to suggest that this could be overcome at the reserved matters stage.
9. I have been directed to other sites where housing has been granted planning permission⁴. However, the sites are on the south side of the more developed part of Maria's Lane and do not have the same character. In addition, the appeal site's circumstances are different to the inland site at Trethewey⁵. The decisions at these sites have therefore carried limited weight in my reasoning.
10. Consequently, the site would not be suitable for housing, with particular regard to the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The proposal would conflict with the relevant aims of Policies 3 and 23 of the CLP, the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2016-2021 and the Framework.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

11. The provision of a single dwelling would be a very modest addition to the housing stock. There would also be some benefit in increased economic activity, particularly during construction. However, these are cumulatively modest benefits. They do not outweigh the harm to the AONB.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and that there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict. For the reasons outlined above and taking all matters raised into account, the appeal should be dismissed.

Matthew Jones

INSPECTOR

⁴ Refs: PA16/04376, PA17/03726, PA18/04281

⁵ Appeal Ref APP/D0840/W/18/3209669