



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 July 2020

by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/20/3247263

Land and Stables at Crowan, Praze-an-Beeble TR14 9NB

- 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 J Sleeman against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA19/00584, dated 14 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is change of use of redundant stable to a single dwelling.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the suitability of the site for a dwelling, having regard to local and national policy for the location of housing.

Reasons

3. The site comprises a hedge bound field and a stable building to the east of the village of Crowan. Access is through a modest gateway from the adjoining highway to the west, at a point where the road from Crowan splits off towards Blackrock to the east and southwards towards the buildings at Buscaverran.
4. The stable was granted planning permission in 2000¹ with condition No 2 requiring it to be used only for the keeping and stabling of horses in connection with the residential use of Clovelly House nearby. Whilst the wording of the condition is not without ambiguity, its reference to residential use does clearly place it outside of the definition of agriculture in my view². I therefore regard the site to be Previously Developed Land (PDL) under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Clovelly House is no longer within the same ownership as the site, giving the stable a currently disused status.
5. Whilst close to Crowan, the site does not adjoin the settlement but falls a little distance into its open countryside setting. Policy 7 of the Cornwall Local Plan: Strategic Policies Document 2010–2030 (adopted 2016) (the CLP) restricts new housing in the open countryside to that which fulfils one of given special circumstances. Of potential application to this proposal is the reuse of a suitably constructed redundant or disused building that is appropriate to retain and where it would lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.
6. The Crowan Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018-2030 (made 2019) (the CPNDP) directs housing to its defined settlements, including Crowan, pursuant to settlement boundaries and Policy HT1. It also caters for the

¹ W2/PA00/00655/F

² Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 336(1)

- conversion of buildings in the countryside under the terms of Policy HT3. This is where the building is suitable for conversion without substantial rebuilding and where the change to a dwelling would not cause significant harm to the character or appearance of the building and its landscape or the countryside.
7. Policy 7's supporting text identifies that the term 'appropriate' relates to a building's scale and method of construction, structural soundness and the ability to convert the building without the necessity of substantial demolition or substantial rebuilding operations. The appeal is accompanied by a structural survey of the stable. Its conclusion that the stable could be converted in a manner compliant with the Building Regulations has not been disputed by the Council and I have no reason to disagree with its findings.
 8. The proximity of the site to the urban form of Crowan is appreciable in views when heading towards the settlement from Black Rock. That said, the lane from Buscaverran provides clear and largely unobstructed public views of the stable within a principally rural setting. Given the lane's luxuriant and sinuous hedgerows, gentle undulations and surrounding pasture, it displays some of the landscape qualities prevalent in this part of Cornwall³. The stable's modest and utilitarian form, accompanied by a small pen enclosed by rustic fencing, leads it to sit neutrally within an, although undesignated, attractive pastoral scene.
 9. The conversion would maintain the stable's utilitarian form but, given the new glazing and fenestration arrangement, would introduce a sense of domesticity, leading it to exhibit a somewhat confused appearance. The relocated access would necessitate the removal of hedgerow in a narrower and more intimately experienced part of the lane. The new system of substantial hedgerows and entrances would closely contain the building in a contrived manner rather alien to the functional relationship it has maintained with the wider field. The inevitable trappings and paraphernalia of residential use would be visible around the dwelling and likely at the new site access. Given also that domestic light pollution would inevitably occur during hours of darkness, the proposed development would be highly incongruous within its immediate setting. This would not be comparable in visual terms to the existing lawful use of the site.
 10. I acknowledge that the scheme would secure a new use for the stable and create other forms of enhancement to its immediate setting, such as a safer highway environment and increased habitat. However, the impact of the development on the character of this environment would be significant, and to such extent that the overall effect of the scheme would be one of harm, not enhancement, in my view. It follows that the proposed conversion would conflict with Policy 7 of the CLP and Policy HT3 of the CPNDP.
 11. Policy 21 of the CLP, consistent with the Framework, encourages the best use of land. Of particular relevance to this appeal, it seeks to encourage sustainably located proposals that use PDL and buildings provided that they are not of high environmental or historic value. The term 'sustainably located' is not directly defined by the supporting text, but it does clarify that one must consider the suitability of the site in terms of both accessibility and location. It also states that the importance of the countryside includes its landscape value.
 12. Crowan is a very short and adequately safe and level walk from the site and is a location where the principle of future growth is accepted by the CPNDP. In

³ Features identified within the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study

these circumstances, the site can be considered accessible. However, the landscape value that I have identified within this location, and the harm that would be rendered to it by the appeal scheme, suggests to me that the proposal would not be sustainably located under the terms of Policy 21.

13. I have been directed to an appeal decision within the Falmouth area⁴. I note from the Inspector's reasoning in that decision that there were similar themes present. However, it is also clear that the specific circumstances in that case were materially different, with the glasshouses set within a more urbanised setting, partially screened by the properties Pencreek House and Sailors Creek. As such, this appeal decision has attracted limited weight in my reasoning.
14. I therefore conclude that the site would not be suitable for a dwelling, having regard to local and national policy for the location of housing. The proposal would conflict with Policies 1, 2, 3, 7, 12, 21 and 23 of the CLP, Policies HT1 and HT3 of the CPNDP and the Framework.

Planning Balance

15. The government is seeking to significantly boost the supply of housing. The scheme would contribute a one-bedroom dwelling to the local housing stock. Given the small scale of the proposal, its benefit in this regard would be modest. Biodiversity gains would also be limited by the scale of that proposed and the scheme's economic benefits through the construction phase would be modest and time limited. These benefits therefore attract limited weight.
16. Conversely, the scheme would conflict with development plan policy for the location of housing and would undermine the Council's plan-led approach, contrary to Paragraph 15 of the Framework. This is a significant matter in the balance, and it outweighs the benefits of the scheme.
17. 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 the conflict.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons outlined above and taking all matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Matthew Jones

INSPECTOR

⁴ APP/D0840/W/19/3220335