



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 September 2020

by David Wyborn BSc(Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/20/3249187 Roskorwell, St Keverne TR12 6PR

- 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 Slade against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA19/10625, dated 14 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is conversion of barn to form single dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, having particular regard to the location within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and development plan policies for housing in the countryside.

Reasons

3. The site is located within the South Coast Western section of the Cornwall AONB. The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study (the LCS) identifies the area as falling within the North East Lizard Peninsular character area. The LCS describes some of the key landscape characteristics as a contrasting landscape of open farmed plateau and small hidden valleys, very narrow winding lanes bounded by high Cornish hedges and hedge trees, and with few nucleated villages and isolated farmsteads.
4. The Roskorwell Manor site, together with the neighbouring scatter of properties, sits within a generally open plateau landscape, surrounded by fields with hedge boundaries and wooded valleys. The area exhibits many of the key and positive characteristics of the character area.
5. The Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030 (the Local Plan) seeks to direct most new housing to the main towns and villages with a hierarchical approach based on their role and function. New housing in the countryside is strictly controlled. Policy 7 of the Local Plan does allow some new homes in the open countryside where special circumstances are met. This includes where the reuse would be of suitably constructed redundant, disused or historic buildings that are considered appropriate to retain and would lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.

6. This approach has similarities with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) policy that allows for development of isolated homes in the countryside, where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting (paragraph 79c).
7. The wider building group at the Roskorwell Manor site includes the large detached dwelling (now it is understood in separate ownership) and a number of stone outbuildings which have been converted into residential use and form a holiday letting complex. A detached garage with floorspace above is nearing completion following my decision which allowed this replacement structure on appeal in October 2018¹. Adjoining this outbuilding, and in general proximity with most of the other buildings, is the portal framed and timber clad building the subject of this appeal.
8. This building has different proportions to most of the surrounding buildings with its reasonably tall sides and shallow sloping roof pitch either side of the central ridge. Its rather functional form is at odds with the generally vernacular and attractive stone clad holiday lets and the more traditional proportions of the new outbuilding. Nevertheless, the timber clad elevations of the building have turned a mellow grey with age, the general lack of openings help contribute to a recessive presence, and the greenery growing up part of the frontage, and the trees and hedging immediately around parts of the building, including to the rear, soften the appearance of the structure in its setting. Overall, the building has a reasonably benign effect within the immediate site and in wider views.
9. The proposal would be to convert the building to a dwelling. Externally this would involve the addition of a series of openings, and a balcony to the rear elevation. The insertion of the windows would be to all the elevations and would be quite extensive in number and extent. The double height reasonably large windows to the front elevation would become a fairly dominant visual element, draw the eye and detract from the simple and low key appearance of the present front part of the building in its setting. The addition of the mixed sized windows to the south elevation with their number and arrangement would appear an incongruous addition. The balcony to the rear and the associated first floor window and doors would harmfully alter the character of this simple agricultural-like building adding a more domestic type of appearance and diminishing the rural character along the rear boundary.
10. The hedge to the south of the building is shown to remain but parts of the other greenery around the building would appear from the plans to be removed. In all likelihood this would be necessary to allow light and views from the windows and the balcony. The removal of this vegetation would expose the building to more open views from within the site, which is accessed by holiday makers, and increase the presence of the building from the very limited views from the wider countryside². There are limited and glimpsed views of the building from the road, but some of the harmful changes would be perceptible and in turn this would detract from the appearance of the present building group.
11. The alterations and additions to the existing structure and the surroundings would make the building more conspicuous and the proposals would be harmful

¹ APP/D0840/W/18/3205265

² I have taken into account the appellant's Landscape Viewpoint Analysis

for the reasons explained. Car parking and domestic paraphernalia could be successfully accommodated within the site as this is already part of the character of the existing holiday letting site, however, given my findings above there would be harm to the immediate setting of the building. Consequently, the requirement under Policy 7 of the Local Plan and paragraph 79c of the Framework that proposals should lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting would not be met.

12. I accept that physically the building would be capable of conversion and, on the basis of the appellant's evidence, is redundant. However, given the functional appearance of the building, and the findings of harm which would result from the conversion proposals in this particular case, I am not satisfied that the building would pass the test that it is suitably constructed such that it should be considered appropriate to retain. This view is reinforced by the advice in the supporting text of the Local Plan that the conversion of large portal framed buildings will rarely be appropriate.
13. The Framework requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The proposal would cause harm to the immediate setting of the building and some harm to the rural surroundings when seen in the very limited views from the wider countryside and from a short section of the road. The harm would be limited in extent and localised, nevertheless, the proposal would not conserve or enhance the AONB as required by policy.
14. This proposal differs from the planning circumstances of the adjoining building which was allowed on appeal. That building was a replacement, of acceptable design and appearance, and fulfilled an ancillary function to the wider site. It did not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area or the AONB. That appeal decision therefore carries limited weight in the present considerations for the conversion of the adjoining building to provide a dwelling on the site.
15. My attention has also been drawn to the appeal decision at Nanfan Farm, Cury³ where a portal framed barn was allowed to be converted to a dwelling. I visited that barn during a site visit to another part of the Nanfan Farm site the day before my visit to Roskorwell. The Inspector who determined the earlier appeal at Nanfan Farm considered, for the reasons explained, that the proposal would lead to an overall enhancement to the immediate setting and was compliant in terms of Policy 7 of the Local Plan. In paragraph 9 the Inspector comments that due to the very specific circumstances of that site the conversion of that portal framed building would not be harmful.
16. Furthermore, because of the position of the Nanfan building, it being partially set down within its site and with its particular association with the other buildings, it was found that the alterations to the building would not harm the rural character of the area and the AONB.
17. In the present case, I have found that the works to the building would be harmful to the immediate setting and harm the character and appearance of the area, including the AONB. Consequently, while I have taken full account of the Nanfan Farm appeal decision, including its policy analysis and findings,

³ APP/D0840/W/19/3237330 – Nanfan Farm, Churchtown, Cury, Cornwall – dated 27 December 2019

there are clear differences and, consequently, I attach this other decision limited weight.

18. In the light of the above analysis, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. As a consequence, the proposal would not conserve and enhance the AONB, a matter that the Framework requires be attributed great weight. Additionally, the proposal would not meet with the development plan and Framework policy tests for the provision of new housing in the countryside. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with policies 2, 7, 12, 23 and 27 of the Local Plan which require, amongst other things, that development maintains and enhances Cornwall's distinctive natural and historic character.
19. While the building could be considered previously developed land, I am not satisfied that there would be compliance with Policy 21 of the Local Plan because the evidence does not clearly demonstrate, in particular, that the site is sustainably located in terms of access to services and facilities.
20. Although the Cornwall AONB Management Plan 2016-2021 (the MP) is not part of the development plan it is, nevertheless, an important material consideration. Given the harm to the AONB, the proposal would not comply with Policies MP9 and SCW8.04 of the MP, which seek that development is compatible with the distinctive character of the location.

Other Matters

21. The scheme would provide an additional dwelling and therefore provide a small boost to housing in the area. It would accord with the Framework policy approach to support the development of under-utilised land and buildings. There would be social and economic benefits locally during the conversion works and in subsequent occupation. However, as only a single dwelling would be delivered the cumulative benefits accrue limited weight and do not outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above, the scheme does not comply with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Wyborn

INSPECTOR