
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 February 2021

by Adrian Hunter BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/W/20/3259659

Rowan Heights, Road from Rix Hill to Grenofen Cross, Grenofen PL19 9ER

- 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 C & J Blackburn against the decision of West Devon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 0188/20/OPA, dated 16 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is outline application with some matters reserved for 5 dwellings including 1 bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. For the purposes of precision and clarity, I have taken the description of development from the Council's Decision Notice.
3. The planning application is submitted in outline with all matters, except for access, reserved for subsequent approval. An illustrative layout (Figure 9 of the Landscape and Visual Assessment, contained within the Design and Access Statement) accompanies the outline planning application and I have taken this into account in so far as establishing whether or not it would be possible, in principle, to erect five dwellings on the site.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether the proposal makes adequate provision for the type and size of dwellings required to support the local community;
 - The effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area; and
 - Whether the proposal makes adequate provision for the inclusion of carbon reduction measures.

Reasons

Local community needs

5. Grenofen is identified as a Sustainable Village within the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP). Within these locations, Policy TTV25 of the JLP supports the delivery of in the order of 550 homes, with Grenofen identified

as being suitable for accommodating up to 10 units. In terms of their delivery, Policy TTV25 identifies that, where possible new dwellings should be delivered through neighbourhood plans. There is currently no neighbourhood plan in place for Grenofen, with Policy TTV25 identifying that in this instance, development would be supported where it meets the identified local needs of local communities. Policy DEV8 of the JLP, seeks to ensure that there is a broad mix of housing within settlements, and requires proposals to provide dwellings of appropriate sizes, types and tenures and supported by local housing evidence, to ensure that there is a range of housing to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

6. Indicative plans show that the proposal would be for 5 detached dwellings, set within plot sizes which would reflect those of the neighbouring properties. The appeal application also identifies that one dwelling would be a bungalow.
7. In terms of local needs, the appellant has referred to the Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment 2017 (SHNMA) in support of their case, which, in their view, identifies a requirement for the provision of properties with 3 or 4 bedrooms. On the other hand, the Council have referred to data provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which in their view, provides a better indication of the local need for sizes and types of dwellings and shows a need for terraced homes.
8. The purpose of the SHNMA was to support the decisions about housing strategy, resources and future policy and to provide an evidence base to inform the preparation of the JLP. As a consequence, it covers a wider geographical area, with the relevant data being more focused at a District level. Notwithstanding the fact that the information contained within the SHNMA is more recent, I consider that its purpose is to provide a more strategic view of the housing needs both across the District and the wider JLP area, rather than an indication of the housing needs at a local level, as specifically required by Policy TTV25. In contrast, the ONS data is more focused and provides a clearer indication of the needs at a more local level. In this regard therefore, the provision of 5 detached dwellings would not meet the identified needs of the local community.
9. Accordingly, on the basis of the evidence before me, the proposal would fail to provide appropriate house size and types to meet the identified needs of the local community. For these reasons and in this respect, the proposal would be contrary to Policies TTV25 and DEV8 of the JLP and Paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Character and appearance

10. Policy DEV23 of the JLP requires proposals to conserve and enhance landscape, townscape and seascape character and scenic and visual quality and avoid significant and adverse landscape or visual impacts.
11. The appeal site lies on rising ground on the western side of the A386 and comprises part of a large open paddock. The majority of the village is located on the eastern side of the A386. In contrast, the western side is more rural in character, with significant areas of open countryside, along with a ribbon of residential development that extends into the countryside along Rix Hill. These dwellings are substantial properties set within spacious plots, with mature trees

and established landscaping, all of which contributes to the areas rural character.

12. The appeal site occupies an open, visible gap and, as such, makes an important contribution to the rural character of the western side of the road. It is separated from the main village core by the A386 and other open fields. The appeal site rises away from the A386 and, as a result, is clearly visible. Whilst these views are relatively local and are seen in the context of existing village development and the host property, the proposed dwellings, in particular those further away from the A386, would be clearly discernible. As a consequence, the proposal would introduce an urban form of development that would be in contrast to the surrounding rural character, with the development appearing as an incongruous form of development that would be at odds with the surrounding open countryside. Furthermore, due to the nature and layout of the existing settlement, the presence and introduction of dwellings on the appeal site would be poorly related to the existing built pattern of the Village.
13. In support of the proposal, the appellant has indicated the potential to provide additional structural landscaping, along with the screening benefits of the existing hedgebank, which runs along the frontage of the site. It is also intended that development would be limited to the lower parts of the site, thereby ensuring that development would not break the skyline. Whilst the topography and the provision of new landscaping would filter some views and, when taken together, would serve to offset some of the impact, the overall scale, bulk and massing of the proposed dwellings would be overly prominent, and appear as a form of development at odds with the landscape character of the area.
14. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and, in this respect, would be contrary to Policy DEV23 of the JLP and Paragraph 170 of the Framework.

Carbon Footprint

15. Policy DEV32 of the JLP identifies a need to deliver a low carbon future for the plan area and identifies a number of measures and provisions that should be included within new developments.
16. It has been put to me by the appellant that, due to the outline nature of the proposal, these matters could and should be adequately addressed through the reserved matters submission.
17. In my view, however, the aims of Policy DEV32 are clear, with these aims aligning with those of the Framework. In this instance, given that no information is provided either in principle, or by way of commitments, to how the scheme would deliver the requirements of Policy DEV32, I do not find it appropriate to leave the matter to be addressed to this later stage. For the same reasons, I do not consider that it can be appropriately addressed through a suitably worded planning condition.
18. For the above reasons, and on the evidence before me, I therefore conclude that the proposal fails to demonstrate sufficient carbon reduction measures and, in this respect, would be contrary to Policy DEV32 of the JSP and the Framework.

Other Matters

19. Residents of neighbouring properties have raised concerns associated with their living conditions and the availability of parking. However, these matters do not alter the main issues which have been identified as the basis for the determination of this appeal and were not raised by the Council in refusing the application and I see no reason to disagree with this position.
20. My attention has been drawn by the appellant to the identification of Grenofen as a Sustainable Village in the JLP, along with their view that there are existing constraints around the village that would make the delivery of further new dwellings difficult. This, along with the location of the site in relation to public transport routes, in the opinion of the appellant, supports the case for development on the appeal site. In this regard however, I have not been provided with any evidence on potential alternative sites and their unsuitability for development in comparison to the appeal site. On this basis, I have therefore given this little weight.
21. The appellant's Landscape and Visual Assessment has also shown that the proposal would have no adverse effect upon the Dartmoor National Park, Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Mining World Heritage site and would not affect the special qualities outlined within the Management Plan for the AONB. I do not seek to bring any of these into question, however given these are requirements of planning policy and legislation, I have given them little weight.
22. The appellant has also identified that development on the appeal site would serve to prevent new development taking place in other, more sensitive locations. In this regard however, no evidence has been put to me to justify this, therefore I have given the matter little weight.

Conclusion

23. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Adrian Hunter

INSPECTOR