



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 19 October 2021

by M Bale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/21/3273531

The Cottage, Trelana, Northcott Mouth Road, Poughill, Bude EX23 9EL

- 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 Mrs A Davies against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA20/03691, dated 2 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 12 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is construction of a two storey dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The appeal relates to an application for outline planning permission. Approval for access is sought at this stage so I have treated the plans showing this as a firm part of the proposal. Plans indicating other matters, such as layout, are treated as illustrative.

Main Issue

3. The main issues are the effect on highway safety and the effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

4. The proposal would be served by an existing access to Northcott Mouth Road that serves The Cottage. On egress a high wall to the right that extends to the carriageway edge, means that an emerging driver has very little visibility of approaching vehicles until their vehicle is substantially on the highway.
5. From this direction, vehicles approach the site from a wide stretch of highway and, notwithstanding the presence of traffic calming features, I have no detailed evidence of vehicle speeds or volumes. At the point of the site, the road dramatically narrows such that drivers are likely to be primarily focussed on negotiating the highway and oncoming traffic.
6. The proposal would result in two dwellings instead of one using the access. This potential doubling in vehicle movements is a significant intensification. While I note that additional dwellings have been allowed via other existing accesses with poor visibility in the area, these are said to have already served more properties. Thus, while the actual increase in trips may be comparable, the proportional increase in those other examples would be less, with the higher existing generation also giving greater certainty that they operated safely.

7. I note that The Cottage has an alternative access via Trelana Care Home. However, there is no substantive evidence as to the use of this access. It appeared to me that the access to Northcott Mouth Road was far more direct and convenient and, as it is proposed to be retained, I find no reason that the use by the existing dwelling would reduce from the current situation. If the access via the care home is just as convenient and regularly used now, then the proportional increase from the proposal on the access direct to Northcott Mouth Road would be even greater than described above.
8. Finally, I note acceptance in the appellant's submissions that the access requires alteration to safely accommodate the additional traffic. I, therefore, find that the proposed increased use of the access, in an unaltered state, would be detrimental to highway safety, contrary to those aims of Policy 27 of the Cornwall Local Plan 2010-2031 (LP) which require that all developments should provide safe and suitable access to the site for all people.
9. Visibility could be improved and a proposal to reduce the first 2.1m of wall to 900mm in height has been prepared. An Inspector in connection with a 2003 appeal for a new access to the care home found the immediate stretch of Northcott Mouth Road alongside the site to have no unique quality and the access would do little to alter the character of the road. He found that the character and appearance of the conservation area would not be harmed.
10. However, the affected wall in this case sits at the entrance to the conservation area. I saw that its narrowing effect plays an important role on marking the transition from the modern housing area to the more enclosed historic environment. Walls and enclosure are common throughout the conservation area and, therefore, an important part of the area's character and appearance that contribute to its significance.
11. Although the wall may now be taller than it once was, that does not dilute its current contribution to the significance of the area, nor does it demonstrate historic justification for the stepped appearance now proposed. The reduction in enclosure, although small, would therefore fail to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and would cause less than substantial harm to its significance.
12. There are public benefits associated with the provision of additional housing in a location that is generally considered appropriate. However, those benefits, when associated with a single dwelling, are limited and do not outweigh the great weight that I must attribute to the conservation of heritage assets.
13. I, therefore, find that the proposal to address the highway safety problems would conflict with LP Policy 24 and Policy 23 of the Bude-Stratton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2030 that seek to conserve and enhance the character and appearance, significance and amenity value of conservation areas.
14. I, therefore, conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Bale

INSPECTOR