



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 April 2022

by M Bale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/21/3289471

Coombe Hill House, Coombe Hill, Bissoe, TR4 8RQ

- 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 & Mrs Campling against the decision of Cornwall Council.
- The application Ref PA21/07792, dated 29 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 25 October 2021.
- The development proposed is conversion & extension of outbuilding to form holiday let.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect on the character and appearance of the area and whether the site is an appropriate location for the development, with regard to accessibility.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site contains a small building, set slightly apart from nearby dwellings. It is in an elevated position on rising land in a rolling, lightly developed landscape. Despite the presence of powerlines and the like, the area has a generally uncluttered agricultural character. The building has a utilitarian appearance, that, while having little architectural merit or aesthetic value, sits unassuming alongside boundary hedgerows and is not intrusive in the landscape.
4. An extension to the footprint of the building is proposed, together with the formation of a dual pitched roof in place of the existing mono-pitched structure. The enlarged floorspace may not be large and roof works may be common in conversion schemes. However, the appellant confirms that these alterations are required to provide liveable space and headroom for future occupiers. This indicates that the building is not capable of conversion without this substantial new building, limiting any benefits that may be associated with the reuse of existing buildings.
5. In this context, although the building may have no significant structural defects, the totality of the extensions would be significant alteration to the form of the building and it would take on a more domestic appearance. I, therefore, find that the proposal does not have support from Policy 7 of the

Cornwall Local Plan 2016 (LP) that permits some residential accommodation in the countryside, including through the re-use of suitably constructed buildings.

6. The proposal seeks to emulate a more traditional vernacular style and appearance than the existing structure. However, the works would also result in an appreciably larger building, with a more domestic appearance. It is currently accessed via a field gate from a narrow, unsurfaced track. It is proposed to lay a gravel driveway from the gate to the building. This would create a formal access and accentuate the domestic appearance of the appeal site, at odds with the appearance of the existing undeveloped field and track to the site.
7. It has been indicated that the proposal would not cause any harm to the outstanding universal value (OUV) of the world heritage site (WHS) within which the site is located. However, it has not been demonstrated that the OUV is dependent upon the agricultural and lightly developed character and appearance of the landscape around the site. The appellant's Heritage Statement indicates that the site itself is not valued for its contribution to the WHS. This is, therefore, of limited weight in consideration of this issue.
8. For the reasons given, the changes to the building would result in a harmful domestication of the rural character and appearance of the surrounding countryside. Such would conflict with those aims of LP Policy 12 that seek, amongst other things, to maintain and enhance the distinctive natural character of Cornwall.

Accessibility

9. LP Policy 5 permits new tourism accommodation where it would be of an appropriate scale to its location and accessibility by a range of transport modes. The proposal would only be small in scale and so traffic generation would be limited. However, the site is some distance from any recognisable settlement that provides services or facilities that may be used by future residents. There is a public house and bus stop at Frogpool that I am told provides an hourly connection to Truro and other locations. However, the distance, that the appellant estimates at around 1400m, is beyond that which most people would consider walking to catch a bus. The closest railway station is further.
10. While there may be extensive public footpaths in the area, as well as cycling opportunities, it has not been demonstrated that these provide for anything more than recreation. It may be that a short car journey could provide access to the public transport connections, reducing the journey length by private transport, but there is no substantive evidence that such behaviour would likely occur in practice. There may well be acceptance in the tourism industry that travel by car is the most convenient means of transport in Cornwall, and used by most visitors. However, that does not mean that new accommodation should be in locations such as the appeal site where car travel is the only realistic option.
11. I, therefore, find that, despite its small size, the proposal would not be accessible by a range of transport modes. As such, it would conflict with those aims of LP Policy 5 detailed above.

Other Matters

12. My attention has been drawn to a site at Tregasso Farm where the Council permitted the conversion of a barn to holiday accommodation. However, unlike this case, it appears that proposal was deemed to be a conversion that was supported by LP Policy 7. While the scale and associated traffic generation may have been similar, the overall balance of considerations would therefore have been different.
13. The proposal would lead to some socio-economic benefits, including through potential job creation and spend in the local economy. As advised by the National Planning Policy Framework, it may be that some development needs to be permitted outside settlements in order to support a prosperous rural economy. However, the benefits in this case would be limited due to the small-scale of the proposed development. There may be enhancement features for bats within the proposal, but, in the absence of any apparent existing bat activity at the site, I attribute little weight to this matter.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons, the proposal would conflict with the development plan. Material considerations have not been shown to indicate otherwise that the development ought be permitted. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Bale

INSPECTOR