
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2022

by Mr C J Tivey BSc (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/22/3293152

Woodlands, Praze Road, Praze An Beeble, Camborne, Cornwall TR14 0PR

- 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 M Wills against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA21/03835, dated 6 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 20 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of dwelling east of Woodlands with all matters reserved.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the appeal proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and whether it is in an accessible location, having regard to sustainable means of travel.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The site is located within a rural area to the south of Praze Road and is within the ownership and control of the appellants forming part of the property known as Woodlands. It is located within a short and loose ribbon of development of other dwellings with Clowance Barton Lodge and Grey Gables to the western and eastern sides respectively.
4. I note that Policy 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010 – 2030 adopted November 2016 (CLP) stipulates, amongst other things, that infill schemes that fill a small gap in an otherwise continuous built frontage which do not physically extend 'the settlement' into the open countryside will assist in meeting the housing growth within the Community Network Area. However in support of that policy it is stated in CLP paragraph 1.68 that a settlement should have a form and shape and clearly definable boundaries, not just a low density 'straggle of dwellings'.
5. To consider that the appeal site is located within a settlement is stretching the imagination and for all intents and purposes I opine that the proposal would constitute new development within what is essentially open countryside, as

defined by CLP paragraph 2.33. That paragraph goes on to state that the Plan seeks to ensure that development occurs in the most sustainable locations in order to protect the open countryside from inappropriate development and that the supporting text to CLP Policy 3 sets out the Council's approach to sustainable development, clarifying that the majority of development will be provided in settlements with a range of facilities. It is however recognised that there may be a need for some housing in the countryside pursuant to CLP Policy 7.

6. Policy 7 restricts the development of new homes in the open countryside to within five criteria which do not apply to the proposal before me, nonetheless the appeal site is set well back from the road with a fairly dense and protected woodland screen intervening. Whilst there is an arable field to the rear, that in itself is fairly visually self contained by virtue of its mature boundary vegetation with other trees and woodland beyond.
7. Therefore, on balance, I consider that the proposed development would have a limited impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside and having regard to the aforementioned neighbouring dwellings, the scheme would not constitute the development of an isolated home in the countryside (for the purposes of paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework')). Aside from Policy 1 of the Cornwall Site Allocations Development Plan Document November 2019 (SADPD) which is not of relevance to the proposal as it refers to housing growth for the settlements named within its Table 1 and which specifically excludes Praze-An-Beeble, I consider that the other policies listed within the Council's Decision Notice are the most important for determining the proposal. Some of these policies do however incorporate matters appertaining to both of the main issues in this appeal. Nonetheless, on the issue of character and appearance alone, I find no conflict between the proposal and CLP Policies 2, 3 and 23 which seek to sustain local distinctiveness and character, recognising that all urban and rural landscapes, designated and undesignated are important.

Accessibility

8. Praze Road is a busy 'B' road with the settlement of Praze An Beeble itself being some distance away from the site, the appellants state this to be 250m, although that appears to be to the edge of the settlement development boundary as opposed to into the built-up area of the village. whereas the Council stipulates this to be 500m, which I consider to be a more realistic distance.
9. Critically there are no public footways along the side of Praze Road and vehicles tend to travel along it at speed, and where there is no street lighting. The verges are overgrown and in some places none-existent. As a route to either walk or cycle along it would not be for the faint-hearted with no public transport service available along it either.
10. Consequently I consider that the appeal site is not well related to the main village by virtue of its poor accessibility by sustainable means of transportation. I note the examples that have been cited of other new dwellings that have been permitted in the rural area of Cornwall, however ultimately each case must be assessed on its own merits.

11. Whilst the appeal site could be deemed to be previously developed land, and that there would be some economic and social benefits flowing from the proposal both during the construction process and following first occupation, all in all I consider its location is not a sustainable one due to the very likely heavy dependence of future occupiers upon the use of private vehicles, to the detriment of the environment. I accept that there could be employment opportunities at Clowance Barton Farm, but this has not been substantiated and whilst there is now a greater tendency of home working and that groceries can be delivered to homes, the community services and facilities referred to by the appellants would still need to be accessed; and I say this notwithstanding that sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas.
12. Therefore in conclusion on this issue, I find that the proposal would fail to limit reliance on private motor vehicles, giving rise to unsustainable travel movements contrary to CLP Policies 1, 12 and 21 and Policy HT1 of the Crowan Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 – 2030 adopted 21 May 2019 (NDP) which together require a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development in considering proposals, including taking into account its location and fundamental design principles such as movement – creating a network of safe well-connected routes to services and facilities whilst minimising the need to travel.

Conclusion

13. Having regard to the above and all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

C J Tivey

INSPECTOR