



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 August 2022

by Mr S Rennie BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/22/3290401

Land East of Meadowcroft, Stoke Climsland, Cornwall, PL17 8NX

- 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 M Scoble Construction Ltd against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA21/06006, dated 9 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 5 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is for the construction of two four bedroom bungalows.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (1) whether the location of the proposed houses is appropriate given Development Plan policies; and (2) the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The main settlement policies of the development plan are Policies 2 and 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010 – 2030 (adopted 2016) (the Local Plan). The strategy set out in Policy 2 seeks to provide a sustainable approach to accommodating growth, providing a well-balanced mix of economic, social and environmental benefits. This should provide homes based on the role and function of each place.
4. Policy 3 defines how development will be accommodated, based on this hierarchy, with growth focussed on identified main towns. Stoke Climsland is not one of the main towns listed in Policy 3.
5. Outside the main towns, Policy 3 suggests that housing growth will be delivered for the remainder of the Community Network Area housing requirement through Neighbourhood Plans; the rounding off of settlements; development of previously developed land within or immediately adjoining settlements; infill schemes that fill a small gap in an otherwise continuous built frontage; or rural exception sites.
6. The site of the proposed development is a field (though stated to be used for storage and amenity) and so is not previously developed land. It is not identified for development by a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Furthermore, it is not put forward as a rural exception site. However, it needs to be considered whether the proposed development could be either infill

- development or rounding off of a settlement, thereby being in accordance with Policy 3.
7. With regard to both the matter of rounding off or infill there has been guidance provided with the Chief Planning Officer's Advice Note (the CPOAN) titled Infill/Rounding Off, which I have been supplied with. I have taken the contents of this note into consideration with my assessment.
 8. Firstly, in terms of rounding off, Policy 3 advises that this should be for the rounding off of settlements. The CPOAN advises that proposals should provide a symmetry or completion to a settlement boundary. When travelling north out of the village centre along Kingston Road past the playing field there was a sense that the character had changed to being more rural and entering the countryside. There are the houses around the junction adjacent to the site, but this appeared when viewed on site as a small group of dwellings within the countryside and not part of a settlement. In this case, the site is separate from the settlement to the south with a clear gap existing between site and settlement edge. I would therefore not regard the site as being either within or adjacent to the settlement. As such, developing this site could not round off this settlement due to this separation.
 9. With regard to the matter of infill development, policy 3 states that infill schemes are those that fill a small gap in an otherwise continuous built frontage. In this case, the site is not a small gap but is instead large. Two bungalows are proposed on the site, but more could be accommodated potentially.
 10. Furthermore, the site is a corner plot, with Kingston Road running north-south to the eastern boundary. Kingston Road acts as a physical barrier which separates the site from the small number of dwellings to the east of the road junction. The proposed bungalows would appear as two new dwellings in a row of three with Meadowcroft. As such, in my view this development would not be a typical infill plot as it would not be between a clear row of buildings.
 11. I have already stated that I would consider this site a large gap, in the context of infill development. Paragraph 1.66 of the supporting text to Policy 3 sets out that such large gaps often provide the setting to the settlement and add to the character of the area. Whilst I would consider the site to be separate from the village it is within the wider rural setting of Stoke Climsland. The field to which the proposed bungalows would be sited, adjacent to the road junction, is an undeveloped parcel of land which adds positively to the rural character setting of the village. It adds to the sense that the site is part of the countryside which makes up the wider setting for Stoke Climsland. Sporadic development with open and undeveloped gaps is part of this rural character. Development and resultant urbanisation of this site, with the loss of its current open and undeveloped appearance and its positive contribution to the setting of the village, would diminish the rural character of the area and the wider setting of the Stoke Climsland.
 12. As such, I would consider that this would not be a form of appropriate infilling and would therefore not accord with policy 3 on this matter.
 13. For the above reasons, the proposed development would not be an appropriate form of either infill or rounding off in my view. The proposal would not meet with any of the exceptions for housing in such a location as set out by Policy 3

or within the CPOAN. The proposal would also not accord with the exceptions to housing development in the countryside as set out by Policy 7. The proposal is therefore contrary to these policies.

14. The site is within the Inny Valley and Lawhitton Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and so is an area sensitive to new development within the landscape. There are other dwellings in the area, but they appear as old houses within a countryside location. The landscape is predominantly rural and undeveloped, positively contributing to the AGLV. The proposal would urbanise a small field in a prominent position adjacent to a crossroads, diminishing the rural quality of the area.
15. I acknowledge that the development is only for two dwellings and the bungalows could be designed to be in keeping with others in the area. However, the new dwellings would be visible from the adjacent roads, even if screened to some extent by landscaping, and the development in this particular location would be to the detriment of the rural character of the area.
16. As such, the proposal, even with it being for bungalows with landscaping, would not conserve the rural landscape qualities of the AGLV.
17. Due to the harm to the rural character of the area as a result of the proposal to introduce new dwellings into an undeveloped large gap, the development would also be contrary to Policies 23 of the Local Plan and saved policy ENV 1 of the North Cornwall Local Plan. These policies require that proposals recognise and respect landscape character, and provides protection of landscape character being particularly important in the Areas of Great Landscape Value, amongst other things.
18. The proposal is also contrary to Policies 1 and 2 which requires development to be sustainable and to provide homes based on the role and function of each place, the character and setting of settlements, and a consideration of environmental protection and improvement, for example.

Other Matters

19. There is mention in the Council evidence of the site being in the zone of influence of the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation. If I was intending to allow the appeal, I would first consult Natural England on this matter and go back to the parties for more detail. In the circumstances I have not pursued this matter further.

Planning Balance

20. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, I am required to determine appeals in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
21. In this case the proposal would provide two dwellings towards housing land supply for the area where there are some services and facilities nearby, including a school and playing field. There would be economic benefits from the construction of the dwellings, together with the financial boost from future occupiers using local businesses. The proposal could include biodiversity enhancement and the proposal could be considered an efficient use of the site. I note that the proposed houses would be built by a local builder and employer. All these potential benefits, among others raised, would result in moderate

weight in favour of the development, with the benefits limited as this is a small scale housing proposal and would not make a significant difference to housing numbers for the area.

22. I am also aware of the housing issues facing Cornwall, with the number of properties being used as holiday lets and second homes, for example. However, the Council can demonstrate a good level of housing land supply at this time, even if this will require increased completions to keep at this level. Nonetheless, I have taken into account the contribution towards housing supply the proposal would provide, but for the reasons given above the proposal would not accord with the housing policies of the LP and there would be some impact to the rural character of the area.
23. Overall, the harm I have identified above and the conflict with development plan policies is such that it significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits. As such, my determination of this appeal should not be made other than in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Mr S Rennie

INSPECTOR