



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 December 2023

by S Harrington MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/23/3320192

Treneglos, Sancreed Road, Sancreed, Cornwall TR20 8QS

- 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 Mr J Thomas against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA22/02000, dated 18 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is construction of two detached dwelling houses.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application was made in outline with all matters reserved for future consideration (the 'reserved matters'). I have therefore treated any references to reserved matters, on the plans or in other documentation, as illustrative.
3. Following the Council's determination of the application the subject of this appeal, the Council adopted its Climate Emergency Development Plan Document. This document, together with the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010- 2030 comprise the development plan and I have had regard to it as such. The parties have had opportunity to comment on its relevance during the appeal process.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site would be a suitable location for new dwellings with specific regard to the Council's settlement strategy; and
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Location of development

1. Policy 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030 (LP) sets out a hierarchical strategy for the delivery of new housing. Sancreed is not a location named within Policy 3(1), and therefore Policy 3(3) provides that, outside these larger named settlements, housing growth is to be delivered through, amongst other means, rounding off of settlements.
2. The LP defines rounding off as '*development on land that is substantially enclosed but outside of the urban form of a settlement and where its edge is*

clearly defined by physical features that also acts as barrier to further growth. It should not visually extend building into the open countryside’.

3. The Chief Planning Officer’s Advice Note – Infill/Rounding Off (December 2017) does not form part of the statutory development plan and is to be regarded as informal guidance. However, it does provide some clarity on the locally adopted approach in relation to matters such as rounding off of settlements, indicating that *‘Rounding off provides a symmetry or completion to a settlement boundary’.*
4. The development pattern of Sancreed encompasses a group of buildings around the Church of St Creda, with higher density modern housing further north. The appeal site is part of a large established garden associated with Treneglos. This property is separated from the church by an open area incorporating an associated cemetery (the ‘open area’) which I am informed is referenced in the Council’s Historic Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA) as ‘settlement:C20’.
5. There is some built form on the opposing side of the highway to Treneglos. However, the adjacent open area provides a notable separation distance between the host dwelling, the church and immediately surrounding cluster of buildings. Even if the HLCA indicated that the settlement was directly to the north of Treneglos, I observed this open area results in a clear visual disconnection between Treneglos and the periphery of a grouping of buildings which creates the urban form of the settlement. Furthermore, the appeal site, due to the separation from Treneglos, would appear further detached from the urban form.
6. Consequently, the appeal site appears divorced from the main urban form of Sancreed and does not provide for symmetry or completion of a settlement boundary. Therefore, I find that the appeal site does not immediately adjoin the settlement and cannot be considered rounding off.
7. In conclusion on this main issue, the proposal would not be in an appropriate location with regard the Council’s settlement strategy. The proposal conflicts with LP policies 1, 2, 3, and 7 which seeks to take a hierarchical approach to direct development based on the role and function of places. The proposal would also, in this respect, be contrary with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) in relation to achieving sustainable development and protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.

Character and appearance

8. The site is within an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and the Landscape Character Area CCA03 Penwith Central Hills (LCA). Although part of a garden and therefore partially having a domestic character, the appeal site does still exhibit some of the LCA characteristics including Cornish hedges and its relationship with an intimate network of small to medium-sized fields. Other landscape characteristics of the AGLV which include woodland in the valley bottoms, are clearly evident surrounding the appeal site.
9. The mature roadside boundary, despite some domestic planting, appears as, and retains the character of the rural boundaries within the surrounding countryside. Moreover, given the close proximity to adjacent agricultural land, and lack of built form, the site, albeit part of a domestic garden, has more

visual affinity with the surrounding countryside then that of the urban form of Sancreed and maintains a strong rural character.

10. As the existing boundaries, including the roadside boundary and associated mature trees could be retained, the contribution these make to the wider character would also be retained. However, although the proposal is in outline form so no details are before me of the reserved matters, I observed that, despite the mature boundary screening, residential built form would nevertheless be evident from the adjoining highway and access point, even more so during winter months when foliage is not in leaf.
11. Given the spatial separation from Treneglos, the proposal would largely be seen from the adjacent highway against the backdrop of open countryside. The degree of change to the site as a result of the proposal would be discernible in the context of the character of the site as well as the wider landscape characteristics of the AGLV. The erection of built form in this domestic, but currently undeveloped area would inevitably result in a visual urbanisation of the site. This would result in further sporadic development away from the previously described main grouping of buildings at Sancreed and harmfully erode the strong rural character of the area.
12. Consequently, I have found the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. This would result in conflict with LP policies 12, 21, 23 and Saved Policy CC-5 of the Penwith Local Plan 2004. These policies seek to ensure, amongst other things, that development is of high-quality design which respects surrounding areas and enhances the quality of place and conserves and enhances the landscape character. The proposal would also be contrary with the provisions of the Framework in relation to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty.

Other Matters

13. LP Policy 21(c) seeks to ensure the best use of land and encourage sustainably located proposals that increases building density where appropriate, taking into account the character of the surrounding area and access to services and facilities to ensure an efficient use of land. Even if I were to find that the appeal site is in a location that could provide future occupiers easy access to services and facilities without the reliance of a private vehicle, and be an efficient use of land, I have nevertheless found that the proposal would result in harm to the character of the area.
14. I also acknowledge the findings of Securing Homes for All: A Plan to respond to Cornwall's Housing Crisis and the contribution that small windfall sites can make to housing supply. The proposal would provide benefits in terms of the contribution of two dwellings towards housing supply. The proposal would also provide some employment opportunities during the construction phase and future occupiers would provide further economic and social benefits in terms of future spend within local businesses and use of local services and facilities.
15. Notwithstanding, and acknowledging the housing need in the area, the benefits of the proposed scheme would be limited given the scope and scale of the development. Such matters therefore neither individually nor in combination outweigh the identified harm and the associated development plan conflict described above.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan, read as a whole. No material considerations, individually or cumulatively, indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

S Harrington

INSPECTOR