



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 August 2025

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/25/3361791

Land at Higher Trefullock Farm, School Lane, Summercourt, Newquay TR8 5EA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr George Richards (George Richards Farms) against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA24/04609.
 - The development proposed is described as “Continued stationing of two containers and proposed stationing of eighteen containers for self-storage purposes”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have used the address of the site that was given on the application form in the banner heading. However, the road giving access to the site is referred to as School Road on the Ordnance Survey plan submitted with the application, so I have used this name in the rest of the decision.
3. Two of the storage containers were already in position at the time of my site visit. I am therefore dealing with this element of the appeal retrospectively.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - a) Whether the site is suitable for the proposed use, bearing in mind the policies of the development plan;
 - b) The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area; and,
 - c) The effect of the development on highway safety.

Reasons

Development plan policies

5. The appeal site is a roughly rectangular parcel of land fronting School Road, in a loose cluster of development to the east of the main built-up part of Summercourt. At the time of my visit, the site had a hardcore surface, but the evidence indicates that this has been applied relatively recently, and that it was previously a grassed field. There are school buildings to the west, and the playing field abuts the site to the south. There are also dwellings to the east and north, and the road outside the

site has pavements and streetlights. Nevertheless, the density of the buildings is low, with large undeveloped spaces between them. Consequently, the site lies outside the settlement envelope defined by the St Enoder Parish Neighbourhood Plan: 2018-2030 (the Neighbourhood Plan). Policy 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan states that land outside the settlement envelopes is considered to be countryside.

6. Policy 5 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010 – 2030 (the Local Plan) allows for new employment uses in the countryside of a scale appropriate to their location, or where an overriding need to be in that location has been demonstrated. Similarly, Policy 4 of the Neighbourhood Plan supports proposals for business space and employment land, of an appropriate scale, in smaller rural communities, where an over-riding need to be in that location can be identified. Neither policy requires a need for the development itself to be demonstrated, but both require that the scale is appropriate, and that there is justification for the particular countryside location.
7. There is no evidence to demonstrate that the proposed use for self-storage containers necessarily requires a countryside location, due, for example, to its interdependency with other rural uses. Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that the use would be incompatible with surrounding users and occupants, such that it could not be located within a settlement. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that this particular location is justified by the needs of the local population for a self-storage facility. Indeed, my attention has been drawn to another facility in the locality, which provides 34 units. I am not persuaded that further capacity is likely to be necessary to meet the needs of the residents of Summercourt.
8. Indeed, it is not contended that this is the case. Rather, the appellant contends that the site is appropriate due to its accessibility to the A30 trunk road. I acknowledge that the nature of the proposed use dictates that private vehicles are likely to be used, wherever it is located. However, as the scale of the proposal would exceed what might reasonably be required by the local population, it is likely that users would be drawn from a wide area along this transport corridor. The Planning, Design and Farm Diversification Statement submitted with the application identifies that the site is accessible to key towns such as Truro and Newquay. Consequently, rather than limiting the need to travel, the scale and location of the proposal would be likely to encourage journeys out of large settlements to the countryside. This would be in conflict with Policy T1 of the Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (February 2023) (the CEDPD), which requires new development to be located in order to minimise the need to travel.
9. I acknowledge that the site is well-connected to the village by pavements with street lighting. This would allow users of the proposed facility to walk safely to the village. However, as there is a limited range of services in the settlement, it is unlikely that trips to the storage facility would regularly be linked to visits to Summercourt to obtain other services. Consequently, most visits to the site would be standalone journeys. I am also mindful that there are good public transport links available, which could be used by customers delivering a vehicle to be stored at the site, or subsequently collecting it. Nevertheless, whilst this may result in a modest reduction, the majority of trips to and from the site would be by private vehicles. As the scale of the proposal would exceed local need, these trips may be drawn from a wide area.

10. The proposal is described as a farm diversification scheme on previously developed land (PDL). However, whilst evidence has been provided of the likely income to be derived from the development, I have not been supplied with any details to demonstrate how this extra income would be used to benefit the farm business, or to provide additional employment opportunities. Furthermore, the land is not occupied by a permanent structure and, on the evidence before me, I am not persuaded that it comprises PDL.
11. To conclude on this issue, the scale of the proposal would not be appropriate for its location, as it would exceed local need, so would encourage wide-ranging trips by private vehicle. Furthermore, there is no overriding locational or business need for the use to be located in the countryside. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies 1, 2, 5 and 7 of the Local Plan, Employment Policy 4 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and Policies AG1 and T1 of the CEDPD. Taken together, these policies seek to direct employment development to accessible locations in order to reduce the need to travel by private vehicles, whilst allowing for proposals of an appropriate scale that require a rural location.

Character and appearance

12. The appeal site lies outside the core of the settlement, where the built environment is transitioning into the open countryside around it. Whilst there are buildings and urban highway features close to the site, the development is loosely clustered and surrounded by open green fields, with hedgerows on both sides of the highway. As a result, the buildings are seen within a countryside setting and the immediate locality has a rural character. Whilst the surrounding landscape does not carry any designation, it nevertheless provides an attractive setting for the village. Notwithstanding that the site has recently been hard surfaced, its open nature allows views across it to the playing field and the open landscape beyond. It therefore makes a positive contribution to the rural setting and approaches to the village.
13. The existing two containers have an industrial character that is incongruous within this setting. The addition of a further 18 units would result in an unbroken line of similar structures across almost the entire width of the site. Whilst the roadside boundary hedge provides some screening, I saw that the existing containers were visible through this foliage during my visit in the summer. The proposed development would be more readily apparent in the winter. The existing and proposed containers would be prominent in views through the access point from School Road, and would obstruct the current views through the site to the open countryside beyond, resulting in significant harm to the rural setting of the settlement.
14. The existing containers are also prominent in views from the lane to the west, across the school playing field. From this viewpoint, their stark appearance is incompatible with their rural surroundings. The proposed continuous line of utilitarian structures would only serve to exacerbate the already harmful impact of the development.
15. It is contended that the proposal is only for change of use, and that the containers are portable, and therefore transient in nature. However, it is not suggested that I should impose a condition limiting the period for which permission should be granted. The containers could, therefore, be permanently installed if I were to allow

the appeal. Furthermore, their robust appearance and overall bulk means they would not have an ephemeral appearance. Consequently, the harm to the character of the area would not be reduced by their portability. I am mindful that the arrangement of the containers could be controlled by a planning condition. However, I am not persuaded that an alternative configuration would avoid the harm that I have found to the character and appearance of the area.

16. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would, therefore, be contrary to Policies 2 and 23 of the Local Plan; Employment Policy 4 and Landscape Policies 1 and 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan; and Policy C1 of the CEPD. Taken together, these policies seek, amongst other things, to ensure that development respects the character of the landscape and the setting of the locality.

Highway safety

17. Access to the site is gained from School Road, which is straight and relatively level in the vicinity. Traffic passing the site is governed by a 30-mph speed limit, which applies from a point approximately 150 metres to the east. This restriction is emphasised through various road signs and physical features, including painted zigzags and a red 30mph on the road surface, and an illuminated sign triggered by traffic movement. From what I saw during my visit, these features are generally successful in limiting traffic speeds past the site. I have not been provided with any evidence regarding the volume of traffic on this section of the road, but I observed that vehicles only passed the site on a sporadic basis.
18. The proposal does not involve any alteration to the existing access, which comprises a field gate at the western end of the site frontage. Visibility for drivers emerging from this access is achieved across pavements in both directions. Neither party has provided details of the extent of the available visibility, but from a point 2.4 metres back from the carriageway an emerging driver would be able to see for a considerable distance in both directions. On the basis of the evidence before me, I am satisfied that, with routine hedge trimming, the access provides adequate visibility along School Road in both directions.
19. The access is very close to the crossroads formed by School Road and two perpendicular lanes. Indeed, it emerges onto School Road almost alongside the lane to the west of the site. To avoid potential vehicular and pedestrian conflict, the Highway Authority recommended that a new access should be provided at least 30 metres from the adjacent junction, and the appellant has indicated that this could be secured by condition, if necessary.
20. An access point close to a crossroads has the potential to create confusion for drivers and pedestrians where traffic movements are frequent or fast-moving. In this case, however, the two perpendicular lanes carry very little traffic. I spent a considerable time at the site and saw no vehicles using either of the junctions. Furthermore, the nature of the proposed use is such that traffic movements in and out of the access point would be limited. The appellant's suggestion that there would be approximately 40 traffic movements per month has not been contested. Consequently, even allowing for the fact that traffic movements may be higher during school drop-off and pick up times, there is a very low likelihood of vehicles emerging onto School Road from the appeal site and the adjacent junction at the same time.

21. Even if two vehicles did emerge simultaneously, the drivers would have uninterrupted visibility of each other, and would be waiting almost side by side. Consequently, they would be able to readily communicate their intentions, and mutually agree how to proceed without any resultant highway danger ensuing. Consequently, had I been minded to allow the appeal, a condition requiring a new access would not have been necessary or reasonable.
22. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not result in any significant increase in highway danger. It would therefore accord with Policy 27 of the Local Plan, which seeks to ensure that all developments provide safe and suitable access to the site and do not cause a significantly adverse impact on the local or strategic road network.

Conclusion

23. I have found that the proposal would not have a harmful impact on highway safety. However, this does not outweigh the harm that I have found with regard to the character and appearance of the area or the conflict with development plan policies.
24. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR