
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 October 2025

by H Faulkner BSc (Hons) MSc PGCE MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/25/3360442

The Quarry Fields, Land to the rear of Sarnia, Trevothern, Coverack, Cornwall TR12 6SD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Kimberley Bastian against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA24/08403.
 - The development proposed is for construction of a dwelling.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a field to the rear of a bungalow known as Sarnia. There is currently access to this field between Sarnia and the neighbouring bungalow. Beyond the site is open countryside and woodland. There are few other properties on this side of the road. Opposite the site is Specky Wood, a caravan park, there are several other houses nearby and another caravan park known as Little Trevothern.
6. Policy 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan (CLP) defines how development will be accommodated, with growth focussed on identified main towns. Outside of these areas housing growth can be through identification in a Neighbourhood Plan,

rounding off settlements and development of previously developed land and infill schemes. In this case the site has been presented as 'rounding off.'

7. The starting point is to consider whether the area in the vicinity of the site is a settlement, in this case there is no settlement boundary in place. The background text to Policy 3 states a settlement should have form and shape, and clearly definable boundaries, and not be just a low-density straggle of dwellings. The Chief Planning Officer's Advice Note, although not adopted policy, provides some useful guidance. Although there are a number of dwellings and other buildings nearby, and the caravan sites spread some distance to the south, I do not find that this is much more than a cluster of development. When travelling through the area only a few houses are visible from the main road and there is no apparent clear form to the settlement. I accept that there is no expectation of services however there is also no signage identifying the settlement, no street lights, and no pavement.
8. Even if the site were considered to be a settlement, in order to be accepted as rounding off, the background text to Policy 3 states that development should not visibly extend into the countryside. In this case the location of the proposed house would be in an open field beyond the line of existing houses and would therefore conflict with this aim. There may be bungalows in front of the site but the land on the three other sides is undeveloped. The site is not fully enclosed by existing boundaries with the appeal site segregating part of a larger field. While the appellant states that the proposal would not facilitate further development given the siting within a larger hedged field, and the space behind the adjacent bungalow I do not find this to be the case. Together these elements lead me to conclude that the proposal would not constitute rounding off under Policy 3.
9. Furthermore, the proposal meets none of the special circumstances set out in Policy 7 of the CLP which allow for development in the countryside.
10. The proposal would introduce a house in an out of settlement location. Whilst Coverack is relatively close, the walk would be along a narrow lane without any pavement and with long sections being unlit. Given the size of the village the level of services is also more limited. I have not been provided with details of any bus service in the locality either. As a result, future occupants would be reliant on their cars.
11. Given that I do not find Trevothen to be a settlement in accordance with the policies in the CLP and that the development would not be rounding off in any event, the proposal is not supported by Policy 2, 3 and 7 of the CLP.
12. Also under consideration is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area including the Cornwall National Landscape (previously known as the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)). The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) directs that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. This requirement is reflected in Policy 23 of the CLP, which requires proposals to be informed by and assist the delivery of the objectives of the Cornwall AONB Management Plan (CMP).
13. The area surrounding the site is characterised by open fields and woodland. With the main focus of development in the locality being at the nearby village of Coverack. In the proximity of the site on the north side of the road there are

examples of single dwellings fronting the road with the countryside beyond. Whilst the houses and campsites to the south are more condensed, openness between housing is a characteristic of the rural area.

14. The field patterns, such as those surrounding the site, contribute to the character of the area with agricultural land bounded by Cornish hedges being noted in the CMP. The CMP seeks development within the CNL to be “landscape-led” and positively respond to conserving and enhancing the designated landscape. Furthermore, it requires the cumulative effects of development to be considered.
15. The introduction of a dwelling to the rear of existing bungalows would extend into the open countryside, the presence of which would be visible from the road. This would be within an area of rural character and would have a harmful effect on the areas tranquil undeveloped nature. Even if the land is not currently in agricultural use its undeveloped state contributes to the openness of the area.
16. I conclude that for the reasons above the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Whilst this would be fairly localised, I am required to give great weight to the conservation of the CNL and the proposal would result in harm to landscape and scenic beauty. As a result, the proposal would also conflict with the requirement to seek to further the purposes of the National Landscape. As such, it would not comply with Policies 2, 12 and 23 of the CLP which seek amongst other things to respect and enhance quality of place and distinctiveness and conserve landscape beauty in the CNL, along with the CMP and the Framework.

Other Matters

17. The site is located within the Zone of Influence of the Fal and Helford Special Area of Conservation. Regulation 63(1) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 indicates that the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment is only necessary where the competent authority is minded to give consent for the proposed development. Therefore, given my overall conclusion on the main issue, it is not necessary for me to consider this matter in any further detail.
18. I note the appeals referenced in the Planning Statement. The assessment of what is considered to be a settlement will be on a case-by-case basis, while size, scale, and form are part of the assessment there will be varying characteristics in each case. As such, I do not find that the examples at Trevorrick or Homer Park to be sufficiently comparable in this instance.
19. The needs of the appellant and their desire to live locally near family are noted. As are the comments from the local councillor.
20. I have not been provided with any evidence in respect of the agricultural value of the site. However, even if the site cannot be actively used, this does not provide sufficient reason for it to be developed.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

21. The proposal would introduce new housing into the countryside which would conflict with Policies 2, 3 and 7 of the CLP. Harm has also been identified in respect of the effect on the character of the area and the CNL.

22. The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing. However, as I have found harm to the CNL, there is conflict with the policies of the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance and provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. Therefore, the proposal does not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined at paragraph 11 of the Framework.
23. There are benefits arising from the proposal which have been identified including contribution to housing supply where there is a deficit. The contribution of a small site is also recognised. However, considering the relatively modest scale of the proposal, these benefits would be restricted in extent.
24. The benefits arising from the proposal do not provide sufficient justification for a development that conflicts with the development plan and national policy when taken as a whole. The material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Faulkner

INSPECTOR