
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 August 2025

by **A Oyebade MSc FCILT**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/24/3354649

20 Quay Road, Charlestown, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 3NX

- 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 D Olver against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA23/09903.
 - The development proposed is the redevelopment of workshop into garden room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The appellant contends that the appeal site lies outside the boundary of designated heritage assets. However, the Council has clarified that the host dwelling is located within both the Charlestown Conservation Area (CA) and the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site (WHS).
3. The location plan identifying the application site incorporates land within the CA and WHS, which includes the dwelling and much of the garden area. The location of the existing workshop building and where the garden room is proposed is located outside of these boundaries, but immediately adjacent to them. I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area including the effect on the significance of the CA and WHS from development within their settings.

Reasons

The significance of the CA and WHS

5. Based on the available evidence and my site visit observations, the significance of the Charlestown CA stems in part from its rich collection of architectural and historic buildings. Its setting on St Austell Bay, with Charlestown Harbour as a central focal point, enhances this significance, creating a strong sense of place and visual cohesion through the interplay of built heritage and coastal landscape. The Cornish Mining WHS Office has further advised that any harm to attributes of Outstanding Universal Value, including the CA, could place the UNESCO designation of the wider Cornish Mining WHS at risk.

6. The streets within the Charlestown CA are characterised by narrow lanes, traditional surfacing materials, and stone boundary walls that collectively reinforce its historic character. Rows of granite and slate cottages, mainly dating from the Georgian and early Victorian periods, line these streets and contribute to the area's architectural integrity. Quay Road itself features a mix of single and two-storey detached and terraced properties, many of which exhibit well-preserved architectural detailing. Several Grade II listed buildings are located along this stretch near the appeal site, further underscoring its heritage significance.
7. Most of the residential properties in the surrounding area are clearly defined by their principal two-storey dwellings, which sit prominently in relation to their predominantly single-storey ancillary buildings. These garden outbuildings and stone-built structures typically reflect the maritime heritage and conservation status of Charlestown. Main houses and their associated buildings generally employ consistent materials and detailing, contributing to a strong sense of visual coherence and reinforcing the historic character of the area.
8. The Council's Charlestown Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan explains that Quay Road's buildings and streetscape form a cohesive and historically significant ensemble within Charlestown. It also states that alterations that introduce domestic or incongruous elements, such as rooflights or non-traditional cladding, and do not reflect existing glazing pattern would undermine the integrity of the CA and WHS. Hence, any proposed development must respect the established vernacular, scale, materials, and visual coherence of the area.

Effect on the character and appearance of the area and significance of the CA

9. The existing derelict structure on the appeal site is a modest, single-storey utility building with a timber frame and corrugated metal cladding and roofing, typical of agricultural or light industrial outbuildings. During my site visit, I observed three other small storage buildings located within the rear courtyard of the host property. These ancillary structures appear to serve comparable functional purposes. However, the appeal building spans a broader section of the garden's width behind these outbuildings and stands slightly taller, allowing for an open view of the rear vegetation and skyline from the rear elevation of the host dwelling.
10. The appeal proposal comprises a two-storey contemporary building incorporating an office/studio above. Designed with a pitched slate roof, glazed gable and recessed balcony, painted clapperboard cladding and six rooflights, the scheme introduces a substantial volume of built form onto a constrained plot. Its overall height and domestic design would appear visually prominent and discordant when viewed from the street frontage. In contrast to the original structure that is utilitarian in nature and likely used for agricultural storage, the proposed building adopts a distinctly domestic aesthetic that undermines the established character of the site and its wider historic setting.
11. Furthermore, the inclusion of a balcony and multiple rooflights in the proposed building accentuates its departure from the modest form of the existing utility structure and other nearby ancillary buildings. Its increased scale, massing, and domestic design would appear incongruous within the established historic setting. As such, the development would harm the character or appearance of the area and the setting of the CA.

12. The appellant cites the nearby Orchard development (planning ref. PA24/04732), asserting that its garage structure dominates the site and exceeds the height of this appeal property. However, a review of the approved garage's elevation plan (No. 2023-65-2004A) reveals discrepancies with the representation shown in Figure 2 of the appellant's statement, making direct comparison uncertain. The elevation plan indicates that the approved garage is only marginally higher around its ridge than the single storey building next to it. In any case, the view from the host property's bathroom, evident in the appellant's own submission, clearly illustrates that the appeal proposal would visually dominate the rear elevation of the host dwelling. Moreover, it would obscure a significant portion of the skyline, where the existing rear vegetation currently offers a gradual and natural transition into the horizon.
13. The appellant has also indicated that the proposed first floor glazing cannot be viewed from any part of the CA or the WHS, as it is shielded from view by the elevated boundary fence erected by the developers of the adjacent greenfield Orchard site. I have observed that all the structures at the rear of these terrace buildings are single storey high including the building adjoining the entrance gate of the new development beside the appeal site. Hence, the two-storey appeal property would be clearly visible.
14. The appellant has indicated that the proposed rooflights are intended to enhance natural lighting at first-floor level, thereby reducing reliance on artificial lighting and contributing to a lower carbon footprint. While this objective is noted, rooflights are not a characteristic feature of the local vernacular or the setting of the CA, and their inclusion would introduce a visually intrusive element that conflicts with the established architectural rhythm.
15. Although the appellant has expressed a willingness to omit the rooflights if they are deemed harmful to the heritage asset, this concession does not address the broader issue. The principal harm arises not from the rooflights alone, but from the overall prominence and incongruous design of the appeal building itself. Even with the removal or reduction of rooflights, the proposal would remain incompatible with the character and appearance of the area and setting of the CA.
16. The appellant compares the height of the appeal proposal with that of the existing utility building, noting that a reduction in ground level by approximately 500mm would result in the new structure being taller only from the point of its dual-pitched roofline to the ridge. While the appellant suggests that this roof form helps mitigate the perceived increase in overall height, I consider the change to be significant. This is particularly evident in the view from the host property's bathroom, as illustrated in the appellant's own statement, where the proposed building appears notably more prominent.
17. The appellant notes that there is no evidence to suggest that the development site was historically used for port-related activities and therefore argues it should not be assessed within that context. However, the position of the appeal building is next to the CA, whose significance is closely tied to its coastal setting on St Austell Bay, including the historic Charlestown Harbour. The appellant further contends that the proposal should not be considered in relation to the Grade II listed buildings at 23 and 24 Quay Road due to the physical separation. Nonetheless, I have determined this application in relation to the effect of the appeal proposal on the character and appearance of the area and the significance of the CA.

18. Therefore, the appeal proposal would conflict with Policies 2, 12 and 24 of Cornwall Local Plan (Adopted November 2016). Together these policies state that new development should maintain and respect the special character of Cornwall by being of high quality and demonstrating a cultural, physical and aesthetic understanding of its location, and ensuring Cornwall's enduring distinctiveness by maintaining and enhancing its distinctive natural and historic character.

Other matters and planning balance

19. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the effect of the appeal proposal on the setting of the designated heritage assets would lead to less than substantial harm to their settings as the appeal scheme would only impact a modest area of these assets. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
20. The appellant has cited the rebuilding of the site and visual enhancement as public benefits arising from the proposal as well as noting some private benefits. The replacement of an existing farm storage or utilitarian type structure with a visually assertive building of domestic character would result in harm to both the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the setting of the CA. This harm significantly outweighs the claimed benefits.
21. In accordance with paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework, great weight must be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. In this context, the modest public benefits put forward by the appellant do not outweigh the degree of harm identified, and the proposal therefore fails to meet the requirements of national and local heritage policy.

Conclusion

22. The appeal development conflicts with the development plan as a whole. Overall, none of the other considerations material to the development indicate that this appeal decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, for the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Oyebade

INSPECTOR