



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 August 2025

by A Oyebade MSc FCILT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/25/3362643

Barn at Causilgey Farm, Tregavethan, Truro TR4 9EP

- 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 Mr M Tomlinson against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA25/00457.
 - The development proposed is application for permission in principle for a maximum of two dwellings with associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The appeal seeks permission in principle, as set out under the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017. According to national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), this mechanism offers an alternative route to securing planning permission for housing-led development. It involves a two-stage process: the first stage, permission in principle, establishes whether the proposed development is acceptable in terms of location, land use, and scale. The second stage, technical details consent, addresses the specific design and implementation details. Planning permission is only considered to be fully granted once both stages have been approved.
3. This appeal concerns the first stage of the process. Accordingly, the submitted plans are treated as indicative only. All other matters are reserved for consideration at the technical details consent stage, should permission in principle be granted. Where permission in principle is granted, it must specify a range, stating the minimum and maximum number of dwellings permitted in principle. The appellant has sought permission in principle for up to two dwellings.

Main issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposed development would provide a suitable site for housing in respect of its location and proposed land use, having regard to the proximity of services and the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Whether the appeal site is a suitable location for housing

5. The appeal site is located within open countryside, surrounded by agricultural land and areas of woodland. The wider landscape surrounding the appeal site retains a distinctly rural character with limited built development, predominantly agricultural,

offering expansive views across open countryside. A solar farm is situated along one side of the access road leading to Causilgey Farm, introducing a modern feature within the otherwise traditional setting.

6. The approach from Tregavethan Road, approximately two miles distant, is via an unnamed single-track lane, unevenly surfaced and lacking formal kerbing or pedestrian infrastructure. This route primarily serves local farms and residences and is bordered by hedgerows, fields, and intermittent woodland, which together create a strong sense of enclosure and reinforce the area's rural character. As the lane nears the appeal site, the landscape opens slightly to reveal a cluster of converted barns, stone cottages, and agricultural buildings.
7. The immediate setting of Causilgey Farm comprises a disparate collection of buildings, including a single-storey detached stone cottage with traditional rural detailing, a substantial stone-built structure likely to be a converted barn, a short terrace of single-storey dwellings with private gardens, and two large agricultural barns. The irregularity in built form and general appearance reflects a legacy of piecemeal development, combining elements of agricultural heritage with modest residential adaptation.
8. However, this fragmented character lacks the coherence and contextual sensitivity typically expected in open countryside locations. According to the Council officer's report, most of these buildings were granted planning consent prior to the adoption of the current Cornwall Local Plan (Adopted November 2016), and therefore do not necessarily align with its spatial strategy or design principles. In this context, further residential intensification risks compounding the visual and spatial discordance, undermining the objectives of sustainable rural development and landscape protection.
9. Policy 2 of the Local Plan promotes a sustainable approach to growth, requiring new development to deliver a balanced mix of economic, social, and environmental benefits. It emphasises the need to recognise the value and sensitivity of landscape character and to protect, conserve, and enhance both the natural and historic environment. Under Policy 3, the scale and mix of development should reflect the role and function of individual settlements, ensuring proposals are appropriately located and proportionate.
10. Policy 7 of the Local Plan restricts the development of new dwellings in the open countryside to exceptional circumstances. These include: (a) the replacement of existing dwellings, where the new building is broadly comparable in size, scale, and bulk, and suitably designed for its setting; (b) the subdivision of existing residential properties; and (c) the reuse of suitably constructed redundant, disused, or historic buildings with lawful residential use, where their retention is considered appropriate and would enhance the immediate setting. Policy 21 permits increase in building density where appropriate, considering the character of the surrounding area and access to services and facilities to ensure an efficient use of land.
11. The appellant seeks permission to erect up to two residential dwellings on the appeal site, which is in a countryside. However, the proposal does not satisfy any of the exceptional circumstances outlined in Policy 7 of the Local Plan, which restricts new residential development in the open countryside. The site's location and surrounding environment present significant constraints in terms of access to

essential services and facilities, including the absence of pedestrian infrastructure, public transport links, and proximity to local amenities.

12. As such, the development would be heavily reliant on private car use, undermining the principles of sustainable development as set out in Policy 2 of the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These principles require new development to promote accessibility, reduce reliance on unsustainable transport modes, and contribute positively to the social, economic, and environmental fabric of the area. In this context, the proposal fails to demonstrate how it would support a sustainable pattern of growth or integrate effectively with the existing settlement hierarchy.
13. The appellant asserts that the Chief Planning Officer's Advice Note indicates no expectation of services or facilities when defining settlements. Nevertheless, this interpretation overlooks the broader intent of the guidance. The Advice Note clarifies that settlement definition is not solely a matter of physical infrastructure but also encompasses the lived experience of residents, including the presence of community networks, social cohesion, and access to services and facilities. These elements contribute to how a place functions and is perceived as a settlement.
14. Crucially, proximity to amenities and essential services remains a core consideration in assessing whether a development supports sustainable growth. Policy 2 of the Local Plan and the Framework emphasise that sustainable development should promote accessibility, reduce reliance on private vehicles, and foster inclusive, well-connected communities. In this context, the absence of nearby services or infrastructure undermines the sustainability credentials of the proposal and reinforces concerns about its locational suitability.
15. The appellant cites paragraph 110 of the Framework, which recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and that such differences should be considered during decision-making. However, this acknowledgement does not negate the fundamental purpose of the policy, which is to promote sustainable transport through measures that reduce the need to travel and offer a genuine choice of transport modes. Even in rural settings, development proposals are expected to demonstrate how they enhance accessibility, reduce dependency on private vehicles, and contribute to a more integrated and environmentally responsible transport network. The lack of such measures weakens the sustainability elements of the proposal and conflicts with the overarching aims of paragraph 110.
16. The appellant further contends that the hamlet of Causilgey benefits from proximity to Truro and Threemilestone, both of which offer a broad range of services and facilities. Nonetheless, this assertion overlooks the practical limitations of the site's location. The appeal site is separated from these settlements by a considerable distance, and the intervening route, characterised by irregular, narrow, unlit rural lanes with no pedestrian infrastructure, fails to provide safe or viable connections for sustainable travel. As such, the site cannot be considered well-related to existing service centres, and its reliance on private car use for even basic amenities reinforces concerns about its unsuitability for residential development in terms of sustainable transport and spatial planning.
17. Consequently, the appeal proposal would be contrary to Policies 2, 3, 7 and 21 of Cornwall Local Plan, as described above.

Character and appearance

18. The appeal site lies in proximity to Penhale Dunes and the Fal and Helford Special Area of Conservation (SAC), both of which are designated for their ecological importance at an international level. Policy 23 of the Local Plan requires that development proposals sustain local distinctiveness and character, while protecting and where possible enhancing Cornwall's natural environment and assets, in accordance with their international, national, and local significance. In addition, Policy C1 of the Truro & Kenwyn Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted May 2023) supports development within Conservation Areas only where it preserves or enhances their special character and wider setting.
19. The existing buildings at this location exhibit a marked irregularity in built form and general appearance, which detracts from the coherent rural character typically expected in countryside settings. Rather than presenting a unified or contextually sensitive agricultural vernacular, the site comprises a fragmented assemblage of structures with varying scales, orientations, and architectural styles. This lack of visual cohesion undermines the principles of rural design and landscape integration, as set out in both national and local planning policy. The resulting discordance reinforces the site's unsuitability for further residential intensification, particularly in the context of open countryside where development is expected to respect and enhance the prevailing character.
20. This assessment stands in clear contrast to the appellant's claim that, while the larger buildings on site may lack visual merit, the remaining residential properties exhibit appropriate built form and massing. It also challenges the assertion that the grouping of dwellings associated with the appeal site presents a clear and defined spatial arrangement. Furthermore, the appellant suggests that there is scope for introducing replacement buildings of residential character that would constitute an improvement over the existing built form and contribute to a more cohesive settlement pattern.
21. However, the cumulative effect of the existing disparate structures, varying in scale, orientation and architectural treatment, fails to establish a legible or sympathetic residential character. The site lacks the visual coherence and contextual integration necessary to support further development in this sensitive rural location. In such settings, where landscape quality and spatial harmony are critical planning considerations, the proposed intensification cannot be justified because of perceived betterment alone. Any new development must demonstrably enhance the character and appearance of the area, rather than compound prevailing fragmentation.
22. Therefore, the appeal proposal would contravene Policies 23 of Cornwall Local Plan and C1 of Truro & Kenwyn Neighbourhood Plan, as detailed above.

Other Considerations and Planning Balance

23. In accordance with Policy 22 of the Cornwall Local Plan (Adopted November 2016), any development proposal within SAC must be accompanied by an appropriate mitigation strategy. The appellant has submitted such a strategy and made the required financial contribution to the Council. The Council has confirmed that these measures satisfactorily address the SAC mitigation requirements.

24. Policy 1 of Cornwall Local Plan states that the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the Framework. The Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites, with the Council's officer's statement identifying only a 3.8 years' supply. Paragraph 11d (ii) of the Framework explains that in these circumstances, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the Framework policies.
25. The proposal would deliver a modest contribution to local housing supply, generating associated social and economic benefits during both the construction phase and subsequent occupation. However, the limited scale of the development, comprising no more than two additional dwellings, means that its overall impact on housing delivery would be marginal. Moreover, the inefficient use of land in an open countryside location, where spatial strategy prioritises sustainable patterns of growth and land optimisation, further diminishes the weight that can be attributed to these benefits. In this context, the proposal does not represent a sufficiently valuable contribution to justify development in a sensitive rural setting.
26. In the circumstances of this case, I have concluded that there would be harm to the character and appearance of the countryside, which would be long lasting. The adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework policies taken as a whole. The proposed development would not therefore benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
27. The appellant refers to two separate proposals as potential fallback positions: a prior approval granted for the conversion of an agricultural building to a single dwelling under Class Q (Ref. PA24/02192), and a second application currently under appeal seeking confirmation of whether prior approval is required for a similar change of use (Ref. PA24/02191). However, the current appeal proposal does not replace the approved Class Q conversion (PA24/02192), and there is no mechanism before me to prevent its implementation within the relevant time period, even if this appeal were to be allowed. Consequently, there is a realistic prospect of up to three dwellings being delivered on the site, intensifying residential development in a location already deemed unsuitable for further growth. This scenario raises significant concerns regarding cumulative impact, landscape sensitivity, and policy compliance.
28. I have noted that the outcome of the appeal relating to application PA24/02191 remains uncertain at this stage. Nonetheless, when considered cumulatively, the proposed development conflicts with the spatial strategy and design principles set out in Policies 2, 3, 7, 21 and 23 of the Cornwall Local Plan, as well as Policy C1 of the Truro & Kenwyn Neighbourhood Plan. These policies collectively seek to safeguard the character of the countryside, promote sustainable patterns of development, and ensure that new housing is appropriately located and integrated.

Conclusion

29. Having considered all other material factors relevant to the proposed development, none provide sufficient justification to depart from the provisions of the development plan. Accordingly, and for the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Oyeade

INSPECTOR