
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2025

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/25/3362082

Land East of Bella Vista, Enys, Penryn TR10 9LB

- 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 R Courage against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA25/00515.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a single dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for the construction of a single dwelling at Land East of Bella Vista, Enys, Penryn TR10 9LB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PA25/00515, and the plans submitted with it.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. The Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has two 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 two stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. 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.
4. A plan has been submitted showing how a dwelling could be accommodated on the site, but I have considered this to be solely for illustrative purposes because the application only relates to the principle of the proposed development.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for a single dwelling, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development.

Reasons

6. The appeal site lies on the northern edge of Penryn, which is a named town within the hierarchical settlement strategy set out in Policies 2 and 3 of the Cornwall

¹ PPG Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030 (adopted 2016) (the Local Plan). Policy 3 says that in these settlements, the delivery of housing will be managed through a Site Allocations DPD or Neighbourhood Plans. The site is not allocated for development by the Cornwall site allocations development plan document (the SADPD), which was adopted in 2019. However, Policy 1 of the SADPD makes provision for windfall development, including small scale rounding off that is appropriate to the size and role of the settlement and does not physically extend development into the open countryside. Advice on the scope for appropriate proposals is found in the supporting text.

7. In this case, the site has built development on two sides and is enclosed by a Cornish hedge on its northern boundary, so it fulfils some of the criteria. However, its eastern boundary is an arbitrary line through a field that extends into the open countryside beyond. The proposal would not, therefore, provide completion or symmetry to the settlement boundary, but would visually extend development into the open countryside. Furthermore, it would facilitate the potential for further incremental growth to the east. Consequently, the proposal would not constitute rounding off in accordance with Policy 1 of the SADPD.
8. In any event, the Penryn Neighbourhood Plan 2020 to 2030 (the Neighbourhood Plan), which was adopted more recently than the SADPD, in December 2020, defines a settlement boundary to assess where rounding off would be appropriate. The appeal site lies outside this boundary. Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan states that proposals for development outside the settlement boundary will only be permitted on previously developed land (PDL) or to meet a clearly evidenced local need for affordable homes. The site is not PDL, and the proposal is not for affordable housing, so it would be contrary to Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.
9. The site lies outside the physical boundaries of the existing settlement so, in accordance with the definition at paragraph 2.33 of the Local Plan, it is in the open countryside. Policy 7 of the Local Plan states that the development of new homes in the open countryside will only be permitted where there are special circumstances. None of the identified exceptions apply to the appeal scheme, so it would conflict with Policy 7.
10. In summary, the location of the proposed dwelling would conflict with Policies 2, 3, and 7 of the Local Plan, Policy 1 of the SADPD, and Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Consequently, it would harmfully undermine the spatial strategy of the development plan.
11. The appeal site, and the wider countryside to the north and east, comprises grassland divided into small fields by Cornish hedges lined with native trees. The land is part of a broad area that the Council proposes to designate as an Area of Great Landscape Value. However, the evidence indicates that the process by which that would be achieved is at an early stage, and has not been through a process of public consultation, or independent examination. Consequently, I can give little weight to the proposed designation. Nevertheless, the historic field pattern and Cornish hedge boundaries of the appeal site, and its surroundings, are characteristic of the CCA16 Cornwall Character Area². Policy 23 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the landscape character of both designated and undesignated landscapes.

² Cornwall Character Area Study – August 2023

12. The proposed dwelling would, inevitably, be harmful to the character and appearance of the area through the encroachment of built development into the countryside. However, the field that includes the appeal site is visually separated from the wider landscape by the built development on two sides and the continuous lines of trees on the other two. Consequently, the integrity of the expansive landscape to the north and east would not be affected by the proposal. Indeed, the development would not be readily visible from any public viewpoints. In any glimpses from the land to the north and east, it would be seen through the filter of hedges and trees, and in close association with built development. The proposed dwelling may be visible from the road to the west, through the site access, but from here it would be seen in the context of the frontage development in the foreground.
13. Therefore, although the encroachment into the countryside would result in harm to its intrinsic beauty, the discrete nature of the field, and the well-concealed nature of the site means that the harm would be limited. Nevertheless, the limited harm would amount to a conflict with the aims of Policy 23 of the Local Plan.
14. It is not disputed that the centre of the town lies only about 800 metres to the south of the site. Occupants of the dwelling would, therefore, be within reasonable walking distance of a range of services and facilities. The route is quite steep, and parts of it lack segregated footpaths and street lighting. This may be a deterrent to walking for some, particularly after dark, or in inclement weather. However, the part of the road that lacks footpaths carries low levels of slow-moving traffic, so it can be used by pedestrians without any significant highway danger. This stretch is also signposted as a cycle route to Falmouth, so is suitable for more able cyclists.
15. Furthermore, the site is adjacent to the settlement boundary, within which proposals for residential development are supported. I saw many recent developments in the vicinity where residents would face a similar walking route to obtain services. Whilst the route is not ideal, so may discourage walking for some, any residual car journeys would be short. The location of the site would, therefore, provide safe and suitable access, and would allow residents the opportunity to use sustainable and active modes of transport rather than car use for day to day living. In this regard, the proposal would accord with Policy 27 of the Local Plan, Policy 16 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and Policies C1 and T1 of the Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (adopted February 2023) (the CEDPD).
16. The developable part of the appeal site measures approximately 0.16 Hectares in area. A single dwelling on the site would result in a density of only 6.25 dwellings per hectare. The amount of development proposed would not, therefore, represent an efficient use of land, as encouraged by Policy 21 of the Local Plan, Policy C1 of the CEDPD, and Section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Paragraph 130 of the Framework advises that it is especially important to avoid homes being built at low densities where there is a shortage of land to meet identified housing needs.
17. However, paragraph 129 of the Framework says that, in supporting development that makes efficient use of land, the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting must be taken into account. Policy 21 of the Local Plan also requires the character of the surrounding area to be considered, and Policy C1 of the CEDPD supports local distinctiveness in the built and natural environment. The Council has drawn my attention to the higher density development that has

recently taken place to the southeast. However, the site is visually separated from that development, and is much more closely associated with Bella Vista, Tros Mergh, and Mulberry House, which are detached dwellings on spacious curtilages in a semi-rural setting. The amount of development proposed would maintain this prevailing character, so would accord with Policy 21 of the Local Plan and Policy C1 of the CEDPD in this regard.

Planning Balance

18. The proposal would conflict with the spatial strategy of the development plan, and with Policy 23 of the Local Plan, which seeks to protect the natural environment, so the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole. However, it is not disputed that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The most recent evidence indicates that the supply is 3.8 years, so the shortfall is considerable. In these circumstances, the approach to decision-making set out at Paragraph 11d) of the Framework applies.
19. Paragraph 232 of the Framework says that due weight should be given to existing development plan policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. The spatial strategy set out in Policies 2, 3, and 7 of the Local Plan, Policy 1 of the SADPD, and Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan is consistent with the Framework's aims to direct development to locations where there is a genuine choice of transport modes. However, it is not delivering a sufficient supply of homes in accordance with the aims of the Framework. Consequently, I can only afford moderate weight to the conflict with the development plan policies governing the spatial location of housing.
20. Policy 23 of the Local Plan is generally consistent with the Framework's aims to conserve and enhance the natural environment. The proposal would result in limited harm to the character and appearance of the area, and I am mindful that meeting the shortfall in housing provision is unlikely to be achieved without some visual impacts. In this case, the site does not lie within a protected landscape, and there is scope to minimise the harm through the technical details consent process. Consequently, I give limited weight to the conflict with Policy 23.
21. Set against the harm that I have identified, there would be benefits associated with the development. It would support the Framework's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes as set out at paragraph 61. In view of the current shortfall in housing land supply this benefit carries significant weight.
22. There would also be economic benefits associated with the development, through the creation of jobs during the construction phase. Thereafter, residents would contribute to the local economy through ongoing spending and support for local services. The limited scale of the development means that these benefits carry modest weight.
23. When assessed against the policies in the Framework, taken as a whole, the adverse impacts of the proposal do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Therefore, despite the conflict with the development plan, material considerations indicate that permission in principle should be granted.

Conditions

24. The PPG makes it clear that it is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle, whose terms may only include the site location, the type and amount of development.

Conclusion

25. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR