
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2026

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/25/3369732

Land North of The Old Barn, The Valley, Porthcurno TR19 6JY

- 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 Rockridge Projects Porthcurno Ltd against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA24/09774.
 - The development proposed is change of use of field to seasonal car park and community parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside and the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cornwall National Landscape.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises the northwestern part of a gently sloping grass field that rises away from the road frontage. The field is almost entirely surrounded by open countryside, but its southwestern corner has a boundary with the northernmost part of the linear settlement of Porthcurno. However, due to the topography, road alignment, and boundary screening, the field is not readily seen in juxtaposition with the buildings in the settlement. Apart from an overgrown pill box, there are no permanent buildings in the field and, whilst there is a line of overhead wires crossing the site, they are modest in scale and supported on wooden poles. Consequently, when approaching from the north, the site has the appearance of an agricultural field in open countryside, with little in the way of any urban influences.
4. The site lies within the Cornwall National Landscape which, in this area, is an open rugged coastal landscape, comprising a patchwork of fields divided by low windswept hedges, and punctuated by scattered farmsteads. The appeal site shares these characteristics, and is an integral part of this wider landscape. It therefore contributes positively to the scenic beauty of the National Landscape. The legislation¹ requires that, in determining this appeal, I must seek to further the purposes for which the area was designated. Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework says great weight should be given to conserving and

¹ Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023)

enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

5. Porthcurno is a popular tourist village, due to a number of attractions in the area, including Porthcurno Beach, the Minack Theatre, and the Porthcurno Museum of Global Communications. These attractions are reached via the relatively narrow road that runs through the village. There is a large carpark to the south of the settlement near to the attractions, but the evidence indicates that it is not sufficient to meet demand at peak times, leading to haphazard parking and traffic congestion on the approach road. The proposal has been submitted as a response to this issue. It is contended that the site is well-located at the closest point to the beach before the road narrows, and would help to prevent the on-street parking and congestion problems.
6. The proposed car park would be of a substantial scale, accommodating up to 60 cars and extending about 100 metres up the slope from the road. The presence of such a large number of parked cars in this countryside setting would be visually intrusive, and harmful to the natural beauty of the National Landscape. Although it is contended that visibility of the cars would be limited to local viewpoints, I saw that they would be readily seen from the approach road to the north from a considerable distance. From here, the bright colours and reflective nature of the vehicles would be a notable presence in an otherwise almost entirely undeveloped vista. The site is also widely visible in long distance views from the south and west, so the harm to scenic beauty would be wide-ranging.
7. I am mindful that the proposal is for seasonal use only, so parked cars would not be present all year. However, the use is likely to result in some discernible impacts on the land itself, through compaction and erosion. Consequently, even though it would be reversible in the longer term, the visual impacts would not disappear as soon as the car parking ceased at the end of each summer. Furthermore, the absence of parked cars in the winter would not alter the harmful impact on the landscape that would result from the proposed use for a large part of the year. The proposal would, therefore, be contrary to Policies 2 and 23 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010 – 2030 (the Local Plan), and Policy C1 of the Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (February 2023) (the DPD), which seek to conserve and enhance the natural environment and to protect the landscape character and natural beauty of the National Landscape.
8. The impact of high levels of traffic in some localities is recognised in the Cornwall Character Area Description CCA 01: West Penwith South (Land's End to Newlyn). The accompanying guidance to protect/conservate current landscape character advises the development of a Tourism Management Plan for the coast, with special attention paid to honeypot locations such as Porthcurno, to explore ways of alleviating pressure on key locations and on sections of the coastal path. It says this could potentially consider inland parking locations where visitors must 'walk in' to relieve pressure on narrow lanes. Policy WP-P9 of the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2022 – 2027 also supports measures to address visitor pressure/traffic at key destinations within West Penwith.
9. While both of these documents support the principle of addressing the problem, neither identifies the appeal site as a suitable location for a car park. The aim of Policy WP-P9 is to reduce the landscape and visual impact of tourism, but the

proposal would not achieve that. I appreciate that there is no evidence of a Tourism Management Plan being advanced, and that the scheme has been proposed as a short-term solution. Nevertheless, the information submitted does not demonstrate that other sites or potential solutions have been considered. I therefore cannot conclude, with any confidence, that the proposal represents the least harmful means of alleviating parking pressure in the locality. Consequently, the benefits arising from the development do not outweigh the harm.

10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the countryside and the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cornwall National Landscape, resulting in conflict with Policies 1, 2 and 23 of the Local Plan and Policy C1 of the DPD. There are no material considerations that outweigh this harm and the resultant policy conflict.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR