



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 July 2020

by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/20/3246317

15A Little Gregwartha, Four Lanes, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6LN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Terry and Janet Dallimore against the decision of Cornwall Council.
- The application Ref PA19/03953, dated 15 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 30 August 2019.
- The development proposed is described as '*demolition of existing dwellinghouse and separate annexe, outline permission for the erection of ten detached single storey two bedroomed dwellings with parking spaces, formation of roadway (cul-de-sac) off of Little Gregwartha including casual car parking spaces together with driveway leading to three remaining horse paddocks*'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The planning application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved. I assessed the appeal as such, having regard to the layout plan Ref LG/2 on an indicative basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the suitability of the site for the proposed development, having regard to local and national policy for the location of housing.

Reasons

4. 15A Gregwartha is a bungalow within the southern part of the settlement of Four Lanes, where it has coalesced with the settlement of Pencoys. The site comprises the property and part of a group of paddocks which extend behind the dwelling in a south westerly direction until meeting the hedge boundary of Pencoys Cemetery. To the west and north west is housing, the respective Grade II listed buildings of the Church of St Andrew, its lychgate, and Pencoys Villa, and The Sportsman's Arms pub. These buildings front away from the site, on to Church Road, which is a main route through Four Lanes. To the south east the site runs into further areas of paddock, with agricultural land beyond that.
5. Policy 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan: Strategic Policies Document 2010–2030 (adopted 2016) (CLP) establishes a hierarchy for the location of growth within Cornwall, directing it in the first instance to several named locations. The CLP also sets a housing requirement for windfall growth adjacent to or within smaller settlements, of which Four Lanes is agreed to be, subject to a site meeting one of specified criteria within section 3.3 of Policy 3.

6. Of potential application to this proposal is where a scheme would constitute infill or lead to the 'rounding off' of the settlement. Policy 3 states that infill schemes should fill a small gap in an otherwise continuous built frontage and not physically extend the settlement into the open countryside. Its supporting text states that rounding off applies to development on land that is substantially enclosed but outside of the urban form of a settlement, where its edge is clearly defined by a physical feature that also acts as a barrier to further growth. Proposals should not visually extend building into the open countryside.
7. The site is enclosed on three sides, with the urban form of Four Lanes directly to the north west and north east, and the site therefore adjoins the settlement. There is a clear linear character to Four Lanes, and the appeal site is a definable gap in a quite strong linear south eastern edge to the settlement. However, in terms of infill, given its backland location, away from Church Lane, the proposal would not infill a continuous built frontage. With regard to rounding off, the site's south eastern boundary is undefined and flows into the adjacent open paddock without any physical barrier to future growth.
8. Although well concealed from Church Road, the site is visible through a field opening from the public highway above Four Lanes to the east. From here, Pencoy's Cemetery is a low-key feature in the landscape. Intervening trees and vegetation serve to somewhat screen and disassociate the site from the buildings which front Church Road. This has the visual effect of drawing the site away from Four Lanes, and it reads instead as an integral part of the open plateau of farmland and paddocks which form the immediate open countryside setting to the settlement. As such, the scheme would visually extend building into the open countryside. Taking these matters into account, the proposal would not constitute infill nor 'rounding off' under the terms of Policy 3.
9. Criterion c) of Policy 21 of the CLP encourages proposals which would increase building density where appropriate, taking into account the character of the area and access to services and facilities to ensure an efficient use of land. The site is well connected to the facilities of Four Lanes and residents would be able to access bus services to further afield. However, for the reasons already expressed, the land to the south of Little Gregwartha, incorporating the appeal site, exhibits a principally rural character. The urbanisation of this environment would be to the detriment of such. Whilst I accept that this would be modest by virtue of the limited and distant nature of public views of the site, the scheme would nonetheless fail to respond positively to the character of the area. It would not therefore make an efficient use of the land pursuant to Policy 21.
10. I have been directed to the guidance contained within the 'Chief Planning Officer's Advice Note: Infill/Rounding Off' (the CPOAN). As I have found that the site is not within Four Lanes and the scheme would extend into the open countryside, there would be conflict with the CPOAN in my view.
11. The appellants have also referred to several planning permissions for housing elsewhere. With regard to the appeal decisions at Illogan¹, Illogan is a larger settlement named for growth within section 3.1 of Policy 3. The decisions at Wheal Rose² appear to have been made on the basis that Wheal Rose is a dispersed settlement and those particular schemes would not visually extend

¹ Appeal Refs APP/D0840/W/18/3210910 and APP/D0840/W/19/3229068

² Ref PA17/06151 and Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/19/3225000

building into the open countryside. The site at Fowey³ was, unlike Four Lanes, within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and consequently the scheme also fell to be assessed under section 3.4 of Policy 3. Given such, the circumstances of these decisions were materially different to this appeal. Moreover, as expressed within the CPOAN, it seems to me that the application of Policy 3 is a matter best judged on a site-specific basis. Consequently, these other decisions do little to influence my findings here.

12. I therefore conclude that the site would not be suitable for the proposed development, having regard to local and national policy for the location of housing. The proposal would conflict with Policies 1, 2, 3, 7, 12, 21 and 23 of the CLP and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Other Matters

13. Due to the presence of the site within the settings of the Church of St Andrew, its lychgate, and Pencoys Villa, I have a duty to consider the impact of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of these listed buildings. They are enjoyed principally from Church Road, to which they are orientated. This, in addition to their established residential context, and the boundary vegetation between them and the site, would ensure that the scheme would cause no harm to their special architectural and historic interest.

Planning Balance

14. The government is seeking to significantly boost the supply of housing and the scheme would provide 9 additional homes in an area with adequate access to services and facilities. I have no reason to doubt that they could be built out quickly, to a high-quality design and to modern environmental and energy efficiency standards. There would also be economic benefits associated with the construction phase and potentially through increased footfall to local services and facilities. The creation of a new boundary hedge would lead to a small biodiversity gain. Given the scale of the proposal, these are benefits which collectively weight moderately in the scheme's favour.
15. That said, planning law and the Framework require proposals to be determined against the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposed development would conflict with development plan policy for the location of housing and would undermine the Council's plan-led approach, contrary to paragraph 15 of the Framework. This matter weighs heavily in the balance, outweighing the benefits of the scheme.
16. I therefore find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and that there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons set out above, and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Matthew Jones

INSPECTOR

³ Ref PA18/03857