



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 December 2008

by David Vickery DipT&CP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State
for Communities and Local Government

The Planning Inspectorate
4/11 Eagle Wing
Temple Quay House
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Decision date:
14 January 2009

Appeal Ref: APP/C3810/A/08/2081846

**Shripney Garden Caravan Park, Shripney Lane, Shripney, Bognor Regis,
West Sussex PO22 9NS**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr C Linton against the decision of Arun District Council.
- The application Ref: ~~88/38/08/~~ dated 1 April 2008, was refused by notice dated 18 June 2008.
- The development proposed is an extension to the existing holiday caravan park to provide an additional 12 No. mobile homes and the formation of a new vehicular access.

Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the potential loss of high quality agricultural land.

Reasons

3. The site lies outside the built-up area boundary of Bognor Regis and in the countryside as defined in the Local Plan. I saw that it is an open, level, grassed field, roughly square shaped, which lies between an existing caravan park to the north and residential development to the south. Access would be from the narrow Shripney Lane to the west. There is another field to the east, and mainly agricultural land to the west of the lane. The Council stated that the site is officially classified as Grade 1 or 2 agricultural land, and the appellant has not disputed this. Although the site lies adjacent to a Conservation Area, I agree with both main parties that the proposal would not adversely affect its character, appearance or setting.
4. I saw that the site appears to be part of the countryside and that it links the open land to the west with that to the east. It acts as a distinct physical break between residential development and the caravan site to the north. I therefore consider this to be an environmentally sensitive site.
5. The Government's *Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism* emphasises the importance of tourism to the economy, the need for sustainable development, and that applications should be determined in line with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3). Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) gives further advice on tourism and

paragraph 39 says that in considering proposals for caravan parks the objective of providing adequate facilities and sites should be carefully weighed against the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites.

6. Structure Plan policy NE12 says that tourism facilities should be located within built-up area boundaries unless the development requires, and is compatible with, a countryside location. Paragraph 209 explains that the main aim is to maintain and improve existing facilities. It says that sites next to built-up areas can be considered after locations in towns and villages, but that there should be a demonstrable need. Local Plan policy DEV35 is similar in intent. The appellant mentioned Local Plan policy DEV39, but I note that it deals with touring caravan sites and so it is not applicable to this proposal.
7. The appellant said that the proposal would result in benefits to the local economy by providing tourist facilities in a sustainable location, helping to meet market demand compliant with the development plan. The appellant's evidence of need was primarily set out in a Visitor Strategy report produced by the Council in April 2006. This notes at paragraph 4.2.1 that there is a continuing reduction in demand for domestic long stay holidays, much of which is concentrated around Bognor Regis in low cost self-catering accommodation, such as that in Butlins and in camp and caravan sites. Even so, the report targets this sector as a key market to develop and improve in Bognor Regis (paragraph 4.6), but it does not say exactly how this should be done, indicating that further research is necessary to develop higher quality accommodation (pages 52 and 53).
8. So the evidence I have does not show that there is a specific need for mobile homes for holiday accommodation in this area, and/or that this would be the right way to develop low-cost higher quality accommodation to meet the Council's Visitor Strategy for Bognor Regis. Nor, and just as importantly, is there any evidence that there are no sites within the built-up area which would be able to accommodate any such need.
9. In the absence of this evidence, I conclude that the proposal would harm this environmentally sensitive site in the countryside by placing mobile homes on the land together with roads, pedestrian paths and other necessary development to service them. This would have a serious and adverse urbanising effect on the character and appearance of the rural area. It would thus be contrary to the development plan and Government policies above.
10. Given my conclusion above the proposal would also be contrary to the advice in PPS7 at paragraphs 28 and 29 as it would be a development of high quality agricultural land which is avoidable because the need for it is not proven.
11. A previous appeal decision in 1996 was only dismissed on grounds of the loss of agricultural land, but since that time circumstances have changed due to new development plan policies and Government advice. Although local residents were concerned about highway safety, I have no reason to disagree with the Council's favourable assessment on this point.
12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Vickery INSPECTOR