

QUICK GUIDE TO PLANNING FOR CARAVANS

The use of land for caravans and other "moveable dwellings" was first regulated under S.269 of the Public Health Act 1936. In 1960 the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 replaced the 1936 Act in relation to caravans, although other moveable dwelling such as tents remain subject to that legislation.

The 1960 Act introduced a licencing requirement for caravan parks which runs in parallel with but is separate from the planning process. In some respects the two means of control overlap, but the fundamental distinction is that planning deals with whether or not the use of land for the purpose of a caravan site is acceptable - having regard to material planning considerations - whilst the licencing system imposes a wide range of developmental and operation controls over the layout and format of the site and its day to day management and operation.

These licencing requirements are set out by the Secretary of State in Model Standards which "*.. represent those standards normally to be expected as a matter of good practice on caravan sites. They should be applied with due regard to the particular circumstances of the relevant site, including its physical character, any relevant services, facilities or other amenities that are available within or in the locality of the site and other applicable conditions*". Separate standards apply to touring caravan sites, static holiday caravan parks and residential caravan parks.

The established convention (as originally clarified by Lord Denning during the 1960's) is that the planning permission deals with the effect of the site on the surrounding area, whilst the licence deals with the internal arrangement of the site itself.

In the main you cannot lawfully operate a caravan site without both and the planning consent cannot fetter the implementation of Model Standards. Failure to comply with the condition of a site licence is an offence and liable to prosecution.

The most recent Model Standards for Holiday Caravan Sites can be found in Circular 14/89 and you will see that the various conditions define everything from the required density, form of layout, spacing requirements, dimension of site roads etc through to fire safety, electrical wiring, gas compounds, litter etc.

Therefore to operate a caravan park you need planning permission for the use of land as a caravan site and then a site licence issued by the Environmental Health Department which establishes the form of the development within that area.

1 What is a caravan Site?

A 'caravan site' is "*.. land on which a caravan is stationed for the purposes of human habitation and land which is used in conjunction with land on which a caravan is so stationed*".

2 What is a Caravan?

The term 'caravan' is defined in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 as being:

"any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another (whether by being towed, or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer) and any motor vehicle so designed or adapted.."

This definition was added to by Section 13 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 to include a specific definition for so called twin-unit caravans which should be:

- (a) Composed of not more than two sections separately constructed and designed to be assembled on a site by means of bolts, clamps or other devices and;*
- (b) When dis-assembled, physically capable of being moved by road from one place to another (whether by being towed, or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer)*

Provided that when assembled:

- (a) Its length (exclusive of any drawbar) does not exceed 60 feet (18.288m);*
- (b) Its width does not exceed 20 feet (6.096m);*
- (c) The overall height of the living accommodation (measured internally from the floor to the lowest level of the ceiling at the highest level) does not exceed 10 feet (3.048m)*

The dimensions referred to here have been modified recently in Model Standards 2008.

There is a nomenclature issue that needs to be appreciated as the industry has endeavored to move away from the technical definitions in the interests of perception and marketing.

A caravan park may also be referred to as a holiday caravan park; Static holiday/caravan park; holiday home park; touring caravan park; residential caravan park; Home Park; Park Home Estate.

The touring caravan park is self explanatory and relates to a specific form of caravan that is road legal and can be towed behind a vehicle on the public highway.

Holiday caravan parks etc generally relate to caravans that remain on site all year round but are nevertheless mobile and 'caravans' within the definition. These will have chassis and wheels and be sited on a surfaced pitch. Nowadays the provision of toilet blocks has given way to on-pitch drainage, water and electricity connections. Such caravans are often referred to as 'static' caravans.

Residential caravans are those which may be occupied as a persons' only or main residence; as distinct from a holiday occupancy where the caravanner lives elsewhere in their only or main residence.

3 How are caravan parks considered in Policy Terms?

Principal guidance on the role and development of caravan parks is now contained in the Good Practice Guide on Tourism (2006) which also provides example conditions relating to seasonal and holiday occupancy. These have been drawn from decades of experience and many appeal cases over the years. PPS4 and 7 also draw reference to their role and value to tourism revenues and provision of holiday accommodation.

- 4** Caravan site for the provision of sites for Gypsies or other persons of nomadic habit are considered separately.

This is a very quick snap-shop but if you have any specific questions then do please contact me. I also attach a quick photo-guide to the different type of caravan you may come across.

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STATIC HOLIDAY CARAVANS



Typical Static Holiday Caravans



Timber clad caravans (often referred to as a 'Lodge')



Typical Twin-unit static caravan



Twin-unit 'lodge' style caravan

RESIDENTIAL CARAVANS



Typical Residential Caravans



Residential caravans are mostly, but not exclusively twin-units

TOURING CARAVANS



Typical Touring Caravans

