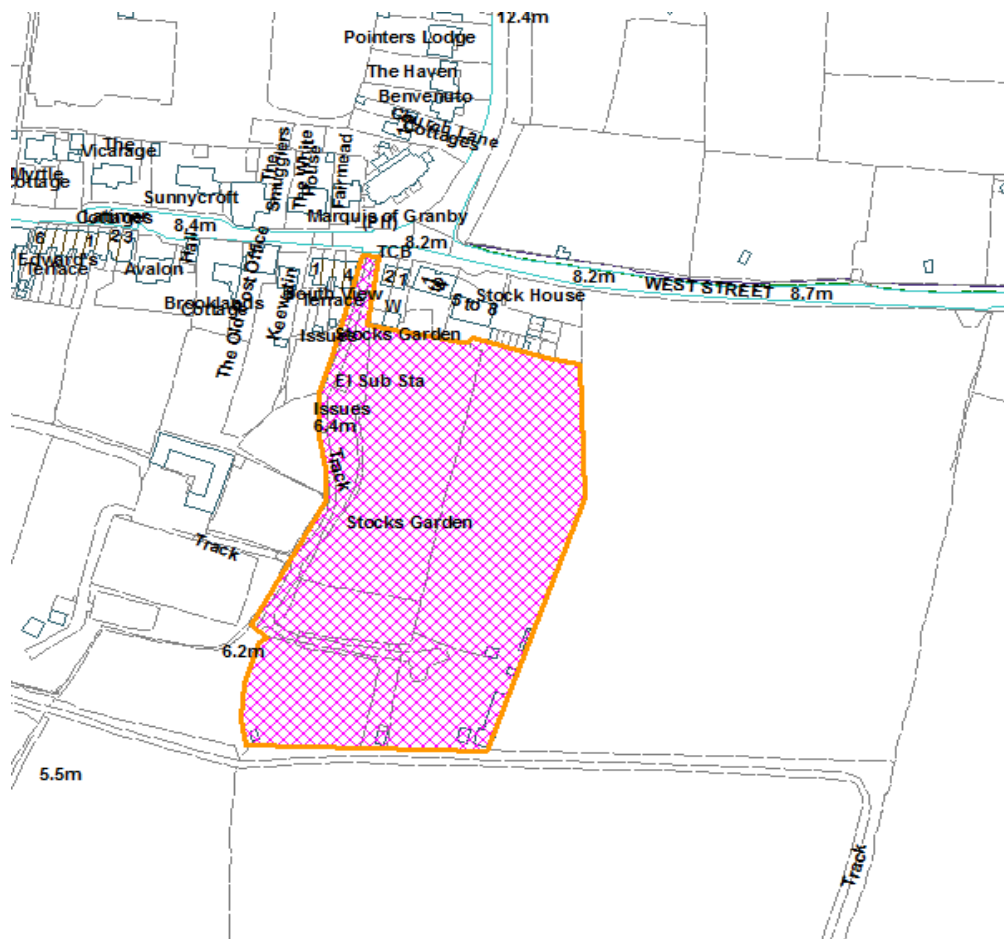




Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The site is located in the countryside to the south of West Street and comprises fields which have been used for the keeping of horses. There were previously a number of outbuildings used as offices, stables and storage units on the site but these have been removed following the grant of planning permission to construct 2no. stables and

ancillary welfare facilities on the site in 2022. The landholding has an area of approximately 1.7ha, although much of this is taken up by paddocks associated with the keeping of horses. The proposed gypsy and traveller caravan site is in the SE corner of the holding and measures approximately 0.3ha.

A number of unauthorised buildings have been installed including a mobile home occupied by the applicant, a second mobile home occupied by a family member, a caravan occupied by another family member and several outbuildings. Only one of the stable blocks approved under the 2022 permission has been constructed so far. There is also an extensive area of hardstanding. Part of the paddock previously identified as being used for the keeping of horses has been taken up by the applicant's mobile home and an area of tended lawn.

Permission is sought to use the site as a private gypsy and traveller caravan site for 4 pitches. The pitches will all be occupied by members of the same family. The application also seeks to retain the existing caravans and hardstanding and to form an area for the parking of touring caravans. The application is retrospective.

The site lies outside of the built up area boundary and is within the countryside and Local Green Gap between Sompting and Worthing. It is to the south of Sompting village, accessed via a track off West Street. There are residential dwellings to the north, farmland to the south and east and further stables and a riding school to the west.

Relevant Planning History

AWDM/0708/22 - Proposed construction of 2no. new stables including ancillary welfare facilities - approved

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: No objection from a transport/highways aspect subject to conditions requiring car and cycle parking to be provided.

Comments that no alterations are proposed to the existing vehicle access point on West Street. From inspection of WSCC mapping, there are no apparent visibility concerns with the existing point of access on West Street. In addition, the proposed development is not anticipated to give rise to a significant material intensification of use of the existing access point.

Two car parking spaces will be provided for each of the proposed pitches. Whilst technically a withdrawn document, the Good Practice Guide on Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites (2008) recommended a provision of two car parking spaces per pitch. Therefore, the proposed parking provision is considered acceptable and is anticipated to meet the needs of the site. On-site turning appears achievable within the site, allowing vehicles to exit in a forward gear.

The site is located within walking/cycle distance of local services, amenities and public transport connections. Cycling is a viable option in the area, and provision for the secure storage of bicycles is also proposed.

Adur & Worthing Councils:

Environmental Health officer has no objection

Planning Policy Manager: There is no objection to the principle of this form of development in the countryside ; although there may be some limited impact on the Local Gap, on balance this matter is outweighed by the evidenced need for Gypsy and traveller accommodation in Adur. To address the local gap issue, consideration could be given to applying a condition to remediate the site should it cease to be required, if deemed reasonable to do so.

Given that this proposal addresses a need identified in the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation Assessment it is not considered to set a precedent for any other form of development in the countryside

Surface Water Drainage Consultant: No objection

Southern Water: Recommend condition - Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of foul drainage disposal have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water

Adur District Conservation Advisory Group: Approve

Sompting Parish Council: Support

Representations

10 letters of support from addresses in Lancing and Sompting:

- Meets a clear need for suitable and authorised sites for Gypsy and Traveller families.
- This proposal offers a practical and responsible way to meet accommodation needs.
- Site is a good location without impacting on local residents
- Applicant is a respectful and considerate neighbour
- Land has been well managed
- Significant time and investment has been made by the applicant to improve and maintain the land
- No parking issues as there is ample space on the site
- No traffic impact arising from this proposal
- Having owners on site is beneficial for welfare and security of horses

1 letter of objection from an address in West Street, Sompting:

- Increased traffic
- Worsening of parking issues
- Noise disturbance
- Loss of privacy

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adur Local Plan 2017 Policies 13, 14, 23

WSCC Guidance on Parking at New Developments (Sept 2020)

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2024)

Relevant Legislation

The Committee may grant planning permission for development carried out before the date of the application in accordance with Section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Save that the development will have already commenced, this is a conventional planning application, and the Committee should consider the planning circumstances existing at the time of the decision in accordance with:

Section 73A of the Act, which states:

- (1) that on an application made, the planning permission which may be granted includes planning permission for development carried out before the date of the application.
- (2) Subsection (1) applies to development carried out -
 - (a) Without planning permission
 - (b) In accordance with planning permission granted for a limited period; or
 - (c) Without complying with some condition subject to which planning permission was granted
- (3) Planning permission for such development may be granted so as to have effect from -
 - (a) The date on which the development was carried out; or
 - (b) If it was carried out in accordance with planning permission granted for a limited period, the end of that period

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that requires the decision to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning Assessment

Principle and Policy Background

The site lies outside of the Built Up Area Boundary and is within the countryside. It is also within the Sompting- Lancing Local Green Gap.

The Planning Statement states that “The application is based on helping to meet the outstanding unmet need for gypsy pitches” and goes on to refer to the lack of vacant sites/ pitches in the district and states:

“As such the applicant is keen to be able to provide additional pitches to help meet the general outstanding need in the area.”

The Statement then confirms that the proposal seeks to provide accommodation for two generations of a single family.

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2024) is the Government's current policy statement on traveller sites. It includes a definition of "gypsies and travellers" as follows:

"Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such."

The NPPF 2024 makes clear that local need assessments should be undertaken to assess the housing need for a range of groups, including travellers - and refers to PPTS 2024, which requires local authorities to undertake their own assessments of need for the purposes of planning.

Paragraph 10 of PPTS 2024 states that local authorities should identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years worth of sites against locally set targets, as well as identify a supply of specific developable sites or broad locations for growth for years 6-10 and where possible years 11-15.

An Accommodation Assessment undertaken jointly by the South Downs National Park Authority, Adur & Worthing Councils and Brighton & Hove City Councils was published jointly in December 2024. This indicates the following need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Adur outside of the South Downs National Park area, and therefore within the local planning authority area of Adur District Council:

Using the PPTS 2024 definition, an estimate of 7 pitches are required from 2024-2042, 3 of these within the first 5 years (2024-29)

Using a wider definition based on ethnic status, 11 pitches are required from 2024 - up to 2042 (7 of these in the first 5 years, 2024-29).

The Adur Local Plan 2017 allowed for the relocation of the Withy Patch traveller site in Lancing, as part of the New Monks Farm redevelopment which allowed for some additional pitches, intended to address needs arising from new family formation on that site. However due to land constraints no additional sites were allocated. As such Adur does not have a 5 year supply of gypsy and traveller sites.

Policy 13 of the Adur Local Plan restricts development outside of the built up area boundary to that where a countryside location is essential or other stated circumstances, or where consistent with other policies in the Plan. This policy also states that any development in the countryside should not result in a level of activity which has an adverse impact on the character of an area.

Policy 14 states that in such areas development should be consistent with other policies in the plan, and must not individually or cumulatively lead to the coalescence of settlements.

Policy 23 (Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople) states:

The Council will seek to deliver Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites to meet all identified needs. Proposals for new Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showpeople site/s or extensions to existing sites will be permitted provided that the following criteria can be satisfied:

- *The site should have safe access to the highway network and provision for parking and turning;*
- *The site should be well related to existing settlements where local services and community facilities (including schools and health services) can be accessed by foot, cycle and public transport as well as by car;*
- *Development should be of a scale that is sympathetic to the local environment and should not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenities of both residents of the site and occupiers of nearby properties, particularly in respect of noise and disturbance from vehicular movements, on-site business activities and other potential sources of noise;*
- *The site should be served, or be capable of being served by an adequate mains water supply, and electricity, drainage and sewerage connections;*
- *The site should not be located in an area of high flood risk (Flood Zone 3), on contaminated land, near refuse/landfill sites, wastewater treatment works, electricity pylons or be adversely affected by noise and odour in order to protect the amenity, health and well-being of residents; and*
- *There is adequate provision for storage and maintenance of equipment, where required for Travelling Showpeople.*

In assessing applications for Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople sites, best practice guidance published by the Government and other bodies will be used

PPTS 2024 states that when considering applications for traveller sites, local authorities should take into account a range of matters including:

- a) the existing level of local provision and need for sites
- b) the availability (or lack) of alternative accommodation for the applicants
- c) other personal circumstances of the applicant
- d) that the locally specific criteria used to guide the allocation of sites in plans or which form the policy where there is no identified need for pitches/plots should be used to assess applications that may come forward on unallocated sites.

Policy C (paragraph 14) of PPTS 2024 recognises that sites for gypsies and travellers can be located in rural areas and the countryside and refers to the need to ensure that scale of development does not dominate the nearest settled community. As such there is no objection to the location within the countryside.

The planning agent has confirmed the gypsy and traveller status of the applicant. He has stated:

“The Lister family are longstanding gypsies. They are proud of their tradition and actively continue to travel for work. Their specialism is roofing work with much work generated by leaflet dropping on route to and from annual Gypsy Fairs at Wycombe

Horse Fair (May), Appleby Horse Fair (June) and also Feria and Sevilla Horse Fairs in Spain (Oct and April). Being from gypsy background they also have hard landscaping skills and general dealing to add to their CV. Horses, tack and carriages are also bought and sold for profit."

Specific Site Assessment when considered against Planning Policies

Assessing the application against the criteria in PPTS 2024:

a) the existing level of local provision and need for sites

The previous section in this report confirms that Adur does not have a 5 year supply of gypsy and traveller sites and between 7-11 new pitches are required in the period from 2024-2042.

b) the availability (or lack) of alternative accommodation for the applicants

Following on from (a) above, there is a lack of alternative available accommodation for the applicant.

c) other personal circumstances of the applicant

The Planning Statement submitted with the application states that the applicant has close local family connections within the area

d) that the locally specific criteria used to guide the allocation of sites in plans or which form the policy where there is no identified need for pitches/plots should be used to assess applications that may come forward on unallocated sites.

This application falls to be considered against Policy 23 of the Adur Local Plan, being an unidentified/unallocated site. When looking at each criteria in turn:

- **The site should have safe access to the highway network and provision for parking and turning**

The site has its own vehicular access road off the track leading from West Street. There is land available for vehicle parking and a proposed dedicated area for the parking of touring caravans. The local highway authority has not raised an objection.

- **The site should be well related to existing settlements where local services and community facilities (including schools and health services) can be accessed by foot, cycle and public transport as well as by car**

The site can be accessed by foot, cycle and public transport as well as by car. It lies outside Sompting village but is within reasonable distance of the main built up area of both Sompting, Lancing and Worthing where education and health facilities are located.

- **Development should be of a scale that is sympathetic to the local environment and should not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenities of both residents of the site and occupiers of nearby properties, particularly in respect of noise and disturbance from vehicular movements, on-site business activities and other potential sources of noise**

This is assessed in more detail in the sections below.

- **The site should be served, or be capable of being served by an adequate mains water supply, and electricity, drainage and sewerage connections**

The applicant's agent has confirmed that the site is connected to essential utilities.

- **The site should not be located in an area of high flood risk (Flood Zone 3), on contaminated land, near refuse/landfill sites, wastewater treatment works, electricity pylons or be adversely affected by noise and odour in order to protect the amenity, health and well-being of residents**

The site is not within a high risk flood area and is not considered to be adversely affected by any of the matters mentioned above.

Visual amenity

The existing and proposed caravans/mobile homes are located at the southern end of the site approximately 120m from the nearest residential boundary to the north. They are shown as being reasonably well grouped, together with the hardstanding area for touring caravans, towards the SE corner of the site. The rest of the site to the north is to remain as grazing land/paddocks.

The mobile homes will be sited over a permeable base bricked up under the perimeter to assist in insulating the mobile home. The mobile homes will retain their axles and wheels but these will be concealed by the brick surround. The low pitched roof will be of dark colouring. Each unit will remain within the dimensions for a caravan under the Caravan Act 1960 (as amended); i.e. Length – 20 metres, Width – 6.8 metres , Internal Height – 3.05 metres.

The hardstanding and access shall be constructed in a permeable 20mm pea shingle road planings material over a hardcore base.

The site is reasonably well screened by hedgerows and trees on the boundaries and within the site. The existing buildings are not easily visible when approaching the site along the access track off West Street. Due to the contained nature of the development and the natural vegetation around the edge of the site, it is not considered that the open character and appearance of the countryside will be eroded to any significant degree, thereby safeguarding the Local Green Gap.

However, should the number of pitches increase, there is the potential for

intensification and greater visual harm and for this reason it is considered to be reasonable to limit the number of pitches to just 4 (plus parking for 4 touring caravans). This accords with paragraph 26 of PPTS 2024 which states:
“Local planning authorities should very strictly limit new traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside areas allocated in the development plan.”

The applicant has agreed to such a restriction.

Caravans and mobile homes do not benefit from permitted development rights so planning permission would be required for any further development.

Residential amenity

The distance from the nearest dwellings to the north and the intervening screening means that the mobile homes/caravans are not likely to have a harmful impact on the outlook for neighbouring residents. The activity associated with the 4 pitches is expected to be low key and should not result in any harm to residential amenity.

Accessibility and parking

Two car parking spaces will be provided for each of the pitches which is considered to be acceptable. There is space on site for parking of touring caravans and the existing access does not raise any concerns with West Sussex Highways.

Flood risk and drainage

The site is not within a flood risk area. Surface water drainage will soak into the ground as existing and the Council's drainage consultant has not raised any objection.

The site is already connected to mains foul drainage so the condition requested by Southern Water is not required.

Ecology and biodiversity net gain

The application is retrospective and is therefore exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain.

Conclusion

The site lies within the countryside but is reasonably well screened and sufficiently distant from the nearest neighbouring residents to not cause a loss of visual or residential amenity. There is an identified lack of gypsy and traveller sites in the District and the provision of four pitches on this site for use by an extended family would accord with National and District planning policies. Subject to an appropriate condition limiting the number of pitches to a maximum of 4, the application can be supported.

Recommendation: Approve

Subject to conditions (below):-

1. Approved Plans
2. Car parking
3. Cycle parking
4. Limit the number of pitches to a maximum of 4 plus parking/storage of 4 touring caravans.
5. Hard and soft landscaping details to be submitted and approved. including any new fences