

AWDM/0289/26 Land at Stocks Garden West Street Sompting

Site

The site lies outside of the Built Up Area Boundary and is therefore considered countryside in planning policy terms (Policy 13 of the Adur Local Plan 2017). It is also within the Sompting- Lancing Local Green Gap and therefore policy 14 applies.

Proposal

The proposal is for change of use to a private gypsy and traveller caravan site for 4 pitches (to include parking).

For the purposes of clarity it is worth highlighting that there is perhaps some ambiguity in the Planning Statement regarding future users of the site. Page 5 of the supporting statement says: *The application is based on helping to meet the outstanding unmet need for gypsy pitches*.

Similarly Page 6 of the supporting document refers 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.'

However page 7 goes on to say: *'The orientation and position of the proposed development has been chosen to provide the accommodation required for two generations of a single family and to minimise its impact on the surrounding area'* which infers use by a specific family.

Definition

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (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.

(For information, this definition was also included in the Draft NPPF consulted on in December 2025 for consultation purposes).

Need for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation In Adur

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, 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 (Policy 5) which allowed for some additional pitches, intended to address needs arising from new family formation on that site (see paragraph 4.51 of the Local Plan). However due to land constraints no additional sites were allocated; this matter will need to be considered further through the review of the Adur Local Plan.

As such Adur does not have a 5 year supply of gypsy and traveller sites.

Countryside and Local Green Gap.

The site is located in the countryside and Local Green gap (Policies 13 and 14 of the Adur Local Plan 2017 respectively). The site is located outside of the Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB) and detached from the village of Sompting, lying slightly south of Sompting village which is made up of broadly linear development along West Street

Policy 13 restricts development outside of the BUAB 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 (see point below regarding scale of development).

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 also states: in assessing applications for Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople sites, best practice guidance published by the Government and other bodies will be used.

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. (It may also be worth noting that the Draft National Planning Policy Framework 2025 which was published for consultation explicitly recognised that gypsy and traveller settlements as being an acceptable form of development in the countryside where certain criteria are met - although this document is not formal government policy at this point in time). As such there is no objection to the location within the countryside.

Matters such as landscaping, lighting, boundary treatments, and surfacing should take into account the countryside location.(Policy 15).

With regards to the local gap issue, with this particular scale and form of development ,there are some structures/ hardstandings proposed which may have some limited impact on the Local Green Gap.

Other Matters

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 - see above.
- 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. This is addressed below.

Regarding criteria (b) and (c) these matters are referred to in the Planning Statement which states that the applicant has close local family connections within the area.

Regarding criterion (d),locally specific policies, Policy 23 of the Adur Local Plan 2017 refers to Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Criterion a of the policy requires safe access to the highway network and room for turning and parking. I am not aware of any access issues. However there may be benefit in confirming whether there will be any additional vehicles such as touring caravans belonging to the residents which require parking onsite. Being mindful of perceptions of scale this could perhaps be addressed via condition if considered necessary.

The second criteria requires that sites are 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 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.

The third bullet point of Policy 23 states:

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

There are similarities with the following paragraph (26) from 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 . Local planning authorities should ensure that sites in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate, the nearest settled community, and avoid placing an undue pressure on the local infrastructure.

This site is indeed outside of an existing settlement and is not allocated in the development plan. The application is for 4 pitches. The scale of development proposed would not seem to be of a density or number to '*dominate the nearest settled community*', to quote the PPTS.

Similarly I am not aware of any concerns or issues relating to amenity or impact on infrastructure arising from this site at this proposed scale of development. However this could perhaps be confirmed through the planning process by the use of a condition to keep the number of pitches at 4, if considered appropriate to do so.

The policy also requires that the site is serviced, or capable of being served by mains water supply and electricity, drainage and sewerage connections, and should not be in an area of high flood risk. A range of other factors including contaminated land are listed which may have an adverse impact on amenity health or wellbeing; however I am not aware that any of these factors impact this site.

Conclusion.

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.

M Hayes

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