

Planning, Design & Access Statement



Site : Land at Viewpoint Place Rochester Road Gravesend Kent DA12 4TU

Client: [REDACTED]

Proposal: Continued use of the site as a permanent traveller site for occupation by the Harber Family as three pitches, with 1 mobile home unit per pitch; including the retention of buildings for use as utility rooms on Plots 1 & 3 and the relocation/rebuilding of the existing stable block.

Prepared by:



BARRON EDWARDS
PLANNING & ARCHITECTURE

21 January 2018

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been written on behalf of Ms. Linda Harber in support of the planning application for the continued use of the site as a permanent traveller site for the occupation by the Harber Family as three pitches, with 1 mobile home per pitch; including the retention of buildings for use as utility rooms on Plots 1 & 3 and the relocation/rebuilding of the existing stable block at Viewpoint Place Rochester Road Gravesend Kent DA12 4TU. .

1.2 In addition to the application form and certificates the following documents are submitted;

Application plans

- VP01 Rev.1 (Existing & Proposed Block Plans)
- Planning, Design and Access Statement

2.0 Site & its Planning History

2.1 The application site is a roughly rectangular plot of land, approximately 160m long by 50m wide, located on the southern side of Rochester Road directly opposite its junction with Castle Lane. The site was originally used as paddock for the grazing of horses and slopes upwards away from Rochester Road. A block of three stables with hay and tack store was erected in 1997 and is used in conjunction with the grazing land.

2.2 The site has a long and chequered planning history. It has been used since mid 2003 for the stationing of two large caravans for the residential occupation by [REDACTED]. The site is divided into two distinct parts – a residential area and paddock area. The caravans have historically been positioned in the southern part of the site and permission for 2 residential mobile homes, a brick-built dayroom, stable block and touring caravan. The northern part of the site being used as paddock and grazing for the family horses. The occupiers follow a traditional gypsy lifestyle and regularly travel to horse fairs to purchase and trade in horses.



2.3 The occupation of the site in 2003 was initially unauthorised and subject to enforcement action and several dismissed appeals which resulted in legal proceedings being taken in the High Court. However changes in traveller legislation outlined in ODPM Circular 01/06 resulted in an application being submitted in October 2009 for a temporary 3 year permission for the stationing of two mobile home units and a touring caravan for occupation by [REDACTED]

This being granted on 16 November 2009.(20090234)

2.4 In October 2012 an application was submitted for the continued use of the land for the stationing of the caravans and occupation by the Harber family on a permanent basis; this being a revision of Condition 3 attached to permission 20090234 which limited the use to 3yrs. Permission was granted by the LPA on 12 February 2013 (20120911) for occupation on a permanent subject to conditions including Conditions 2 & 3 which stated:

No more than two residential caravans, one touring caravan and associated development for a gypsy family, including a single storey utility building and stable building, shall be stationed on the site at any one time except with the written permission of the Local Planning Authority.

The use hereby permitted shall be for a single traveller family and the caravans occupied by [REDACTED] and members of her immediate family normally residing with her.





Site layout Circa 2012

2.5 Since that time the site has been occupied by [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The site has been regularly inspected in January & July as part of the bi-annual gypsy count and has been no significant changes in the occupation of the site has been noted other than some minor alterations in the site layout. These are shown on the existing block plan submitted with the application which show the two approved mobile homes with their own curtilages and own access points and has never been questioned by the LPA .

2.6 Linda and her family occupied one mobile home unit whilst [REDACTED] shared the other with their [REDACTED] occupying the touring caravan. However as the [REDACTED] it has become necessary to replace the touring caravan (shown in the Photograph below) with an additional mobile home unit. The touring caravan having replaced by Granby Champagne Static Caravan 11.5m (38'0") long by 3.6m (12'0") wide which is currently located against the eastern boundary in line with the stable block but outside the recognised residential part of the site. New post and rail



has been erected to the paddock with additional laurel & conifer planting that was intended to eventually screen the new unit from any views from the north.



Site circa 2015

2.7 We would emphasise that this is an approved traveller site which has always been occupied by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and there is no change in this, although [REDACTED] since married and have families of their own. As a consequence, whilst still the Harbor family, the Council now regard the occupation of the site by 3



households and because the residential area has been subdivided it now constitutes 3 traveller pitches as opposed to a single pitch with two mobile home units.

3.0 Proposal

3.1. This application seeks to regularise the use to 3 traveller pitches for occupation by the individual Harber households each with its own mobile home unit and utility rooms and other associated outbuildings. There is no intention for each pitch to have space for touring caravan even though the families still maintain their traveller lifestyle. These are now kept at an alternative site and only visit the site periodically when the families go on the road due to the limited space available

The individual pitches are currently occupied as follows;

3.2 Plot 1 – a Willerby Wellington mobile home unit (12 x 3.6m)

Occupied by [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] still follows a traditional gypsy lifestyle and is currently on the road travelling. She still travels to all the gypsy horse fairs and trades in horses and ponies which are kept in the stables or in the paddock. She first came to the site in October 2003 when she left the site in Denton due to anti-social activities and the need for her children to attend school. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. They are registered with a [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

3.3 Plot 2 – a Willerby Salisbury Mobile Home (12 x 3.6m)

Occupied by – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



The family still follow a traditional traveller lifestyle and the family regularly travel to the gypsy hose fairs where [REDACTED] in horses. When not travelling [REDACTED] is employed locally as a landscape gardener. He has lived on the site with his [REDACTED] since October 2003 when they are moved off the Denton site. He has always lived at the site and has never lived elsewhere other than when travelling. [REDACTED]

3.4 Proposed Plot 3 – this is a Granby Champagne Static caravan (11.5m x 3m)

This is the home base for [REDACTED] who spend most of their time away from the site travelling. The unit is permanently occupied by [REDACTED] who previously lived in [REDACTED] follows a traditional traveller lifestyle and only visits the site when not travelling. [REDACTED]

3.5 It is important to note that all the occupiers of the site are those who moved onto the site in October 2003 and whose occupation is authorised by the 2009 temporary permission (20090234) and permanent permission granted in February 2013 (20120911). The only difference is that the younger [REDACTED] have grown up and now have families of their own and consequently the Council deem this to be three households as opposed to a 'single traveller family'. The occupation of the site is still in accord with the conditions 2 & 3 attached to the original permission (20090234), which was carried forward in permission 20120911.

3.6 The family have occupied the site for almost 15yrs. and are well established on the site and have established links with the community. The siblings have grown up at the site and now have children of their own who have established themselves at local schools and have benefited from regular school attendance. They are all registered with a GP at the local health centre and the whole family has benefited from having a settled environment. We are satisfied that these factors all mitigate towards the consideration of the



applicant's case in that there is no material change in the occupation of the site.

3.7 It is acknowledged that the new caravan is unauthorised and located outside the residential part of the site. It is however low key and has no significant impact on the visual amenities or character of the site. However as part of this proposal this unit will be moved into the residential curtilage and will be based on the concrete base for the existing stables. The new unit will not be visible from outside the site and will be seen against the background of the approved mobile homes. The stables will be relocated/rebuilt within the lawful paddock area and will be 4 no 3.6 x 3.6m stables with shiplap boarded elevations. The site has already been planted with a mixed hedge of laurel and conifers, like the western boundary, and will be barely visible from the public highway (Rochester Road – A226) and will be totally screened once the new planting becomes established.

3.8 The applicant has accepted the Council's request that the site now be designated as three traveller pitches as three separate households even though it will still only be occupied by the Harber Family. We are satisfied that there would be no conflict with any council policy and would make a valuable contribution towards the council's need to provide additional traveller pitches in the borough. We have shown that there is no material change in the occupation of the site and consequently no reason to assume that there will be any change in vehicular movements to the site. Plot 1 has two parking spaces immediately in front of it. Plot 2 has space for two vehicles two spaces adjacent to the stable block and the new unit (Plot 3) Would have space for two vehicles on the existing hard-standing.

4.0 Policy Considerations

Gravesham Core Strategy:

4.1 The most relevant and up to date document is Policy CS17 of the Council's Local Plan Core Strategy (Sept 2014) which deals specifically with the provision of Traveller sites within the borough. This has three key elements:

- Safeguarding existing permanent traveller sites with permission.

- Investigating the extension of existing permanent site (albeit in the urban area)
- Supporting the provision of new sites.

4.2 This is an existing site that has benefited from a permanent permission for two mobile homes and a touring caravan since 2013 for the occupation by the Harber. There is no intention in this proposal to change this situation other than the permission is for a single traveller family. Again there is no change in this or the occupation of the site other than the Council now regards the original single Harber family as three separate households and that the site has been subdivided into three separate pitches. The pitches would be occupied by ethic travellers who have lived on the site since 2003 and still main the traditional traveller lifestyle.

4.3 There would be no expansion in the approved residential curtilage of the site which would be reconfigured to provide the addition static unit with the relocation/rebuilding of the existing stable block into the approved paddock area. The proposal would both safeguard the existing permanent site and whilst not extending the site would provide two additional pitches to meet the Councils shortfall in traveller sites.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) :

4.4 The Governments to the provision of travellers sites is consistent with its approach to protecting the Green Belt from inappropriate development and is set out in paragraphs 79 – 92. Inappropriate development, by definition, is harmful and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering planning applications substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. The key issue here is that it is an existing site with permanent permission and no enlargement of the residential part of the site is proposed. The only impact on the openness of the Green Belt would be the provision of a block of 4 stables on paddock land that would not be contrary to Green Belt policy.



National Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS):

4.5 The PPTS applies to those Gypsies and Travellers who meet the definition as set out in Annex 1 of the policy statement. It has always been accepted that the main applicant Linda Ann Harber (Plot1) meet the definition and this was considered in depth when the permanent permission of the site was granted. Indeed Linda is currently travelling and not on the site. Steven Harber (Plot 2) regularly travels and trades in horses as part of his main employment. Charlotte (Plot 3) follows the traditional gypsy lifestyle and currently is travelling and not on the site. We are therefore satisfied that all the applicants meet the definition as revised.

4.6 In terms of planning for Traveller sites, paragraphs 4 and 9 requires planning authorities to assess local need and plan over a reasonable timescale for an appropriate supply of suitable sites, including private sites, to meet that need. The supply should comprise specific, deliverable site for the first five years and developable sites or broad locations for later years. Whilst it is accepted that Paragraphs 23 & 24 restrict the development of sites in the open countryside or onto previously developed land. This is a permanent site and would not require the taking of any additional Green Belt land and must be considered to be 'previously developed'. It is our understanding that the Council does not have sufficient traveller sites to meet its defined need and the proposal provides an opportunity to provide addition pitches **without** being inappropriate development. We are therefore satisfied that there would be no conflict with the PPTS.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 We have taken on board all the relevant Council policies and requirements to provide additional traveller pitches and the applicants have accepted that, whilst there has been no material change in the occupation of the site which remains as a single gypsy family as the original approval in 2009, it now comprises three households and would be occupied as three separate gypsy pitches. The site has been subject of regular council inspections in January & July annually and we are not aware that the Council, prior to the change of the touring caravan to a static unit, had considered the occupation of the site as

any more than a single family occupation. The application seeks to regularise the additional static caravan within the residential part of the site and the occupation as 3 pitches, to relocate/rebuild the existing stables within the paddock area and retain the buildings erected without the benefit of planning permission as utility rooms for the respective plots (Plots 1 & 3)

James Barron BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

