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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2025

by **Jonathan Price BA(Hons) DipTP DMS MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 June 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Z1510/W/25/3360303**

**Barrells Meadow, Kirby Hall Road, Castle Hedingham, Essex CO9 3EA**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr D Barrell against the decision of Braintree District Council.
  - The application Ref is 24/02346/FUL.
  - The development proposed is described as 'continued use of land and the stationing of static caravan for occupation by site manager (resubmission)'.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for use of land for the stationing of a static caravan for occupation by the site manager at Barrells Meadow, Kirby Hall Road, Castle Hedingham, Essex CO9 3EA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/02346/FUL, subject to the following conditions:
  - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: drawing No. 2856/01 Rev B: 12.07.2024 block plan and location plan; proposed elevations; floor plan.
  - 2) The occupation of the static caravan hereby permitted shall be limited to a person solely or mainly employed or last employed at Barrells Meadow caravan site, or a widow or widower or surviving civil partner of such a person, and to any resident dependants.

### Main Issues

2. Whether the proposal is suitable with regard to a sustainable business need, accessibility to services and facilities, the character and appearance of the area and the living conditions provided for occupiers.

### Reasons

#### *Sustainable business need*

3. The site is within countryside, a short distance along a lane leading from Castle Hedingham village. The static caravan is positioned adjacent to a workshop close to the road and is occupied by the appellant, who manages the associated touring caravan site to the rear. This follows his father's retirement, who lives at the separately owned Four Winds next-door.
4. The development plan is the Braintree District Local Plan 2013-2033 (DLP), which is generally restrictive of such housing, in locations beyond identified settlement boundaries and defined as countryside for policy purposes. However, DLP Policy

LPP38 provides criteria for where a rural worker's dwelling in the countryside might be permitted. This policy ordinarily applies to those involved in agriculture or forestry but can relate to other rural-based enterprises, such as this caravan site. The supporting text refers to functional and financial tests that apply. It also relates to what is now paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This refers to the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work as one circumstance supporting an isolated home in the countryside. This proposal is in reasonably close proximity to a village and not, in my judgement, in such an isolated location.

5. Given the business has operated for more than ten years and been profitable for the last two, I am satisfied the financial test is met. I have no reason to dispute an increasing demand for touring caravan pitches in this location, linked particularly to an all-year-round calendar of events at the nearby attraction of Hedingham Castle. Therefore, there is a reasonable basis to consider this business will grow and become more profitable in the future.
6. In terms of the functional test, the site operates throughout the year and on each day of the week, with visitors potentially arriving at any time. Therefore, it seems reasonable for a site manager to reside on the campsite in order to meet and greet guests, attend to issues occurring during individual stays and provide security and supervision. As the Council suggests, the site manager could fulfil this role by living in existing accommodation nearby. However, this could result in a significant number of individual journeys at varying times to and from the site, which would not be a particularly efficient or sustainable way to manage this business. Given the proposal would not lead to an isolated dwelling in the countryside, there is a balanced case to provide manager's accommodation on-site, even if not essential.
7. As there is no alternative dwelling or building suitable for a residential conversion, the static caravan meets a clearly established need for accommodation. There is no conflict with any other of the criteria in DLP Policy LPP38 and so the proposal satisfies its requirements for permitting a rural worker's dwelling in the countryside and meets a sustainable business need.

#### *Accessibility to services and facilities*

8. Because the stationing of a static caravan is supported under DLP Policy LPP38 as an exception to a general restraint on housing development in the countryside, the issue of the relatively poorer accessibility to regularly required services and facilities is no longer a determinative matter in this case. This proposal does not conflict with the broader spatial strategy in DLP Policy SP 3 for existing settlements to be the principal focus for additional growth in North Essex. This does not preclude development in the countryside and, furthermore, supports the diversification of the rural economy. The support of Policy LPP38 means the proposal is an appropriate use within the countryside, acceptable outside development boundaries and in compliance with Policy LPP1.
9. Policy SP7 of the DLP establishes the place shaping principles for all new development, which includes creating well-connected places that prioritise the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport services above use of the private car. This policy is not particularly applicable to a development management decision over such a small scale proposal. For a countryside location, the appeal site is reasonably well-connected to the services and facilities in Castle Hedingham

village, which are a relatively short distance away. Policy SP7 seeks to facilitate sustainable modes of transport through new developments. Again, this policy does not appear applicable to use of land for a single caravan. This needs to be located here, where accessibility to services is as it stands and not a factor weighing materially against this proposal.

### *Character and appearance*

10. The static caravan is glimpsed above the entrance gates and fencing along a frontage otherwise containing thick boundary hedging. It is not a prominent feature within the street scene, which at this point is hardly the sensitive countryside location the Council suggests. Sited adjacent to the timber workshop building and to be similarly clad, the local distinctiveness of its countryside setting would be preserved. Given the lack of any material harm to the character and appearance of this area, the proposal complies with the applicable parts of DLP policies SP7, LPP35 and LPP52.

### *Living conditions*

11. The Council has previously refused planning permission for a four-bedroom dwelling on this site<sup>1</sup>. The residential caravan is an alternative means to meet the need for site manager accommodation. Internally, the caravan does not meet the Government's nationally described space standards, but these are arguably not aimed at caravans, for which other standards apply. Unlike a conventional dwelling it would not have a defined garden of the size recommended in the Essex Design Guide 2005. However, the accommodation is ancillary to the operation and management of the touring caravan site, within which it is sited. It is necessary to meet a sustainable business need, which is a factor that needs to be balanced against the deficiencies in providing the same living conditions expected of a conventional dwelling. In these circumstances, the proposal provides acceptable living conditions for its occupiers, and any conflict with DLP policies LPP35 and LPP52 does not give rise to any material degree of harm.

### **Conditions and conclusion**

12. The proposal fulfils a sustainable business need for a caravan site operation which helps support the rural economy. I have identified no further material harm for any other reason and consider the proposal to be in accordance with the development plan as a whole. Other than a condition establishing the approved plans, another is necessary limiting occupation of the caravan to the site manager in order to reflect the exceptional circumstances for permission in the countryside. Subject to these two conditions, I conclude that the appeal succeeds.

*Jonathan Price*

INSPECTOR

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<sup>1</sup> 21/02343/FUL - demolition of garage and outhouse and the construction of a 4 bedrooomed dwelling house