



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 November 2011

by Martin Joyce DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 7 December 2011

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/X/11/2159970

4 Waterworks Cottage, Redricks Lane, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire
CM21 ORL

The appeal is made under Section 195 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 against a refusal to grant a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development.

The appeal is made by [REDACTED] against the decision of the East Hertfordshire District Council.

The application, Ref: 3/11/0954/CL, dated 27 May 2011, was refused by notice dated 18 July 2011.

The application was made under Section 192(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.

The use for which a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development is sought is the use of part of the established residential curtilage on which to station a mobile home for purposes incidental to the existing dwelling.

Summary of Decision: The appeal is allowed and a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development is issued, in the terms set out below in the Formal Decision.

Main Issue

1. The main issue in this appeal is whether the proposal would constitute operational development or a material change of use of the land.

Reasoning and Appraisal

2. The appellant wishes to site a "Homelodge" mobile home within the residential curtilage of her house, as ancillary accommodation for her elderly parents. The unit would measure 8.45m in length, 3.85m in width and 2.2m/3.2m in height, to the eaves/ridge. It would be delivered to the site on a lorry and would be capable of removal in the same way. It would not be permanently fixed to the ground, but would be connected to services.
3. The Council accept that the dimensions of the structure could fall within those set out for a twin unit caravan in the statutory definition given in the Caravan Sites Act 1968 as amended¹ (CSA), but they consider that its size, permanence and physical attachment would be such that the siting of the unit would be operational development as defined in Section 55 of the Act, rather than a use of the land. In particular, they contend that the determining factor is whether or not the structure is of a design or size that would make it readily mobile around the site. In this context, its size, degree of permanence and impact on

¹ Sub section 13(2) as amended by The Caravan Sites Act 1968 and Social Landlords (Permissible Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2006 (Definition of Caravan) (Amendment) (England) Order 2006 (SI 2006/2374).

the character of the site lead to the conclusion that operational development would occur. Furthermore, the Council cite two items of case law, and refer to previous appeal decisions, to support their contentions in this respect.

4. In consideration of the above matters, I note at the outset that the Council do not dispute that the mobile home would be used for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such, notwithstanding that occupiers of the mobile home would have facilities that would enable a degree of independent living. The appellant's claim that it would be akin to a "granny annexe" is not therefore at issue, only the question of whether the proposal would be operational development or, as is normally the case, a use of the land.
5. Neither of the cases that the Council rely on relates to the siting of mobile homes or caravans, rather they concern other structures such as a wheeled coal hopper² and a tall mobile tower³. Similarly, the three appeal decisions referred to by them concern the siting of portacabins on land and whether that is operational development or a use of land. I can, therefore, give little weight to these cases and decisions in my determination of this appeal as they do not concern the siting of caravans or mobile homes and are, thus, materially different development. Additionally, I consider that the Council are misguided in their statement that the determining issue is whether the mobile home would be readily moveable around the site. That is not the correct test; rather the test is whether the unit, once fully assembled, is capable, as a whole, of being towed or transported by a single vehicle⁴. In this case, the appellant's statement that this would be the case has not been contradicted. A lack of intention to move the unit around the site is not relevant to the main issue, and would apply to most "static" caravans on any lawful caravan site.
6. The size of the proposed mobile home falls well within the dimensions set out for twin units in the CSA as amended, notwithstanding that it is not specified as a "twin unit", but it appears that the Council consider that its positioning would create a degree of permanence and impact on the character of the site. Impact on character is also of no relevance in a case where the lawfulness of a use is at issue, but the question of permanence is a matter of fact and degree that relates to physical attachment to the ground.
7. In this case, the mobile home would be placed on padstones and is likely to be attached to services such as water, drainage and electricity, although the precise services are not specified in the application. However, attachment to services is not the same as physical attachment to the land, as they can easily be disconnected in the event that the caravan needs to be moved. Additionally, the placing of the mobile home on padstones, or another sound and firm surface, is not, in itself, a building operation as suggested by the Council, notwithstanding that a degree of skill is required in such placement. I know of no support in legislation or case law for such a proposition and the provision of a hard surface within the residential curtilage would, subject to certain limitations, be permitted development under Class F of Part 1 of Schedule 2 to The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 as amended. The Council are, therefore, incorrect in this instance in their interpretation of the permanence of the mobile home as an indication of operational development rather than a use of the land.

² Cheshire CC v Woodward [1962] 2 QB 126

³ Barvis Ltd v Secretary of State for the Environment [1971] 22 P&CR 710

⁴ Carter v Secretary of State [1995] JPL 311

8. I conclude that the proposed development would not constitute operational development, rather it would involve a use of land. As that use would fall within the same use as the remainder of the planning unit, it would not involve a material change of use that requires planning permission.

Other Matters

9. All other matters raised in the written representations have been taken into account, but they do not outweigh the conclusions reached on the main issue of this appeal.

Conclusions

10. For the reasons given above I conclude, on the evidence now available, that the Council's refusal to grant a Certificate of Lawful use or development in respect of the use of part of the established residential curtilage for the stationing of a mobile home for purposes incidental to the existing dwelling was not well-founded and that the appeal should succeed. I will exercise the powers transferred to me under Section 195(2) of the 1990 Act as amended.

FORMAL DECISION

11. The appeal is allowed and attached to this decision is a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development describing the proposed use which is considered to be lawful.

Martin Joyce

INSPECTOR



Lawful Development Certificate

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990: SECTION 192
(as amended by Section 10 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991)

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND)
ORDER 2010: ARTICLE 35

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED that on 27 May 2011 the use described in the First Schedule hereto in respect of the land specified in the Second Schedule hereto and edged in red on the plan attached to this Certificate, would have been lawful within the meaning of Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), for the following reason:

The proposed use would be incidental to the residential use of the planning unit and would not constitute operational development for which a grant of planning permission would be required.

Signed

Martin Joyce

Inspector

Date: 07.12.2011

Reference: APP/J1915/X/11/2159970

First Schedule

The use of part of the established residential curtilage on which to station a mobile home for purposes incidental to the existing dwelling.

Second Schedule

Land at 4 Waterworks Cottage, Redricks Lane, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire
CM21 ORL

NOTES

This certificate is issued solely for the purpose of Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

It certifies that the use described in the First Schedule taking place on the land specified in the Second Schedule would have been lawful, on the certified date and, thus, was not liable to enforcement action, under Section 172 of the 1990 Act, on that date.

This Certificate applies only to the extent of the use described in the First Schedule and to the land specified in the Second Schedule and identified on the attached plan. Any use which is materially different from that described, or which relates to any other land, may result in a breach of planning control which is liable to enforcement action by the Local Planning Authority.

The effect of the Certificate is subject to the provisions in Section 192(4) of the 1990 Act, as amended, which state that the lawfulness of a specified use or operation is only conclusively presumed where there has been no material change, before the use is instituted or the operations begun, in any of the matters which were relevant to the decision about lawfulness.



Plan

This is the plan referred to in the Lawful Development Certificate dated: 07.12.2011

by Martin Joyce DipTP MRTPI

Land at: 4 Waterworks Cottage, Redricks Lane, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire
CM21 0RL

Reference: APP/J1915/X/11/2159970

Scale: Not to scale

