

# LEWES DISTRICT TOURING CARAVAN & CAMPING STUDY

## **Final Report**

Prepared for:  
Lewes District Council  
Tourism South East

**January 2011**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Purpose of the Study

- The Lewes District Touring Caravan & Camping Study was commissioned by Lewes District Council and Tourism South East to provide an objective assessment of the market potential for the future development of provision for touring caravanning and camping in Lewes District, in terms of the expansion and development of existing sites and potential new provision, including the development of luxury camping offers.
  
- It is envisaged that the study findings will be used to:
  - Inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework for the District.
  - Enable the District Council to respond more effectively to development enquiries for touring caravan and camping provision.
  - Assist the District Council's Development Control Team in assessing planning applications for touring caravan and camping development projects.
  - Inform other actions needed by the District Council and its partners to support the development of the touring caravan and camping sector in the District.
  
- It is recognised that from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, the South Downs National Park Authority will become the planning authority for their area, which includes a significant part of Lewes District<sup>1</sup>. Hence, as this study applies to the whole of Lewes District, it will be able to be utilised for the above purposes by both the District Council and the National Park Authority.

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<sup>1</sup> A number of the planning functions of the National Park Authority will be delegated back to the constituent local authorities within the National Park.

## Sector Development Potential

- The study findings provide clear evidence of market potential for the following:
  - Modest expansion of existing touring caravan and camping sites in the District.
  - The development and upgrading of existing touring caravan and camping sites in terms of:
    - putting in hard standings to attract touring caravans and motor homes during shoulder season months and into the winter;
    - electric hook up points;
    - toilet and shower blocks;
    - laundry facilities;
    - children's play areas.
  - The extension of the operating season of existing sites, in some cases to year-round operation.
  - The development of further luxury camping units on existing sites and new luxury camping operations.
  - The development of new campsites, camping barns and possibly camping pods along the South Downs Way National Trail.
  - The development of new small-scale touring caravan and camping sites elsewhere in the District.
  - Possible scope for the development of a large new club site for the Camping and Caravanning Club, subject to further discussions with the Club, most probably linked to an existing or new visitor attraction, leisure or sports facility. Such a site may require some form of permanent accommodation for the site manager. It is likely that such a proposal would need to be considered in a sub-regional context (i.e. beyond just Lewes District. Finding an appropriate site that is acceptable in planning terms could be difficult.
  
- The research shows strong demand for touring caravanning and camping in the District at weekends and during the peak summer months, and clear evidence of shortages of provision for caravanning and camping for Bank Holiday and summer weekends. The study also identifies frustrated demand for camping provision along the stretch of the South Downs Way that runs through the District, together with strong demand for luxury camping and clear market potential for more provision of such accommodation in the District.

- It must however also be recognised that:
  - Most existing sites have spare capacity during the week and for most weekends outside the peak summer months and Bank Holidays;
  - There is a clear need to protect the landscape of the District, particularly in the South Downs National Park.
  
- These factors suggest that the priorities for the District should be in terms of:
  - Small-scale, incremental expansion of existing touring caravan and camping sites;
  - The controlled development of largely small-scale new sites that are well screened and landscaped.
  
- A significant and rapid expansion of provision could undermine the viability of existing sites. Encouraging large-scale touring caravan and camping sites would be generally inappropriate given the importance of protecting the District's landscape.

### **LDF Policy Implications**

- The existing saved Local Plan policies that cover touring caravan and camping sites provide positive and appropriate support for the future development of the sector in line with the study's conclusions regarding the market potential and priorities for its development and could usefully be rolled forward into the LDF. They could be further strengthened with specific policy references to the expansion and improvement of existing touring caravan and camping sites and the development of luxury camping accommodation. There is no planning rationale for imposing seasonal or occupancy conditions on touring caravan and camping sites.
  
- In moving forward with the Local Development Framework the key issue will be whether there is a need for specific planning policies on touring caravan and camping sites (in terms of rolling forward into the LDF the existing saved Local Plan policies that cover these forms of visitor accommodation, as suggested above), or whether the guidance in the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism is adequate and does not therefore need to be repeated in the LDF. This will depend on how proactively and explicitly the District Council and/or the National Park Authority wish to encourage, guide and control the future development of provision for touring caravanning and camping in the District/area of the National Park within

the District. It will also depend on the forthcoming changes to the planning system, which will include the consolidation of existing national planning policy statements, circulars and guidance documents. This could result in the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism being withdrawn.

### **Other Public Sector Intervention**

- There could be merit in the District Council using the study findings to proactively encourage the expansion and development of existing touring caravan and camping sites and the development of new sites and luxury camping offers. This could be achieved by:
  - Circulating the study report, or a version of it, to the operators of existing touring caravan and camping sites and those that could be interested in developing new sites;
  - PR activity to secure local press and media coverage of the study findings;
  - Caravanning and camping development seminars/ workshops to disseminate the findings to people that might be interested in developing touring caravan and camping sites in the District.
- These activities could be progressed in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority and/or the South Downs Way National Trail Team.
- There may be merit in increasing the information on touring caravanning and camping in the Enjoy Sussex guide and website in the future as a means of more proactively supporting the sector. This would require activity to encourage touring caravan and camping sites in the District to take part in the national VisitBritain or AA quality grading schemes as the Enjoy Sussex partners operate an assessed only policy for entry into the guide and website. None of the sites in Lewes District are currently accredited under these schemes.
- The District Council will need to continue to monitor how the touring caravanning and camping sector is developing and performing in the District to establish ongoing priorities for its further development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Study Objectives

- The Lewes District Touring Caravan & Camping Study was commissioned by Lewes District Council and Tourism South East to provide an objective assessment of the market potential for the future development of provision for touring caravanning and camping in Lewes District, in terms of the expansion and development of existing sites and potential new provision, including the development of luxury camping offers.

### 1.2 Uses of the Study

- It is envisaged that the study findings will be used to:
  - Provide evidence of the market potential for further provision for touring caravanning and camping in Lewes District to inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework for the District and South Downs National Park.
  - Enable the District Council to respond more effectively to development enquiries for touring caravan and camping provision.
  - Assist the District Council's Development Control Team in assessing planning applications for touring caravan and camping development projects.
  - Inform other actions needed by the District Council and its partners to support the development of the touring caravan and camping sector in the District.
- It is recognised that from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, the South Downs National Park Authority will become the planning authority for their area, which includes a significant part of Lewes District<sup>1</sup>. Hence, as this study applies to the whole of Lewes District, it will be able to be utilised for the above purposes by both the District Council and the National Park Authority.

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<sup>1</sup> A number of the planning functions of the National Park Authority will be delegated back to the constituent local authorities within the National Park.



### 1.3 Study Methodology

- The study has involved the following modules of research and consultation:
  - An inception meeting with the District Council's Tourism & Economic Development and Planning Policy Managers.
  - An audit of current provision for touring caravan & camping in and around Lewes District, identifying any recent changes in the last 3 years in terms of new sites, the expansion and development of existing sites and any site closures. The audit has been based on information provided by Lewes District Council supplemented by our own Internet searches and review of the Caravan Club and Camping and Caravanning Club site directories. Where discrepancies have been identified sites have been contacted by telephone to check information.
  - An assessment of recent proposals for new touring caravan and camping sites and investment in existing sites through a review of relevant planning applications and discussions with the owners of existing sites.
  - A telephone survey of the operators of existing touring caravan and camping sites in and immediately surrounding Lewes District to gather information on occupancy levels and patterns, key markets, market trends, levels of denied business and development plans. The touring caravan and camping sites interviewed are listed at Appendix 1.
  - A review of relevant strategy and policy documents and research reports including:
    - Lewes District Local Plan;
    - Lewes District LDF Core Strategy Issues and Emerging Options Topic Papers;
    - The Economic Impact of Tourism in Lewes District, 2009;
    - South Downs Management Plan.

- A review of available published reports and articles on market and development trends and future prospects in the UK touring caravan and camping sector, sourced from VisitEngland, the Caravan Club, the Camping and Caravanning Club, the National Caravan Council and Leisure Management. A list of the reports and articles that we reviewed is provided at Appendix 2.
  
- Telephone consultations with:
  - The manager of the Lewes and Seaford Tourist Information Centres;
  - The South Downs Way National Trail Officer;
  - South Downs National Park Authority.
  
- Discussions with the managers responsible for new site development at the Caravan Club, Camping and Caravanning Club and Feather Down Farm Days to establish their interest in developing new sites in Lewes District

## **1.4 Structure of the Report**

- The report that follows sets out the following:
  - The findings of our audit of the current provision for touring caravanning and camping in Lewes District and immediate surrounding area, recent changes and planned development;
  - Our assessment of the current demand for touring caravanning and camping in the District and surrounding area;
  - Our assessment of the future market and development prospects for touring caravanning and camping in the District;
  - Our understanding of the planning policy context for touring caravanning and camping in the District;
  - Our conclusions regarding the opportunities for the development of the touring caravan and camping sector in Lewes District;
  - Our recommendations regarding the role that Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority can play to support the development of the sector in terms of planning policy formulation and other possible intervention and support

## 2. CURRENT & PROPOSED TOURING CARAVANNING & CAMPING SUPPLY IN LEWES DISTRICT

### 2.1. Current Supply

- Our research has identified 14 touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District with a total of 302 pitches, and 21 sites in the surrounding area (within approximately 5 miles of the District boundary), with a total of 604 pitches. The total provision for touring caravanning and camping within and immediately surrounding Lewes District is thus 35 sites and 906 pitches. This supply is summarised in the table below. Details of the sites are provided in the tables overleaf. A map showing the location of each caravan and camping site in Lewes District is included at Appendix 3.

#### LEWES DISTRICT & SURROUNDING AREA TOURING CARAVANNING & CAMPING SUPPLY – JANUARY 2011

Location	Caravan Sites		Caravan & Camping Sites		Camping Sites		Certificated Sites <sup>1</sup>		Total	
	Sites	Pitches	Sites	Pitches	Sites	Pitches	Sites	Pitches	Sites	Pitches
<b>Lewes District</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>116<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>7</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>Surrounding Area<sup>3</sup></b>										
Wealden District	1	78	4	159	5	148 <sup>4</sup>	8	40	18 <sup>5</sup>	425
Mid Sussex District							2	10	2	10
Brighton & Hove			1	169					1	169
<b>Total Surrounding Area</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>604</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>906</b>

Notes:

- 5 van/ pitch sites certificated by the Caravan Club or Camping & Caravanning Club for the exclusive use of their members. Such sites do not need planning permission or a site license from the local authority.
- Includes 12 luxury camping units (bell tents and unusual caravans) on 2 sites.
- Within approx 5 miles of the District boundary.
- Includes 7 luxury camping units (yurts) on 2 sites.
- There are only 14 caravan and camping operations in Wealden District. Three of them have separate certificated caravan sites and one has a separate tents only area. The total number of sites in Wealden District is thus shown as 18.

**LEWES DISTRICT & SURROUNDING AREA -TOURING CARAVAN & CAMPING SITES – JANUARY 2011**

Site	Location	On South Downs Way <sup>1</sup>	Grade	Opening Period	Touring Caravan Only Pitches	Touring/ Tent Pitches	Tent Only Pitches	Pitches with Hard Standings	Pitches with Electric Hook Up	Toilet/ Showers/ Laundry	Yurts/Tipis etc. for Hire	Static Caravans for Hire
<b>Lewes District</b>												
Blackberry Wood	Streat	✓	n/a	All Year			20 <sup>2</sup>			T/S	3 <sup>6</sup>	
Buckle Holiday Park	Seaford		n/a	All Year <sup>3</sup>		150 <sup>4</sup>		✓	✓	T/S/L		
Court House Farm	Beddingham	✓	n/a	n/a			25					
Hackmans Farm	Plumpton	✓	n/a	Feb-Oct			10			T		
Safari Britain <sup>5</sup>	Firle	✓	n/a	May-Sept						T/S	9 <sup>7</sup>	
Spring Barn Farm	Lewes	✓	n/a	Mar –Sept			32			T		
Stoneywish Nature Reserve	Ditchling	✓	n/a	Mar-Oct			20 <sup>8</sup>			T		
Audiburn Stables	Kingston	✓	CL <sup>9</sup> site (CC) <sup>10</sup>	All Year	5							
Bryn Clai	Ringmer		CL site (CCC) <sup>11</sup>	All Year		5						
Gorse Lodge	Peacehaven		CL site(CC)	All Year	5							
Lower Tulley Wells Farm	Cooksbridge		CL site (CC)	Apr-Oct	5							
Newholme	Kingston	✓	CL site(CC)	Apr-Sept	5							
South Heighton Farm	South Heighton, Newhaven	✓	CL site(CC)	All Year	5							
Townings Farm	North Chailey		CL site(CC)	All Year	5							

Notes:

1. Within approx 1 km
2. Blackberry Wood also has a field available for up to 20 tents for use during August
3. March-October for tents
4. Source: ukcampsite.co.uk
5. Group bookings only
6. Holiday bus, gypsy caravan and retro caravan
7. Canvas bell tents
8. Stoneywish Nature Reserve can also accommodate large camps on an ad hoc basis
9. CL = Certificated Location – sites that are certificated by either the Caravan Club or the Camping & Caravanning Club for up to 5 pitches for touring caravans or tents
10. CC = Caravan Club
11. CCC = Camping & Caravanning Club

Lewes District Touring Caravan & Camping Study

Site	Location	On South Downs Way	Grade	Opening Period	Touring Caravan Only Pitches	Touring/ Tent Pitches	Tent Only Pitches	Pitches with Hard Standings	Pitches with Electric Hook Up	Toilets/ Showers/ Laundry	Yurts/Tipis etc. for Hire	Static Caravans for Hire
<b>Surrounding Areas<sup>12</sup></b>												
<b>Wealden District</b>												
Alfriston Camping Park	Alfriston	✓	n/a	All Year			40			T/S		
Broomfield Farm Caravan Club Site	East Hoathly		CC Members only site	All Year	78			34				
Foxholes Campsite & Camping Barn	Seven Sisters C P	✓	n/a	Apr-Oct			20			T	Camping barn sleeping 35	
Heaven Farm	Furners Green		CL site (CC) + licensed site	All Year <sup>13</sup>	5	22		Some	12	T/S		
Hidden Spring Vineyard	Horam		Licensed site + CL site (CC)	Mar-Oct	5	25	30		10	T/S	3 <sup>14</sup>	
Honeys Green Caravan Park	Halland		3 star	Apr-Oct		22		3	22	T/S/L		5
Horam Manor Touring Park	Horam		4 star	Mar-Oct		90			54	T/S/L		
Latchetts Caravan and Camp Site	Chiddingly		CL site (CCC)+ licensed site for tents	All Year		5	10	5	5			
Wowo Campsite	Sheffield Park		n/a	All Year			48 <sup>15</sup>			T/S/L	4 <sup>16</sup>	
Bentley Wildfowl & Motor Museum	Halland		CL site(CCC)	Apr –Oct		5						
Bradford's Farm (rear Laughing Fish pub)	Isfield		CL site(CC)	All Year	5							
Cobbs	Arlington		CL site(CC)	Apr-Oct	5							
Flitteridge Farm	Splaynes Green		CL site(CC)	All Year	5							
Pleasant Rise Farm	Alfriston	✓	CL site (CC)	All Year	5							

Notes:

12. Within approx 5 miles of the District boundary
13. Tents – May-Oct
14. Two fully-equipped yurts and a geodesic dome
15. Includes 8 premium woodland camping pitches open all year
16. 4 fully-equipped yurts

Lewes District Touring Caravan & Camping Study

Site	Location	On South Downs Way	Grade	Opening Period	Touring Caravan Only Pitches	Touring/Tent Pitches	Tent Only Pitches	Pitches with Hard Standings	Pitches with Electric Hook Up	Toilets/ Showers/ Laundry	Yurts/Tipis etc. for Hire	Static Caravans for Hire
<b>Mid Sussex District</b>												
Burstye Farm	Lindfield		CL site (CC)	Easter-Oct	5							
Bridge Farm House	Burgess Hill		CL site (CC)	All Year	5							
<b>Brighton &amp; Hove</b>												
Sheepcote Valley Caravan Club Site	East Brighton Park		5 star	All Year		169				T/S/L		

- The current provision for touring caravanning and camping in Lewes District comprises:
  - One large privately operated touring caravan and camping site at Seaford (Buckle Holiday Park). According to the ukcampsite website this site has 150 pitches. Some pitches have electric hook up points. There is a separate area for tents. The site has two toilet and shower blocks.
  - 5 relatively small camp sites, mostly with basic facilities – toilets and water in the majority of cases. One site has showers. One site (Blackberry Wood) has a gypsy caravan, retro caravan and converted bus for hire.
  - One luxury camping site for group bookings (Safari Britain at Firle), with 9 ready-erected canvas bell tents.
  - 7 certificated sites – 6 Caravan Club sites and one Camping and Caravanning Club site.
  
- There are no Caravan Club or Camping and Caravanning Club club sites in Lewes District.
  
- None of the caravan and camping sites in the District are graded under the VisitBritain or AA grading schemes.
  
- Two sites (Blackberry Wood and Safari Britain) are included in the Cool Camping guide/website. Blackberry Wood offers woodland camping in individual clearings with campfires. Safari Britain offers a camp of fully-equipped canvas bell tents for group bookings.
  
- Seven sites are open all year. Seven operate on a seasonal basis, most typically from the beginning of March or April to the end of September or October.
  
- Nine sites are relatively close to the South Downs Way, typically around 1km away. Only one site (Hackmans Farm at Plumpton) is under a kilometre from the Trail.

- Provision for touring caravanning and camping in the areas immediately surrounding Lewes District is concentrated in those parts of Wealden District immediately to the east of the Lewes District boundary. Provision in this location comprises:
  - One large Caravan Club members only club site (Broomfield Farm at East Hoathly), with limited facilities;
  - One large privately operated caravan and camping sites (Horam Manor Touring Park), with toilet, shower and laundry facilities. More than half of its pitches have electric hook up points;
  - 3 smaller privately operated caravan and camping sites, with toilet and shower facilities. One also has laundry facilities and two sites have pitches with electric hook points;
  - 5 camp sites (one linked to a caravan and camping site and Caravan Club certificated site);
  - 8 certificated sites – 6 Caravan Club sites and 2 Camping and Caravanning Club sites;
  - One camping barn sleeping up to 35 people, linked to the Foxholes Campsite at the Seven Sisters Country Park.
  
- Two of the sites in Wealden (Hidden Spring Vineyard and Wowo Campsite) offer fully-equipped yurts for hire.
  
- Three of the sites in Wealden (Heaven Farm, Wowo and Foxholes) are included in the Cool Camping guide/website. The Wowo Campsite is a family-orientated site with pitches spread out across three fields, together with 8 premium woodland camping pitches available all year and 4 fully-equipped yurts. The site allows campfires.
  
- Two of the sites in Wealden are graded under the VisitBritain grading scheme – Honeys Green Caravan Park (3 stars) and Horam Manor Touring Park (4 stars).
  
- Eight of the sites in Wealden are open all year. The other sites operate on a seasonal basis.
  
- There are only two Caravan Club certificated sites in the neighbouring parts of Mid Sussex District.
  
- The Caravan Club has a large 5 star club site to the east of Brighton (Sheepcote Valley), with 169 pitches. The site is open to non-members. It has a full range of facilities.



- The Camping and Caravanning Club has no club sites in Lewes District or the immediate surrounding area. The closest Camping and Caravanning Club club site is at Crowborough. It has 90 pitches and is open to non-members.

## **2.2. Changes in Supply**

### **2.2.1. New Touring Caravan & Camping Sites**

- Our research has identified the following touring and caravan site openings in Lewes District and the surrounding area over the last 6 years:

#### **Lewes District**

- Blackberry Wood at Streat opened in 2004. The site previously traded as the Sandown Caravan Park.
- Hackmans Farm secured planning permission for its campsite in 2005. The site had previously operated informally without planning approval. The planning permission restricted the area that can be used for camping, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of tents that the site can take.
- The Spring Barn Farm camping site at Lewes opened in 2007.
- Safari Britain at Firlie opened in 2007.
- Stoneywish Nature Reserve at Ditchling started offering camping in 2009 and has started to more actively promote its campsite through its website in 2011.

#### **Surrounding Area**

- The Wowo Campsite at Sheffield Park opened in 2007.
- Hidden Spring Vineyard at Horam opened its caravan and camping site in 2007.
- Latchetts Caravan and Camp Site at Chiddingly opened in 2010

### **2.2.2. Investment in Existing Sites**

- Our research has identified the following recent investment in existing touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area:

#### **Lewes District**

- Spring Barn Farm opened a new toilet block in 2010.

#### **Surrounding Area**

- Honeys Green Caravan Park at Halland undertook a major upgrading programme in 2010 that included resurfacing its car park, drives and paths, installing new lighting, refurbishment of its toilet and shower block, improved drainage and replacement of electric hook up points.
- Hidden Spring Vineyard at Horam expanded its caravan and camping site in 2008 and introduced three fully-equipped yurts for hire in 2009.

### **2.2.3. Site Closures**

- Our research identified the following recent closures of touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area:

#### **Lewes District**

- The Half Moon Inn pub at Plumpton has previously operated a campsite for 20 tents without planning permission. The site is listed on a number of caravan and camping site websites. A planning application for a certificate of lawful use for a camping field with 10 pitches and the hiring of two static caravans for holiday lets was refused by Lewes District Council in February 2009 on the grounds that the applicant had not provided sufficient evidence that the site had been used continuously for camping for a 10-year period. The new tenants of the pub are understood to be interested in applying for planning permission for a campsite in 2011.
- The Plough Inn at Plumpton has a 5-acre field that has previously been used as a campsite for up to 30 tents. It has not been open for the past 4-5 years. The new tenants of the pub are understood to be interested in reopening the campsite.

- The Camping and Caravanning Club certificated site (5 pitches) at Little Rother Wood, Newick is no longer operating.

#### **Surrounding Area**

- The Southdown Farm Camping and Caravanning Club club site at Keymer closed in 2009 following the sale of the farm.

#### **2.2.4. Plans for New Touring Caravan and Camping Sites**

- Our research has identified the following proposals and possible future plans for new touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area:

##### **Lewes District**

- As noted above the new tenants of the Half Moon Inn and Plough pubs in Plumpton are understood to be interested in opening/ re-opening campsites.
- Planning permission was granted in March 2008 for the conversion of an agricultural barn at River Farm, Fletching Common, to campsite facilities and an office. As far as we have been able to establish this permission has not been implemented: we found no evidence of a campsite currently operating at this location.
- A planning application for a 10-pitch caravan site at Little Rother Wood, Newick was withdrawn in 2009. We have been unable to establish whether the applicant has any intention of resubmitting this application.

### **2.2.5. Planned Investment in Existing Sites**

- Our research identified the following plans and proposals for investment in existing touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area:

#### **Lewes District**

- Audiburn Stables at Kingston is considering putting in hard standings and electric hook up points and developing a toilet and shower block at its Caravan Club certificated site in order to service demand from caravanners and motor home owners throughout the year.
- The owners of the Blackberry Wood campsite at Streat indicated that they may add further luxury camping units in addition to their existing gypsy caravan, retro caravan and converted bus.
- The owners of Spring Barn Farm are looking at opening a Caravan Club certificated site in 2011 to meet the demand that they attract for touring caravans and motorhomes. They are also considering developing a shower block in 2012 and may look to extend their operating season to the end of October.
- Hackmans Farm would like to add a further 5 pitches if they can get planning permission for them.
- Safari Britain may look at developing a second site at some point in the future.

#### **Surrounding Area**

- Horam Manor Touring Park at Horam is planning to put in 33 hard standings to attract touring caravans and motorhomes in the shoulder season months. The owners of the site are also planning to develop a new toilet block and a children's playground.
- The owners of Honeys Green Caravan Park at Halland would like to extend the site and lengthen its operating season.
- Hidden Spring Vineyard at Horam may add a further one or two luxury camping units.

- Heaven Farm at Furners Green is considering increasing the capacity of its touring caravan and camping site by a further 8-10 pitches.
- The owners of Latchetts Caravan and Camp Site at Chiddingly may look at expanding the site and developing a toilet and shower block.
- The Wowo Campsite at Sheffield Park would like to open all year.

### 3. CURRENT DEMAND FOR TOURING CARAVANNING & CAMPING IN LEWES DISTRICT

#### 3.1. The Volume & Value of Touring Caravanning & Camping Demand in Lewes District

- According to the economic impact assessment of tourism in Lewes District undertaken in 2009 for the District Council by Tourism South East<sup>1</sup>, 12,000 touring caravan and camping breaks and holidays were taken in the District in 2009, accounting for 32,000 overnight stays and a total direct visitor expenditure of almost £1.5 million. On this basis touring caravanning and camping accounted for 4.4% of staying visitor trips in the District, 3.4% of staying visitor nights and 3.3% of staying visitor spending.

#### Touring Caravanning & Camping – Lewes District – 2009 Volume and Value

	UK Visitors		Overseas Visitors		Total
		%		%	
Trips	11,000	91.7	1,000	8.3	12,000
Nights	25,000	78.1	7,000	21.9	32,000
Spend	£1,105,000	74.6	£376,000	25.4	£1,481,000

Source: The Economic Impact of Tourism in Lewes in 2009, Tourism South East

- Overseas visitors accounted for just over 8% of touring caravanning and camping trips in the District in 2009 but much higher proportions of touring caravanning and camping nights (22%) and spending (25%) due to higher average lengths of stay and average spend per night.
- The average length of stay for UK caravanners and campers staying in the District was 2.3 nights, compared to 7 nights for overseas caravanners and campers. The average spend per night for UK caravanners and campers was £44.20 compared to £53.70 for overseas caravanners and campers.

<sup>1</sup> Source: The Economic Impact of Tourism in Lewes in 2009, Tourism South East

### 3.2. Site Occupancy Levels and Patterns

- As part of the study, Hotel Solutions undertook a telephone survey of the operators of touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area. 14 operators were interviewed (listed at Appendix 1). The key findings of this survey are summarised in the following paragraphs.
- Almost all touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area are fully booked and consistently turn business away during the Easter weekend, May Bank Holiday weekends and weekends in July and August. Some sites operate a minimum 2 night stay policy for summer weekends and a minimum stay of 3 nights for Bank Holiday weekends.
- A number of sites also reported that they are usually full at weekends between March and June and in September and October, particularly if the weather is good. Other sites reported lower weekend occupancies during these months, typically around 50%, with weekend demand at these times more unpredictable and weather dependent.
- Those sites that remain open all year reported some demand during winter weekends, primarily for touring caravans and motorhomes and in one case for camping. A number of sites reported strong demand over the Christmas and New Year period from families getting together.
- Most sites are busy during the week in July and August but generally have some midweek capacity during these months. Some sites reported occasionally filling during the week in these peak summer months.
- Midweek occupancies at other times of the year are generally low and very low at the beginning and end of the season and throughout the winter (for those sites that remain open all year).
- Luxury camping units are generally fully booked and turning away significant business at weekends between April and October and attract strong midweek demand in July and August.

### 3.3. Key Markets

- The main market for all touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area is weekend breaks. Many sites have a regular clientele that will come for several weekends during the year. There is a strong local weekend break market for caravanning and camping from Brighton, East and West Sussex and nearby parts of Kent. There is also strong weekend demand from London. Sites either attract families or older, retired couples for weekend breaks, depending on their market positioning. Campsites also attract weekend demand from young couples and groups of friends. Some sites specifically target the family market. Others try to restrict the numbers of children that they have on site. Caravan Club certificated sites generally tend to attract older couples.
  
- Secondary markets are:
  - 1/2 week family holidays during the school summer holidays in July and August;
  - People on touring holidays stopping off for a night or two;
  - Overseas visitors stopping off en-route to the West Country. Key nationalities are Dutch, German, French and Belgian. The Dutch market is strong in June.
  - People attending events in the area including:
    - Glyndebourne;
    - Lewes Bonfire;
    - Brighton Festival;
    - Pride Brighton & Hove;
    - Events at the South of England Centre at Ardingly;
    - Events at Sheffield Park;
    - Airbourne at Eastbourne.
  - People stopping over the night before they catch the ferry from Newhaven;
  - Walkers and cyclists on the South Downs Way – for those sites that are on or close to the trail;
  - People visiting friends and relatives in the area;
  - People attending weddings or other family occasions.



- Other markets that some touring caravan and camping sites in the District and surrounding area attract are:
  - Youth groups including:
    - Duke of Edinburgh groups;
    - School groups;
    - Scout groups;
    - Other youth groups.
  - Caravan club, camper van and motor home rallies and organised camps;
  - Contractors working on projects in the area – one site reported attracting demand from this market during the winter;
  - People attending conferences in Brighton.

#### **4.4. Denied Business<sup>1</sup>**

- Almost all of the touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area consistently turn business away at weekends during the summer and over Bank Holiday weekends. Denials can be significant for Bank Holiday weekends and peak summer weekends. Some sites also turn business away at weekends at other times of the year. Others usually have some spare weekend capacity outside the peak months. Midweek denials are rare other than during the peak summer months for some sites.
- Overseas visitors and walkers and cyclists on the South Downs Way often do not book in advance and then find that sites are fully booked.
- There appear to be significant levels of unsatisfied demand for luxury camping units: all of the site operators that have such units reported that they are booked up well in advance and have to turn away significant numbers of bookings.
- Some of the touring caravan sites in Wealden District reported that they have to turn away significant demand for seasonal tourer pitches, i.e. where people leave their touring caravan on a site for the season to use at weekends and for holiday, as their planning permission restricts the maximum numbers of days (28) that touring pitches can be occupied by a caravan.

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<sup>1</sup> Business that touring caravan and camping sites have to turn away because they are fully booked or because their planning conditions preclude them from taking it.

### 3.5. Demand and Market Trends

- Almost all of the touring caravan and camping sites that we spoke to in Lewes District and the surrounding area reported increasing levels of demand and more frequent and significant levels of denied business. Most sites reported strong growth in occupancy in 2009 and 2010. For many sites 2010 was a record year. Particularly strong growth was reported in demand for camping and for luxury camping units. Growth was reported in the family market, from older couples and from walkers on the South Downs Way.
- The key factors behind this growth in demand were considered to be as follows:
  - Increased bookings as a result of Internet marketing;
  - A growth in repeat business and regular bookings;
  - Awareness created by press coverage for some of the newer and slightly different campsites;
  - Coverage in the Cool Camping guide/ website;
  - The emergence of the 'staycation' market as a result of the economic climate and exchange rate, with more UK residents opting for holidays in the UK in 2009 and 2010 instead of going abroad.
- The only market that appears to have declined is overseas visitors, although some site operators reported no significant change in demand from this market.

## 4. SECTOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

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### 4.1. The Size of the UK Caravanning and Camping Holiday Market

- Touring caravanning and camping, including motor homes, accounted for 11% of all domestic holiday trips in the UK in 2009, 13% of all domestic holiday nights and 8% of domestic holiday spending, making touring caravanning and camping the second most popular choice of commercial accommodation for UK holidays after hotels. Approximately 5 million domestic camping holidays were taken in the UK in 2009 and around 4.2 million holidays in touring caravans and motor homes.
- Other indicators of the current size of the UK caravanning and camping holiday market are as follows:
  - In Britain there are currently around 500,000 touring caravans and 164,000 motor homes in use.
  - The Caravan Club has more than 200 club sites, around 2,500 certificated sites and a million members.
  - The Camping and Caravanning Club has 110 club sites, 26 forest holiday sites, 1,376 certificated sites, 359 temporary holiday sites and 500,000 members.
  - Many events and festivals rely on caravans and tents for the provision of accommodation;
  - Caravanning and camping helps to support many rural communities across the UK as a result of the spending of caravanners and campers in the local economy.

## 4.2. National Market Trends

- All of the available research reports and articles that we reviewed (listed at Appendix 2) point to a sustained growth in touring caravan, motor home and camping holidays in the UK for at least the last 10-12 years, with particularly strong growth in 2009 and 2010 thought to have been a further strong year for the sector.
- A report produced for VisitBritain Insights in 2008<sup>1</sup> shows significant growth in the UK touring caravan and camping market over the previous 10 years, citing a number of indicators and reasons for this growth:
  - Significant growth in membership of the Caravan Club and Camping and Caravanning Club: membership of the Camping and Caravanning Club increased from just over 140,000 members in 1997 to 500,000 in 2010;
  - Increasing sales of touring caravans and motor homes;
  - A more positive, 'cool' image for camping;
  - Growing sales of tents as a result of improvements in quality and ease of use, with the introduction of new lightweight materials, and increased availability through supermarkets, online retailers, mail order and high street outdoor retailers;
  - The growth in interest and participation in outdoor pursuits.
- UKTS<sup>2</sup> data shows a 17% increase in domestic touring caravan and camping holidays in the UK between 2006 and 2009. Total nights spent on domestic touring caravan and camping holidays increased by 15.5%, while total spending on such holidays increased by 27.8%. The UKTS figures show particularly strong growth in camping holidays, which increased in volume by almost 28% between 2006 and 2009, compared to an increase of around 6.5% in the volume of domestic touring caravan and motor home holidays. The figures also suggest that much of the growth in the domestic touring caravan and camping holiday market in the UK has been in terms of short breaks, with the average length of stay for such holidays gradually reducing year on year.

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<sup>1</sup> The Value of Camping and Caravanning to Local Communities, VisitBritain Insights, January 2008

<sup>2</sup> United Kingdom Tourism Survey

### UK Domestic Touring Caravan and Camping Holidays – Volume & Value 2006-2009

Year	Trips		Nights		Av. Length of Stay	Spend	
	Millions	% of All Holiday Trips	Millions	% of All Holiday Trips	Nights	£Millions	% of All Holiday Trips
2006	7.92	10	33.6	12	4.24	951	7
2007	8.45	11	39.0	14	4.62	983	7
2008	7.54	10	32.1	12	4.26	987	7
2009	9.27	11	38.8	13	4.19	1215	8

Source: United Kingdom Tourism Survey

- 2009 was a particularly strong year for touring caravanning and camping in the UK. According to the National Caravan Council, bookings to UK caravan parks (including static caravan holiday home parks) were up by 25%. The Caravan Club reported an increase of half a million bookings to its sites. Occupancy levels at Camping and Caravanning Club sites increased by 8%. Sales of touring caravans began to increase again in 2009 after a difficult 6 months at the end of 2008 and the early part of 2009. UK caravan manufacturers upped production to meet demand. Camping and outdoor retailers, e.g. Gelert, reported record sales.
- The development of the 'staycation' market in 2009 was a key factor behind the strong growth in domestic touring caravan, motor home and camping holidays. England enjoyed an 18% increase in domestic holiday trips as British people opted to take holidays in Britain rather than, or as well as, going abroad. Research by VisitEngland has shown that there are two distinct types of staycationer – those that switched to a UK holiday due to the economic climate and weak pound and those that took an extra holiday in the UK motivated by a desire to explore the country and go somewhere new. This latter group tended to be younger, single people that were less affected by the financial situation.

- The staycation effect continued in 2010 and looks set to continue in 2011 as a result of the continuing economic uncertainty in the UK and the weakness of the pound against many foreign currencies; the positive holiday experiences that many staycationers have had over the last two years; the current positive media coverage of UK holidays; and the more general macro trends towards localism and increasing concerns about the environment and the safety of air travel. The VisitEngland research into the staycationer market showed that many people had enjoyed their UK holiday in 2009 and would continue to take holidays and breaks in the UK even if their financial circumstances improve.
- Much of the growth in domestic touring caravan and camping holidays in the UK has been from those that are new to caravanning and camping. Both the Caravan Club and the Camping and Caravanning Club rolled out national membership recruitment campaigns in 2009 in order to capitalise on the staycation market. The Caravan Club launched its 'Discover Touring' campaign in April 2009, generating 100,000 visits to the Caravan Club's 'Discover Touring' website in its first three months. The Club attracted almost 65,000 new members in 2009. The Camping and Caravanning Club launched its 'New to Camping' campaign in May 2009 to encourage more people to camp and to target the family market. The campaign attracted over 200,000 visitors to the Club's 'New to Camping' web portal during its first month. Both clubs have continued these campaigns during 2010 and into 2011.
- Both the Caravan Club and Camping and Caravanning Club identify families as a strong growth market. Of the 65,000 new members that the Caravan Club attracted in 2009, almost half (31,000) were families, representing an increase of 27% in family members compared to 2008.
- The two clubs are also finding that emptynesters and retired people are rediscovering caravanning and camping. The Camping and Caravanning Club recruited 28,000 members in 2009 that had returned to caravanning and camping, representing a rise of 22% in such members compared to 2008.

- While touring caravanning and camping remain highly seasonal and weather dependent there is evidence that the season is lengthening and of growing demand during the winter months. New, higher specification models of touring caravans and motor homes that can be used throughout the year have come onto the market. More and more touring caravan and camping sites are extending their opening season and many more are remaining open all year. The Caravan Club and Camping and Caravanning Club have been running successful off-season offer promotions for a number of years. Both clubs also report increasing demand for the Christmas and New Year period.
- There is evidence of a link between the growing festival scene across the UK and increased camping in the youth market. People who get into camping via festivals are seen as tomorrow's parents of camping families.
- Another key market trend in recent years has been the growth in demand for luxury camping or 'glamping' offers, in terms of ready-erected, fully-equipped tents, yurts, tipis and other unusual forms of camping and caravanning accommodation such as camping pods, geodesic domes, gypsy caravans and retro caravans. These types of accommodation have proved to be highly popular with more affluent families that want to experience camping holidays but without the hassle of having to bring their own tents and camping equipment. As a new form of accommodation they have attracted significant media coverage and wherever they have opened such accommodation operations have quickly attracted strong demand. Appendix 3 provides examples of some of the luxury camping offers that have so far developed in the UK.

### 4.3. Future Market Prospects

- There are a number of factors and likely ongoing trends that look set to fuel continued growth in touring caravan, motor home and camping holidays in the UK over the foreseeable future:
  - The ongoing uncertainty in the UK economy, particularly as a result of the cutbacks in the public sector, which is likely to maintain and possibly further increase the demand for staycations in the UK as people are still unable to afford a holiday overseas.
  - The opening of new touring caravan and camping sites, expansion of existing sites and development of luxury camping should result in supply-led growth.
  - Many site operators are investing in upgrading the quality of their sites with the introduction of hard standings and electric hook up points and development of toilet and shower blocks to attract more customers, particularly outside the main season.
  - New, higher specification models of touring caravans and motor homes should help to encourage increased demand in the shoulder season and winter months.
  - Touring caravanning and camping should benefit from the increasing environmental awareness and concerns that many people have in the UK. Caravanning and camping are generally seen as green holiday options with a low carbon footprint. Many caravan and camping sites pay great attention to protecting the environment e.g. in terms of the use of solar power to heat communal shower blocks, recycling points, measures to boost biodiversity and the development of wildlife areas and provision of wildlife discovery activities.
  - Increasing concerns by many people to get out into the countryside to lead active and healthy lifestyles could also fuel interest in caravanning and camping holidays.
  - An increasing desire for shared family experiences could also lead to a growth in interest in family camping and caravanning holidays.



- The growth in interest in outdoor pursuits, such as walking and cycling, and outdoor adventure sports and activities could result in increased demand for camping and caravanning. Many caravanners and campers engage in walking, cycling, fishing, bird watching and other outdoor activities while on holiday. One third of Caravan Club members take bikes with them on holiday.
- The cooler image of camping, growing festival scene and wider availability of tents and camping equipment, with many more outlets now selling such items, could all be factors that will fuel continued growth in demand for camping holidays and breaks.

#### **4.4. The Views of Existing Site Operators in and around Lewes District**

- Virtually all of the site operators that we spoke to in Lewes District and the surrounding area were very positive about the future prospects for their site. Most of them expect to continue to attract strong demand in 2011 and 2012. They see no reason to think that they will not continue to be fully booked for weekends at peak times of the year. A number of site operators see potential to develop mid season and winter business by putting in hard standings to attract touring caravans and motor homes at these times of year. Those site operators that have luxury camping units see strong potential for such units to attract weekend demand for most of the year. A number are considering additional luxury camping units. Some campsite operators also see some scope to attract mid season and winter demand from campers. Site operators expect to see growth in the family and retired couple markets and good potential for increased demand from walkers and those engaging in other outdoor activities.

## 4.5. Operator/ Developer Interest

- Our research identified possible interest from the new tenants of the Half Moon Inn and The Plough pubs in Plumpton in opening/reopening campsites in fields adjacent to their premises. Other than this we did not identify any other firm, live proposals for new touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District or the surrounding area.
  
- A number of the operators of existing touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District and the surrounding area indicated that they have plans, or may consider plans for investment in terms of:
  - Increasing their capacity – in most cases by around 5-10 pitches;
  - Introducing additional luxury camping units;
  - Putting in hard standings to enable them to satisfy year round demand for touring caravans and motor homes;
  - Investing in toilet and shower blocks.
  
- Planned/proposed investment is essentially in relatively small-scale, incremental expansion and upgrading. None of the operators that we spoke to indicated plans or aspirations to expand much beyond their current capacity. In most cases operators wanted to remain as relatively low-key sites, even though most operators felt that there is market potential for more significant expansion.
  
- The South Downs Way National Trail Team would like to encourage more camping provision along the South Downs Way, both in terms of campsites, camping barns and possibly camping pods. Their priority is that any new camping facilities should be as environmentally sustainable as possible. They have some concerns therefore about the potential visual impact of camping pods on the protected landscape of the South Downs. They currently have a tourism student that is undertaking a mapping and gapping review of camping provision along the Trail.

- The Caravan Club indicated that it has no interest in developing a further club site in East Sussex as its existing four clubs sites at Battle, Brighton, East Hoathly and Hastings are sufficient to meet the demand from its members for this part of the country. Neither did the Caravan Club identify any need for further certificated sites in Lewes District. There are already 14 Caravan Club certificated sites in the District and immediate surrounding area. The Caravan Club did not identify any capacity issues with these sites and if anything felt that they need more occupancy.
- The Portfolio Manager for the Camping and Caravanning Club, who is responsible for the development of new club sites, indicated that the Club might be prepared to consider an opportunity to develop a club site in Lewes District. The Club previously operated at club site at Southdown Farm in Keymer. It closed in 2009 when the farm was sold. The Club is continually looking for opportunities for new club sites. Lewes District is a sufficient distance from the Club's other club sites in East Sussex at Norman's Bay and Pevensey. The draw of the South Downs National Park, Lewes, Brighton and the attractions within and surrounding the District could make it a suitable location for a club site. Much will depend on the specific site opportunity, the costs involved and the deal on offer to the Club. Sites associated with visitor attractions and leisure and sports facilities could be of particular interest to the Club. Its most recent club site opening has been at the Gulliver's Kingdom theme park in Milton Keynes.
- The Camping and Caravanning Club only has one certificated site in Lewes District and two in the surrounding area, so could be more interested than the Caravan Club in opening further certificated sites in Lewes District.
- Feather Down Farm Days indicated that they would be interested in opening a new site in Lewes District. Their sites usually comprise 5-10 ready-erected, fully equipped tents on a working farm.

## 5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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### 5.1. National Guidance

- The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 requires land owners to hold a caravan site licence issued by their local authority for land that they wish to use as a caravan site. A site licence can only be issued subject to a valid planning permission for the site. There are some circumstances when a caravan site licence is not required:
  - For sites occupied and supervised by exempted organisations such as the Caravan Club, Camping and Caravanning Club and local caravan clubs;
  - Sites for up to 5 caravans certified by an exempted organisation for the exclusive use of its members;
  - Sites for meetings of exempted organisations e.g. caravan club rallies;
  - A single caravan sited on a site for not more than two consecutive nights and 28 days in any 12 months;
  - Up to 3 caravans on a site of 5 acres or more for a maximum of 28 days in any 12 months;
  - Sites occupied by a local authority.
  
- Under Section 269 of the Public Health Act 1936 the use of land for tented camping for more than 42 consecutive days or 60 days in total in any 12 month period requires a camping site licence from the local authority. In addition the use of land for tented camping for more than 28 days a year normally requires planning permission. Campsites that are not used for more than 28 days in a year do not require planning permission or a camping site licence.

- The DCLG Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism published in 2006 includes guidance relating to holiday, touring caravan and chalet parks covering holiday chalets, caravan holiday homes, pitches for touring caravans, motor homes, camping and all types of self-catering accommodation. The relevant extracts from the Good Practice Guide are reproduced at Appendix 4. Some of the key points include:
  - The need for facilities should be carefully weighed against landscape protection.
  - Where possible visually intrusive sites and sites in flood risk areas should be re-located.
  - Planners should work with operators to improve the attractiveness of sites.
  - New sites are best located close to existing settlements and services but can also be considered in other locations.
  - Economic benefits as well as environmental impacts of developments should be considered.
  - Whilst occupancy conditions are a useful tool to prevent permanent occupation (more detailed guidance is provided on this), planners should be sympathetic to extended opening periods with trends towards year round activity.
  - Staff accommodation may be required on site, ideally using existing buildings/conversions, but accepting there may be a need for new residential development tied to the business.

## **5.2. Planning Policy Guidance on Camping Pods and Yurts<sup>1</sup>**

- Camping pods are effectively wooden tents that can accommodate up to 4 or 5 people. They are manufactured as complete units and transported to site fully constructed. As such they appear to fall within the definition of a caravan as set out in Section 29 (1), which defines a caravan as “any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another (whether by being towed or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer). This means that planning policies in place for static caravan holiday homes may equally apply to camping pods. These can be restrictive of new development. A local authority may however take a different view of camping pods given that they are likely to have far less impact on the landscape than static caravan holiday homes.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Humberts Leisure

- The first camping pods in the UK were introduced at the Eskdale Camping and Caravanning Club site in the Lake District. The Club proposed 10 camping pods on the site, which is located in a particularly sensitive area of the Lake District National Park. The local authority deemed that the pods fell within the statutory definition of a caravan and considered the application against its policy on static caravans, which did not allow such units. It granted permission for the 10 camping pods however as a departure from the Local Plan on the basis that they would have limited landscape impact. The planning permission was so worded that other types of caravan or more visually intrusive structure could not be sited on the land in place of the camping pods.
- The status of yurts in planning law is unclear, particularly as yurts vary widely in terms of construction. In the case of a 2007 planning appeal relating to a permaculture holding near Totnes in Devon, the Planning Inspector concluded that Mongolian-style yurts on the site were not operational development as they were more akin to temporary structures. This suggests that yurts might be considered in planning terms in the same way as tents and touring caravans. If an operator wishes to embellish yurts, e.g. with a fixed wooden floor, wood burning stove or verandah, a planning authority may have a case to describe such yurts as permanently sited structures that would constitute operational development that requires planning permission. The degree of permanence is thus likely to be a key principle in deciding on the planning status of a yurt. The recent introduction of these types of structure in the UK means that there has not been sufficient time to compile a substantial body of case law that would give clear guidance on the matter. Much will thus depend on how each planning authority chooses to interpret the relevant cases and appeals that have come forward to date.

### 5.3. Local Plan Policies

- The saved Local Plan policies relating to touring caravan and camping sites and bunkhouse accommodation (policies E14 –E17) are broadly positive in terms of seeking to retain and enhance existing provision for these types of visitor accommodation and supporting the development of new provision subject to meeting environmental protection and traffic safety requirements:
  - Policy E14 allows for the conversion of existing rural buildings to bunkhouse accommodation for walkers and horse riders;
  - Policy E15 seeks to resist the loss of existing touring caravan and camping sites;
  - Policy E16 allows for the development of new touring caravan and camping sites in the Sussex Downs AONB where it can be demonstrated that there is a proven genuine need which cannot be met outside the AONB and the proposal responds sensitively to the local environment and meets all other environmental protection, traffic safety and local amenity protection criteria<sup>1</sup>;
  - Policy E17 allows for permission to be granted for new touring caravan and camping sites outside the Sussex Downs AONB subject to adequate screening and landscaping, suitable road access and compliance with all District-wide policies.
  
- The policies for new touring caravan and camping sites allow for existing buildings to be converted for ancillary facilities and for small scale new buildings sited close to any existing buildings and sympathetically designed. The policies also preclude the use of new sites for winter storage of touring caravans.
  
- The supporting text to the policies recognises the important contribution that touring caravan and camping sites make to the visitor economy of the District and the opportunities they provide for farmers and landowners to supplement their incomes. It also recognises the need to encourage increased provision for touring caravanning and camping and bunkhouse accommodation to meet existing shortages and growing demand from visitors attracted by the South Downs AONB (now National Park) and South Downs Way National Trail. The need to ensure that touring caravan and camping sites do not detract from landscape quality is stressed, especially in the South

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<sup>1</sup> This policy refers to the Sussex Downs AONB designation, which no longer exists as it was replaced by the South Downs National Park designation on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. However, it is considered reasonable that this policy can still be applied to areas of the District that are within the National Park and were also previously part of the AONB.

Downs AONB, where only small sites (generally less than 10 pitches) are identified as being acceptable. The text also identifies the limited opportunities in the District for the development of new touring caravan and camping sites and a need therefore to seek to retain and encourage the upgrading of existing sites. The supporting text to policy E15 refers to three static caravan holiday home parks at Seaford, Peacehaven and South Heighton, together with Buckle Holiday Park touring and camping site at Seaford.

- Policy E19 states that new static holiday caravan sites will not be granted planning permission as they are considered to be obtrusive in the landscape and detrimental to the coastal and rural character of the District.

#### **5.4. Local Development Framework**

- The District Council is currently working on the preparation of the Core Strategy for the District. A series of topic papers on issues and emerging options was circulated for consultation in Summer 2010. While these papers make no specific mention of touring caravanning and camping, they recognise the potential for tourism to develop further in the District, particularly as a result of the establishment of the South Downs National Park.
- Topic Paper 2 (Key Issues and Challenges for the District) identifies a need to recognise the contribution that the rural area can make to the District's economy, including the potential role of tourism in terms of providing employment, attracting investment and creating wealth. Topic Paper 3 (Vision for Lewes District) sets out a future vision for the District that includes the rural area of the South Downs playing an important tourism role and attracting increased numbers of visitors whose needs will be sustainably managed. Topic Paper 4 (Key Strategic Objectives) includes an objective (Objective 2) to take advantage of the District's natural and historical assets to promote and achieve a sustainable tourism industry in and around the District and specifically to ensure that the opportunities created by the new National Park are realised across the whole of the District.
- The District Council's Planning Policy Manager envisages that the Local Development Framework will set policies on tourism development. This will include setting an over-arching strategy for tourism in the Core Strategy, and detailed policies within a Development Management Development Plan Document.



## 5.5. South Downs National Park Policies

- The South Downs National Park Authority will become the sole Planning Authority for the South Downs National Park in April 2011. The Authority will not initially introduce its own planning policies. It will rely on National Park policies in government guidance and existing local authority planning policies in terms of saved Local Plan policies or adopted Local Development Framework policies. The Core Strategy for Lewes District will be jointly adopted by the National Park Authority and Lewes District Council. The National Park Authority will develop its own Local Development Framework for the National Park to be adopted in 2014.
- The South Downs Management Plan 2008-2013 encourages the promotion of sustainable tourism as a major economic sector under Ambition 7, recognising that if developed in the right way, tourism could become a much more important source of revenue to support farm businesses, other local enterprises and local services, including pubs and shops. The need for further visitor accommodation is also recognised, with the very small proportion of current visitors staying within the South Downs identified as a factor that limits the contribution of tourism to the local economy.
- A number of policies set out under Ambition 7 encourage the development of visitor accommodation in the South Downs:
  - Policy 7.11 encourages farm diversification including the provision of visitor accommodation ;
  - Policies 7.12-7.16 encourage opportunities for sustainable tourism including car free holidays to reduce the sector's carbon footprint;
  - Policy 7.17 supports the provision of appropriate new tourist accommodation, including through farm diversification, especially in areas of poor provision;
  - Policy 7.18 supports the development of accommodation within easy reach of the South Downs Way, including bunkhouse barns, low-key camping facilities and opportunities for horse riders and their mounts.
- The South Downs Management Plan has not been adopted by the National Park Authority. It will develop a National Park Management Plan ready for adoption in 2014. At this stage it is envisaged that the Plan will include policies on provision for touring caravanning and camping.

- All National Parks, which obviously includes the South Downs, have a statutory duty to have regard to the twin National Park purposes. These purposes are : (1) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and (2) to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public. Promoting access to the countryside and the delivery of sustainable tourism, possibly through the delivery of appropriate camping and caravan sites, is likely to help achieve these purposes.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1. Sector Development Potential

- The study findings provide evidence of market potential for the following:
  - Modest expansion of existing touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District.
  - The development and upgrading of existing touring caravan and camping sites in terms of:
    - putting in hard standings to attract touring caravans and motor homes during shoulder season months and into the winter;
    - electric hook up points;
    - toilet and shower blocks;
    - laundry facilities;
    - children's play areas.
  - The extension of the operating season of existing sites, in some cases to year-round operation.
  - The development of further luxury camping units on existing sites and new luxury camping operations.
  - The development of new campsites, camping barns and possibly camping pods along the South Downs Way National Trail.
  - The development of new small-scale touring caravan and camping sites elsewhere in the District and National Park.
  - Possible scope for the development of a large new club site for the Camping and Caravanning, subject to further discussions with the Club, most probably linked to an existing or new visitor attraction, leisure or sports facility. Such a site may require some form of permanent accommodation for the site manager. Such a proposal would need to be considered in a sub-regional context (i.e. beyond just Lewes District). Finding an appropriate site that would be acceptable in planning terms may prove to be difficult.

- The research shows strong demand for touring caravanning and camping in the District at weekends and during the peak summer months, and clear evidence of shortages of provision for caravanning and camping for Bank Holiday and summer weekends. The study also identifies a clear lack of camping provision along the stretch of the South Downs Way that runs through the District, together with strong demand for luxury camping and clear market potential for more provision of such accommodation in the District.
- Having said all of this it must also be recognised that:
  - Most existing sites have spare capacity during the week and for most weekends outside the peak summer months and Bank Holidays;
  - There is a clear need to protect the landscape of the District, particularly in the South Downs National Park.
- These factors suggest that the priorities for the District should be in terms of:
  - Small-scale, incremental expansion of existing touring caravan and camping sites;
  - The controlled development of largely small-scale new sites that are well screened and landscaped.
- A significant and rapid expansion of provision could undermine the viability of existing sites. Encouraging large-scale touring caravan and camping sites would generally be inappropriate given the importance of protecting the District's landscape.

## **6.2. LDF Policy Implications**

- The existing saved Local Plan policies that cover touring caravan and camping sites provide positive and appropriate support for the future development of the sector in line with the study's conclusions regarding the market potential and priorities for increasing provision for touring caravanning and camping in the District. They recognise the growth potential of the sector and current shortages of provision; encourage the development of new sites subject to appropriate safeguards relating to environmental protection, traffic safety and protection of local amenity; and seek to retain existing sites, recognising the difficulty of replacing them if they are lost. They appropriately encourage the development of small-scale sites in the South Downs AONB/ National Park, by implication directing the development of larger sites to other parts of the District.

- The Local Plan does not include any specific policies on the expansion and development of existing touring caravan and camping sites, although the supporting text to the policy to retain existing sites recognises that there may be a need to support and encourage the upgrading of such sites. It could be helpful to have a specific policy reference relating to the expansion and improvement of existing sites in the LDF.
- The Local Plan policies make no reference to luxury camping units, such as yurts, camping pods and geodesic domes, as clearly these types of accommodation had not started to emerge at the time the policies were originally framed. Moving forward it could be helpful for the District Council to give specific consideration to how it would view such types of accommodation in planning terms, particularly as its policy on static caravans (E19), which could be applied to such forms of accommodation if they are deemed to fall under the definition of a caravan, does not allow the development of static caravan sites.
- The Local Plan policies for touring caravan and camping sites do not impose any seasonal or occupancy conditions that would limit the time for which a pitch can be occupied by a single caravan or tent or the operating period of a site (although criteria (d) of Policy E17 does say that conditions will be applied that limit the use of a camping or touring caravan site in order to preclude its use as winter storage for touring caravans). In line with the guidance given in the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism, we see no reason to introduce seasonal or occupancy conditions in the District in the future. Without such conditions caravan site operators will be free to offer seasonal tourer pitches should they wish to. This can help to improve the viability of sites by giving them a guaranteed occupancy and income throughout the season. In impact terms there is unlikely to be any material difference whether a pitch is occupied by the same caravan throughout the season or a series of different caravans. The study provides evidence of potential demand for touring caravanning and camping throughout the year, which some sites are seeking to develop through the installation of hard standings for touring caravans and motor homes. There is no clear need or planning rationale for seeking to limit the operating period of touring caravan and camping sites in the District, subject to ensuring that sites are adequately screened during the winter and that structures that facilitate all year round use (i.e. metalled access routes, areas of hard standing) do not harm the character or appearance of an area.

- The District Council may wish to maintain a policy that precludes the use of touring caravan and camping sites for winter storage of caravans, which could be visually intrusive during the winter months. It should however be recognised that the income that a caravan site can generate from winter storage can be an important factor in ensuring its commercial viability. Flexibility to allow winter storage given adequate screening and safeguards to avoid any adverse impact on the landscape or appearance of an area could merit consideration therefore.
- In moving forward with the Local Development Framework the key issue will be whether there is a need for specific planning policies on touring caravan and camping sites or whether the guidance in the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism is adequate and does not therefore need to be repeated in the LDF. This will depend on how proactively and explicitly the District Council wishes to encourage, guide and control the future development of provision for touring caravanning and camping in the District and also whether or not the Good Practice Guide remains in place once the reform of national planning policy, guidance and circulars has taken place.

### **6.3. Other Public Sector Intervention**

#### **a) Proactively Encouraging the Development of the Sector**

- There could be merit in the District Council using the study findings to proactively encourage the expansion and development of existing touring caravan and camping sites and new sites and luxury camping operations, subject to the planning policy framework for these forms of visitor accommodation. This could be achieved through one or more of the following options:
  - Circulating/ making available the study report, or a version of it, to:
    - The operators of existing touring caravan and camping sites;
    - Farmers and other landowners;
    - Pubs;
    - Visitor attractions;
    - Golf clubs;
    - Leisure and sports facility operators;
    - Business support agencies;
    - Appropriate representative bodies e.g. NFU, CLA.
  - PR activity to secure local press and media coverage of the study findings;

- Caravanning and camping development seminars/ workshops to disseminate the findings to people that might be interested in developing touring caravan and camping sites in the District.
- Activity to encourage touring caravan and camping site operators to take part in the VisitBritain or AA quality grading schemes and the Green Tourism Business Scheme to promote quality and sustainable tourism
- These activities could be progressed in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority and/or the South Downs Way National Trail Team.

**b) Featuring Touring Caravanning & Camping in Destination Marketing**

- At present the Enjoy Sussex guide and website does not have a large touring caravan and camping site presence: it merely refers visitors to TICs for such information. The Enjoy Sussex partners do welcome advertisers from this sector . They operate an assessed-only policy as the criterion for advertising in the guide and website. As none of the touring caravan and camping sites in Lewes District currently take part in the quality grading schemes, activity will first be required to encourage them to do so.

**c) Monitoring Future Development and Performance**

- The Lewes District Touring Caravan & Camping Study provides a snapshot of this accommodation sector in the District at one point in time. Moving forward it will be important for the District Council to continue to monitor how the sector is developing and performing to establish ongoing priorities for the further development and retention of touring caravan and camping sites in the District. This will require ongoing updating of the District Council's database of touring caravan and camping sites, which has been updated by this study.
- In terms of monitoring the future performance of the touring caravanning and camping sector in the District there may be merit in periodically repeating the in depth research that has been undertaken as part of this study. It is likely to be too costly, impractical and unnecessary to put in place an ongoing survey to monitor the performance of the sector however.

**APPENDICES**



**TOURING CARAVAN & CAMPING SITES INTERVIEWED**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Lewes District</b>	
Blackberry Wood	Streat
Hackmans Farm	Plumpton
Spring Barn Farm	Lewes
Stoneywish Nature Reserve	Ditchling
Safari Britain	Firle
Audiburn Stables	Kingston
Newholme	Kingston
Lower Tulley Wells Farm	Cooksbridge
<b>Surrounding Area</b>	
Horam Manor Touring Park	Horam
Honeys Green Farm Caravan Park	Halland
Heaven Farm	Furners Green
Wowo Campsite	Sheffield Park
Latchetts Caravan and Camp Site	Chiddingly
Hidden Spring Vineyard	Horam

**RESEARCH REPORTS & ARTICLES CONSULTED**

'The Value of Camping and Caravanning to Local Communities' - Matthew Eastlake, VisitBritain Insights, January 2008.

'Camping and Caravanning: Why So Popular and Is It Sustainable?' - Sian Ellis, VisitBritain Insights, January 2010

The UK Tourist 2006, 2007, 2008 & 2009

'News and Current Affairs for UK Caravanners', Caravan News

'Understanding the Staycation', Visit England

The Facts – The Caravan Club

The Camping and Caravanning Club Stat Pack 2010

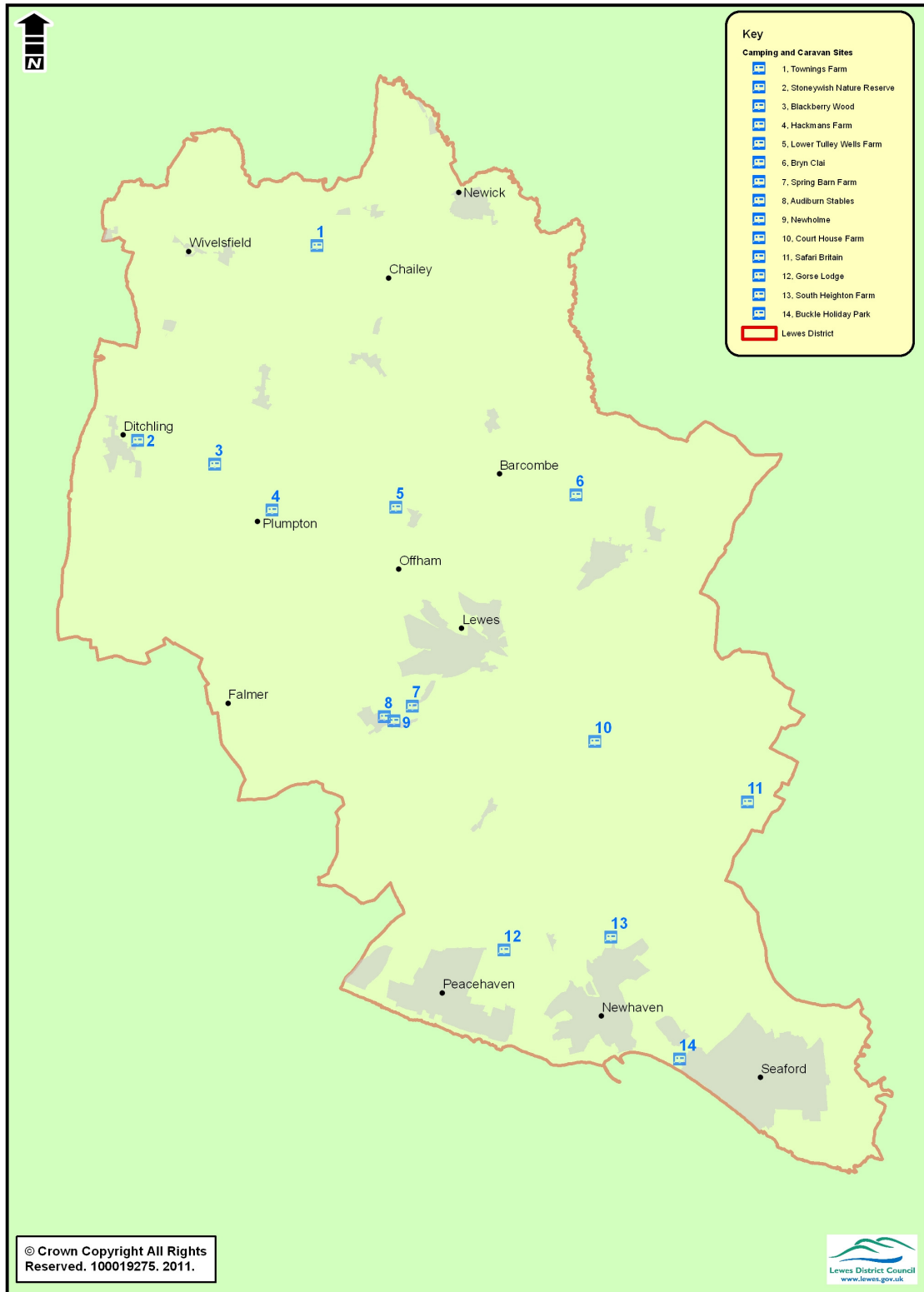
Surge in Bookings to Caravan Parks; Caravan Production Rising; New Jobs Created for the Summer Season – National Caravan Council press release, 8 May 2009

Caravanning on the Crest of a Wave - National Caravan Council press release, 12 October 2009

Boom in UK Caravan Holidays Could Save Thousands of Tonnes of CO2 Emissions - National Caravan Council press release, 16 June 2009

UK Caravan Industry Statistics – National Caravan Council

TOURING CARAVAN & CAMPING SITES IN LEWES DISTRICT



### LUXURY CAMPING OFFERS IN THE UK

Recent years have seen the emergence of a number of new luxury camping (or glamping) concepts in the UK. Go Glamping ([www.goglamping.net](http://www.goglamping.net)), the leading online directory of luxury camping sites now lists some 50 locations in the UK. Key luxury camping products that have so far emerged in the UK are as follows:

- The first UK **camping pods** opened at the Eskdale Camping & Caravanning Club site in the Lake District in 2008. These are wooden tents made from locally sourced timber and insulated with sheep's wool. They have hard foam floors, French windows, wooden decking areas, heaters and electric lighting. Each pod sleeps 4 people. The Eskdale site has 10 pods priced at £40 per night. They have proved extremely popular and have even attracted demand during the winter. The Camping and Caravanning Club has now introduced camping pods at its club sites in Bellingham, Northumberland; Skye and Thetford Forest, where it has introduced a jumbo pod sleeping up to 5 people. Newfoundland Leisure Lodges, the company that manufactured the pods for these sites reports huge interest in the concept, which looks likely to rapidly expand throughout the UK.
- **Feather Down Farms** ([www.featherdown.co.uk](http://www.featherdown.co.uk)) is a concept that has been operated in the UK since 2005 by the Feather Down Farm Days company as a seasonal luxury camping holiday option. Originally developed in Holland, the concept involves Feather Down Farm Days providing working farms with 5-10 fully equipped Feather Down tents for erection between Easter and October. The tents provide spacious, ready-to-use camping accommodation including beds, bedding, a toilet, wood-burning cooking stove, cool chest and cooking equipment. The farmer is responsible for providing a cold water supply to each tent and connection to a mains sewer or septic tank, together with the provision of a communal hot shower facility. Feather Down Farm Days runs a national marketing, advertising and PR campaign and provides a central booking system.

- Another concept that is starting to emerge in the UK is **ready-pitched luxury camps**. Shieling Holidays ([www.shielingholidays.co.uk](http://www.shielingholidays.co.uk)) on the Isle of Mull provides 16 fully equipped Shieling cottage tents, which take their name from the summer cottages that Highland shepherds traditionally use. The tents are equipped with proper beds and fully equipped kitchens and have electricity and gas heaters. Some also have shower and toilet facilities. Forest Tented Lodges ([www.tentedlodges.co.uk](http://www.tentedlodges.co.uk)) in Pembrokeshire is a cluster of safari-style tents that come with en-suite showers. Jolly Days Luxury Camping ([www.jollydaysluxurycamping.co.uk](http://www.jollydaysluxurycamping.co.uk)) in North Yorkshire is a boutique campsite that offers the ultimate in luxury camping, with 5 large tented lodges with four posters beds, sofas and chandeliers, and 5 pairs of bell tents. Safari Britain at Firle in East Sussex ([www.safaribritain.com](http://www.safaribritain.com)) offers a camp of 9 canvas bell tents around a communal living tent for group bookings.
- **Country House Hideout** ([www.countryhousehideout.co.uk](http://www.countryhousehideout.co.uk)) is a new venture from the creator of Feather Down Farm Days, Dutchman Luite Moraal, and opened in England by Mark Gordon. The concept is that guests are invited to stay in the grounds of a private country estate in luxury tented encampments in the style of explorers from years gone by. Each encampment is located in its own private clearing, sleeping up to eight people in luxurious beds, with a plumbed-in toilet, bathing tent, cooking cart and discovery tent equipped with binoculars, microscope and telescope. Four sites have opened so far in the UK in the Scottish Borders, Essex, Shropshire and Lancashire.
- **Yurts**, based on the Mongolian yurt, are wooden frame, insulated circular tents that are usually furnished with beds, wood burning stoves and kitchen equipment. Cornish Yurt Holidays in Bodmin ([www.yurtworks.co.uk](http://www.yurtworks.co.uk)) offers three fully equipped yurts for hire. All three yurts have wood-burning stoves and toilets. One also has a bathroom and another has a shower. Yurt Farm ([www.theyurtfarm.co.uk](http://www.theyurtfarm.co.uk)) at Tregaron in Ceredigion in Wales has 4 fully equipped and furnished yurts. Other examples include Hidden Valley Yurts ([www.hiddenvalleyyurts.co.uk](http://www.hiddenvalleyyurts.co.uk)) in Monmouthshire, Long Valley Yurts ([www.long-valley-yurts.co.uk](http://www.long-valley-yurts.co.uk)) in the Lake District and Meon Springs Yurt Village ([www.meonsprings.com](http://www.meonsprings.com)) in Hampshire.
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- **Tipi** sites offer a similar set up. Examples include Cornish Tipi Holidays at Wadebridge ([www.cornish-tipi-holidays.co.uk](http://www.cornish-tipi-holidays.co.uk)); Tipi West at Cardigan Bay ([www.tipiwest.co.uk](http://www.tipiwest.co.uk)); Eco Retreats in Powys, Wales ([www.ecoretreats.co.uk](http://www.ecoretreats.co.uk)); Isle of Wight Tipi Holidays ([www.tipi-holidays.co.uk](http://www.tipi-holidays.co.uk)) and 4 Winds Lakeland Tipis ([www.4windslakelandtipis.co.uk](http://www.4windslakelandtipis.co.uk)) in the Lake District
  
- Wooden **wigwams** rented out at around 20 sites in Scotland and the North East of England are another alternative. Northumbria's Pot-Doodle-Do ([www.northumbrianwigwams.co.uk](http://www.northumbrianwigwams.co.uk)) has 12 wooden wigwams sleeping 4/5 people. Each wigwam is fully insulated and has electric lighting and heating. Foam mattresses are provided. The site has a central shower and toilet block, kitchen for guests' use and licensed restaurant on site.
  
- Another type of luxury camping unit is **geodesic domes**. The Dome Garden ([www.domegarden.co.uk](http://www.domegarden.co.uk)) at Coleford in Gloucestershire has 6 geodesic ecodeomes equipped with wood burning stoves, beds, private flushing toilets, a fully-equipped outside kitchen area with fridge and timber en-suite hot shower. Another example is Ekopod ([www.ekopod.co.uk](http://www.ekopod.co.uk)) in Cornwall.
  
- Other examples of luxury camping offers include:
  - **Gypsy caravans** e.g. Gypsy Caravan Breaks in Somerset ([www.gypsyncaravanbreaks.co.uk](http://www.gypsyncaravanbreaks.co.uk)) and Roulotte Retreat in the Scottish Borders ([www.roulotteretreat.com](http://www.roulotteretreat.com)), which has 4 French roulette gypsy caravans for hire;
  - **Retro caravans** e.g. Vintage Vacations on the Isle of Wight ([www.vintagevacations.co.uk](http://www.vintagevacations.co.uk)), which has a collection of 10 vintage American Airsteam and Spartan caravans for hire;
  - **Tree houses** e.g. the Fernie Castle treehouse suite in Fife, Scotland ([www.fernycastle.demon.co.uk/treehouse.htm](http://www.fernycastle.demon.co.uk/treehouse.htm));
  - **Tree camping** e.g. Mighty Oak in Cornwall ([www.mighty-oak.co.uk](http://www.mighty-oak.co.uk))

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**EXTRACT FROM DCLG GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON PLANNING FOR TOURISM**

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## Tourist Accommodation

1. Tourism accommodation takes many different forms, including hotels, guesthouses and bed and breakfast premises, self-catering, touring and static caravans and camping, and caters for a variety of tastes and budgets. But all are capable of bringing economic benefits to the areas in which they are located. These benefits will need to be assessed alongside other issues such as suitability of the location in terms of its sustainability.
2. The issues that will need to be addressed in considering planning applications for tourist accommodation will vary according to the type, size, and nature of the accommodation being provided. These are considered further below.

## Holiday, touring caravan, and chalet parks

19. In the UK as a whole, the parks industry accounts for tourist spend of some £3.23 billion<sup>1</sup> each year, accommodating some 22% of all holiday bed nights. The industry comprises holiday chalets, caravan holiday homes, pitches for touring caravans, motor-homes and tenting and all types of self-catering accommodation. Holiday parks are the largest provider of rural tourism bed spaces.
20. PPS7 provides advice for planning policies and development proposals for static holiday and touring caravan parks and holiday chalet developments. Planners should carefully weigh the objective of providing adequate facilities and sites with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites. They should examine the scope for relocating any existing visually or environmentally-intrusive parks away from sensitive areas, or for re-location away from sites prone to flooding or coastal erosion. However, the high land values associated with holiday parks, the cost of infrastructure and possible planning issues relating to a proposed site may make such proposals impractical and unviable.

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<sup>1</sup> UKTS 2002

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21. This advice recognises that planning provides an opportunity to improve the attractiveness of such developments to those who visit them and as features in the landscape. The Environmental Code for Holiday Parks, Caravan and Camping Sites, and Park Home Estates<sup>1</sup> advises park owners on fulfilling the industry's commitment to environmental protection. *Holiday Parks: Caring for the Environment – a Guide to Good Practice* (1991), published by the Countryside Commission, remains an important reference document that includes many case studies directing holiday park operators toward best practice. Planners should work with owners and developers of sites to ensure that the most is made of these opportunities. Where there is an identified demand for new or expanded sites, planners should ensure that environmental impacts and impacts on visual amenity are minimised.
  
  22. New sites that are close to existing settlements and other services will generally be more sustainable as some local services may be accessed by means other than by car. Similarly caravan storage facilities that are close to existing settlements may have less adverse impact and be more sustainable. However, there may be valid reasons for extending or improving existing holiday parks that are not be located close to existing settlements by virtue of their support for successful local businesses and the provision of employment. Authorities should also consider how the proposal will affect tourism in the area, particularly in terms of its economic and environmental impacts.
  
  23. Local planning authorities may attach conditions to planning permissions for holiday parks to ensure that they are used for holiday purposes only. However, with better caravan standards and the trend towards tourism as a year round activity, authorities should give sympathetic consideration to applications to extend the opening period allowed under existing permissions. Annex B covers these matters in more detail.

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<sup>1</sup> Park home estates are outside the scope of this guide as they are residential and not tourist developments



## **STAFF ACCOMMODATION**

24. For many types of holiday parks, a residential managerial presence is often essential, to achieve quality service to the customer, security for the property, and to meet the obligations of health and safety regulations. Accommodation may sometimes also be needed for key members of staff. As far as possible, suitably located existing dwellings should be used to meet these accommodation needs. But where this is not a feasible option, and particularly in locations where suitable housing is not available, or is unaffordable, it may be necessary to provide new, on-site accommodation for managerial and/or other staff. In such cases the conversion of any suitable available existing buildings should be considered first in preference to the construction of new and potentially intrusive housing development in the countryside.
  
25. PPS7 makes it clear that isolated new houses in the countryside require special justification for planning permission to be granted. PPS7 further states that one of the few circumstances in which isolated residential development may be justified is when accommodation is required to enable agricultural, forestry and certain other full-time workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of their place of work. There will be some cases where the nature and demands of the work concerned make it essential for one or more people engaged in a tourism enterprise to live at, or very close to, the site of their work. Local planning authorities should give consideration to the essential needs of all businesses located in rural areas, including tourism and should apply the policies set out in PPS7 – in particular those in Annex A. Planning conditions can ensure that such accommodation is occupied for this purpose only.

## Seasonal and Holiday Occupancy Conditions

1. The nature of holidays in this country has become increasingly diverse, in location, in season and in duration. Many people go away several times a year, often for short breaks and not exclusively in the summer months. Much of this demand is for self-catering accommodation – whether in new or converted buildings or in caravan holiday homes. This spread of demand improves the use that is made of this accommodation and so is advantageous to the businesses which provide it and to those host communities which are supported by the spending that it generates. It can help to reduce the disadvantages of seasonal employment, including the difficulties of retaining trained and experienced staff.
2. Whilst extension of the season has these advantages, the demand for this accommodation may occur in areas in which the provision of permanent housing would be contrary to national or local policies which seek to restrict development, for example in order to safeguard the countryside. The planning system can reconcile these two objectives through the use of occupancy conditions designed to ensure that holiday accommodation is used for its intended purpose. Planning authorities commonly impose such conditions when granting permission for self-catering holiday accommodation.
3. One type of condition frequently used for holiday accommodation, particularly in holiday areas, is known generically as a 'holiday occupancy condition'. The aim of such conditions is generally to ensure that the premises are only used by visitors and do not become part of the local housing stock. There are three principal reasons why a planning authority might seek to do this:
  - in order that national or local policies on development of the countryside are not compromised. Often the conversion of redundant rural buildings to holiday accommodation provides a means to retain those buildings without introducing a level of activity that would occur with permanent households;
  - to avoid occupation by permanent households which would in turn put pressure upon local services. Permanent households may place demands for local schools and social and health services that would not normally arise from visitors. Moreover, in remote locations the cost of providing these services is greater. It may therefore be reasonable for the planning authority to place an occupancy condition when properties are being built or converted for residential use; and

- to strengthen tourism in a particular area by ensuring that there is a wide range of properties available to encourage visitors to come there on holiday.

Planning authorities will frame these conditions according to local circumstances, and in accordance with general Government advice that conditions should be reasonable and fair. They will also need to frame them so that they can be readily enforced by the authority but in a way that is not unduly intrusive for either owners or occupants.

4. Another type of condition that may be appropriate for tourist areas is known as a 'seasonal occupancy' condition. This would seek to restrict use of holiday accommodation during particular times of year, perhaps to protect the local environment. This could be used if, for example, use of the premises or the site might affect an important species of bird during its breeding season or when it is winter feeding. Local planning authorities will need to balance the need to impose seasonal occupancy conditions with the wish to avoid exacerbating the seasonal nature of tourism in the locality and its possible adverse effects upon local businesses and jobs.