

# Practice guidance: Camping pods

How do we approach planning applications for camping pod development?

## **Practice guidance: Assessing proposals for camping pods**

### **What is practice guidance?**

This guidance sets out our practice approach to proposals for camping pods. It is one of a series of guidance notes that respond to customer feedback. It is not planning policy, which can be found elsewhere on our website.

This practice guidance sets out:

- the status of pods
- our approach to making decisions
- the way we condition permissions

Our Development Control Committee had an informal discussion at their April 2012 meeting and this practice guidance reflects this.

### **What is the policy context?**

The Vision for the Lake District National Park is that it will be an inspirational example of sustainable development in action.

Our planning policies were adopted as part of our Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy in October 2010.

Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012.

### **What are camping pods?**

Camping pods are small units of holiday accommodation that are prefabricated and delivered to their site complete. They are timber structures with a curved roof that has the appearance of timber shingles and they are placed on the land with simple support and no foundations. Internally they have a single open space and limited headroom with sufficient space to allow two adults or a small family to sleep on the floor. The accommodation that they provide is basic and akin to a tent.

### **What status do camping pods have in planning law?**

Camping pods are a relatively recent innovation (we were first approached with a proposal for camping pods in 2007). They are not defined in legislation or referred to in our policies. Camping pods fall within the statutory definition of a caravan. A caravan is any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another by towing or transported on a vehicle or trailer. The full definition is set out at the end of this guidance.

### **How do we approach our decisions?**

We take decisions on the basis of our development plan policies, taking account of material planning considerations. We have considered camping pods against our policies for new caravans because of the legal definition. However, Local Plan Policy T9 was not written with a view to camping pods and they are distinctly different in character from most caravans. National (National Planning Policy Framework) and Core Strategy (CS24) policies support high quality, environmentally sensitive tourism developments which improve the quality and range of facilities and camping pods offer a low cost option. Although camping pods are small and capable of being relatively unobtrusive compared to caravans or large brightly coloured tents they do stay on site year round and we pay careful attention to their impact upon the landscape. We have granted permissions where camping pods have been capable of being assimilated into the landscape at existing caravan and camping sites and for farm tourism, in particular in woodland and beside trees and hedges.

## **What conditions do we impose?**

We impose planning conditions upon the permissions that we grant for camping pods to ensure that we maintain control over the type of unit and the way in which it can be used.

We impose our model conditions to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted drawings and particulars.

We impose the following condition to ensure control over replacements.

*None of the camping pods hereby permitted shall be replaced by any other structure(s) or caravan(s) differing from the approved details, unless and until details of the size, design and colour of such replacements have first been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

We impose the following condition to ensure control over how the pods are used.

*The pods hereby permitted shall not be occupied otherwise than for short term holiday letting purposes and shall not be occupied as a person's sole or main place of residence. The owner/operator shall maintain an up to date register of the names and addresses on the occupiers of the pods and shall make the register available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority upon request.*

## **Do service connections need planning permission?**

The excavation of trenches and laying of pipe work and cabling together with above ground posts, connection boxes and such like are likely to amount to development (albeit small scale) that requires planning permission. However, simply connecting a hook-up cable to an existing electric point would not.

## **Are service connections permitted development?**

General Permitted Development Order Schedule 2, Part 5, Class B allows 'development required by the conditions of a site licence for the time being in force under the 1960 Act' as permitted development. This means that if there is a caravan site licence in place or one will be sought (depends on the approach of the District site licensing authorities) and if that licence requires a connection then it will be permitted development.

It is not clear how the site licensing authorities will respond. Pods are not caravans but meet a planning definition of one. On this basis it may be prudent to use conditions along the following lines to maintain our control.

## **Water and drainage conditions**

There have been no instances of water or drainage connection to camping pods and given their small size it is unlikely that facilities could be installed. For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that camping pods continue to provide basic affordable accommodation akin to a tent, we may impose the following condition.

*None of the camping pods hereby permitted shall be connected to a water supply or be provided with drainage.*

**When a mains hook-up is not proposed**

Many tents and caravans are connected to mains electricity supply via hook ups. However, camping pods are permitted as a departure from policy on caravans partly because of the simple accommodation that they provide and for these reasons we impose the following condition. Where appropriate we will expand the reason to refer to the visual impact of electric lighting.

*None of the camping pods hereby permitted shall be connected to mains electricity supply.*

**When a mains hook-up is proposed and is considered acceptable**

In the event that there are some particular circumstances where a hook up is acceptable the following condition would be appropriate.

*None of the camping pods hereby permitted shall be connected to mains electricity supply otherwise than by means of a single campsite electrical hook-up cable. The hook-up shall only be installed in accordance with details which shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

## Annex A: Definition of a caravan

### The Legal Definition of a Caravan

The planning system relies upon the definition of a caravan as set out in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (as amended), and the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Section 29(1) of the 1960 Act 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) and any motor vehicle so designed or adapted but does not include:

- a) Any railway rolling stock which is for the time being on rails forming part of a railway system, or
- b) Any tent.”

Additional provisions also relate to twin-unit caravans. Section 13(1) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 provides that:

“A structure designed or adapted for human habitation which:

- a) Is composed of not more than two sections separately constructed and designed to be assembled on a site by means of bolts, clamps or other devices; and
- b) Is, when assembled, physically capable of being moved by road from one place to another (whether by being towed, or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer)

shall not be treated as not being (or not having been) a caravan within the meaning of Part 1 of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 by reason only that it cannot lawfully be moved on a highway when assembled.”

A twin unit caravan shall not be larger than:

- a) Length (exclusive of any drawbar): 20 metres (65.616 feet)
- b) Width: 6.8 metres (23.309 feet)
- c) Internal height: 3.05 metres (10.006 feet).

The current legal definition of a caravan is broad, and can include a wide range of structures. It is our long held view that a Camping Pod falls within the legal definition of a caravan (a view which has been supported by Inspectors at appeal), however by virtue of their size and construction the wider impact of Camping Pods is typically more akin to the impact of a tent than to that of a larger traditional touring or static caravan.

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A duty planning officer is available Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 12.30pm to talk to either by phone or in person at our Kendal offices. We also run planning surgeries in Keswick, Glenridding and Gosforth where you can meet an officer in person. Please see our website or call us for details of surgery times and locations.

We will update our Practice Guidance on the basis of experience. If you have any views on our guidance please let us know at [planning@lakedistrict.gov.uk](mailto:planning@lakedistrict.gov.uk)