

# H.C.A. Members In Force At Public Enquiry

## Chewton Glen House Hotel And Parkland Caravan Site

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**MEMBERS of the 400-strong Highcliffe Citizens' Association were among the objectors at a public inquiry at Christchurch Town Hall which opened on Wednesday. Some of the members went to the inquiry to hear H.C.A. member, Coun. Col. A. C. Tarnow, put forward their objection.**

The inquiry, conducted by Mr. K. Dodds, the Inspector appointed by the Minister, was into the refusal of the Hampshire County Council, as Local Planning Authority, to give permission for the use of Chewton Glen House Hotel and grounds as a motel with chalets and/or caravans for holiday use; and the use of Parkland Caravan Site, New Milton, for residential development.

Other objections were made by the Hampshire County Council; the Christchurch Borough Council; Mr. L. J. J. Morgan appeared for seven occupiers of Chewton Farm Road;

Mr. W. Gordon Palmer, appeared for ratepayers who objected to the plan; Mr. J. G. Thompson, chartered surveyor, who represented Mrs. F. L. Kemp-Welch.

Counsel for the appellants was Mr. A. E. Telling, instructed by Willmot and East, solicitors, Boscombe.

Mr. Telling said that Parkland consisted of a site of 17½ acres, which was wholly within the Borough of Lymington. It had planning permission, expiring in 1962 for some 275 caravans. That total could be divided into approximately 100 permanent residential caravans and 175 holiday caravans.

"Ten years ago when this was started as a caravan site, Parkland was almost entirely in semi-rural surroundings. Today the picture is very different indeed. The area is almost built up. My clients felt that in view of the encroachment of residential development on three sides of their caravan site it would be a good thing to find another site and to move away.

"The proposal which my clients have in mind is that if and when they get planning permission for another site, they would transfer the holiday caravans thereto."

### NEW SITE

Referring to the Chewton Glen site, he said it was found and purchased with a view to opening on it a new caravan site and taking there the holiday caravans from Parklands.

He said it was a site of approximately 26½ acres—of which only a small part was in the Borough of Christchurch. "In contrast to Parklands which is wholly south of the main A337 road, Chewton Glen is wholly to the north of it."

**The appellants felt that with suitable treatment it would make a first class caravan site. The house was in considerable need of repair and they had obtained estimates which ran into thousands of pounds.**

"In my submission these facts are of considerable significance to this inquiry, because they must assist in forming a judgment as to the possible future use of this house and buildings and we shall be showing that apart from a caravan cum chalet site using the house partly as a motel and partly as a community centre for the caravan site, it is difficult to see any profitable use to which the house can now be put having regard to the very extensive repairs that are now necessary."

### THREE PURPOSES

Mr. Telling said the application which had been made in respect of Chewton Glen site was for the use of the house as a motel and for the use of the grounds for holiday chalets and/or caravans. "What we are asking for today is approval in principle to the use of the Chewton Glen site for these purposes, leaving detailed plans to be submitted to the appropriate local authorities in due course."

"The application refers to chalets and/or caravans. I think I should say the present intention is that there should be a number of chalets on part of the site, but that the greater number should be caravans. We haven't stated in the application any particular number of caravans but the maximum which the appellants have in mind would be 275 and they would be agreeable to a condition limiting the use of the site to 275 caravans and chalets combined."

**He said the caravans would be sited in a gross density of 10 to the acre. He reminded the inquiry that the Minister's model standards for caravan sites specified that the gross maximum density of caravans should be 25 to the acre.**

"The appellants company are prepared to spend a good deal of money in order to create something which would be acceptable to the local authorities and which they themselves would be justly proud."

He thought the company should have some security of tenure if they were to spend large sums of money on the site, and—"from the planning point of view they should have a permanent planning permission or they should have a long term planning permission say for 21 years."

Listing the issues in the appeal, Mr. Telling dealt with the Chewton Glen site.

#### HOLIDAY NEEDS

Referring to holiday needs, he said: "We submit that the proposed use of Chewton Glen as a site for holiday caravans and chalets is a highly desirable development because it does meet the holiday needs of the people of this country and their families who in increasing numbers are turning to this kind of holiday.

"Quite obviously the Minister recognises that there is a tremendous demand for holiday sites and it is going to continue. That makes this a desirable development which ought to be allowed unless there are cogent planning objections."

**He said there was no risk of saturation in the area from caravan sites. It would be part of his clients' evidence that a number of caravan sites in the area would be closing down in the next few years.**

As to the suitability of the site, Mr. Telling commented: "We say that this is potentially a first-class site for this purpose. Chewton Glen is eminently suitable, its natural features make possible an attractive lay-out which will in no way interfere with the amenities of the area."

The third point he made was that in the appellants' submission there was no future for the house as an hotel.

#### DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Commenting on the Development plan, he said the position as they understood it was that Chewton Glen was included in the green belt. "I think that fact is supported by the fact that the Hampshire County Council have included in their green belt a number of caravan sites."

On suitability of other sites, he said the company had looked around extensively in the locality, but had been unable to find other sites which would have been at all suitable.

**Referring to the danger of the holiday-makers crossing the busy A337 road, he said: "My clients are prepared to consider the possibility of a pedestrian bridge over the road."**

At the resumed hearing of the inquiry yesterday, the Town Clerk of Lymington, Mr. A. L. Slater, said his Council were in favour of the appeal, and he said: "The inquiry revealed a divergence of views, a rare occurrence between the adjoining Boroughs of Lymington and Christchurch. We are in favour of it and they are opposing it. Whether the opposition lies in the realms of planning or whether it is a bias of caravan sites in general is something that the Minister will wish to consider in the light of evidence emerging at the inquiry."

#### ABHORRENT TO SOME

He said that to some, caravan sites were always abhorrent, there were always people who objected to a caravan site, and it was the planning authorities' duty to see that caravans were not unsuitably placed. "When you go and look at Chewton Glen is it not possible that this particular site is pretty good for the purpose? Is it not the sort of site that could well be adapted as a good caravan site? "We consider that the approval, if given, should be made subject to carefully framed conditions strictly observed. If that were done the site could be satisfactorily maintained as a caravan site."

Putting forward the County Council's case, the Deputy County Clerk, Mr. A. H. M. Smyth, said he was not disguising the fact that there had been a considerable difference of opinion about the application, and he did not suggest that a decision on it would be an easy one.

"The view of the County Council is that this is a major development and they are looking in vain for , compelling reasons which should re-inforce the appellants' application for permission.

"The only reason is that the appellants' want to transport 270, caravans from A to B," he added.

He said the company had admitted it would be very much to their convenience if the caravans were left on the site all the year round.

"It would be idle to deny that if caravans are to be allowed on the north side of the road, this is a very good site. That is the reason why there has been disagreement. If there has to be a clutter of caravans this is undoubtedly the best place to hide that clutter. The long term effect of the whole of this area will in my submission be disastrous."

Giving reasons for refusal, Mr. T. F. Thompson, County Planning Officer, said:—

"The site of Chewton Glen House Hotel is within an area in which the County Development Plan provides that the existing use shall, for the most part, remain undisturbed, and the proposed use would be inconsistent with these provisions.

"The site is within the proposed Green Belt and the development proposed would be contrary to the intention of the Local Planning Authority to preserve the existing character of the Green Belt.

"The proposed development of Chewton Glen House Hotel and grounds would be out of character with and injurious to the amenities of this pleasant rural area between Milton and Highcliffe.

"Part of the land is required for the future improvement of the principal traffic route linking Lyminster and Christchurch.

"Any substantial increase in the use of the existing accesses to this principal traffic route as proposed would be dangerous and interfere with the free flow of traffic using this road, particularly having regard to the fact that the residents on the holiday site must of necessity cross this road to reach the beaches."

The refusal to permit the use of Parkland Caravan Park, Christchurch Road, New Milton, for residential development is for the reason that it was considered that the site should be retained as a caravan site and not developed residentially until such time as a suitable alternative site can be agreed, particularly having regard to the presence of a considerable number of residential caravans on the site.

Mr. J. Macfadyen, Christchurch Town Clerk, said Christchurch Corporation was concerned with only three acres of the property in question which were in the borough.

After taking out acres of land on the proposed site which were to be used for scheduled road development, land round Chewton Farm House and two acres for Ministry model site standards there were 13 acres left on which to site 250 caravans.

#### STAR-SHAPED CLUSTERS

"I'm not saying you can't plot 250 caravans on 13 acres and still be within Ministry standards, but it has been said that this site would not bear the same appearance as the present Parkland site, but would be more attractive. The caravans, it was said, would not be placed in regimental rows but in star-shaped clusters.

**"If you are to place 250 caravans on 13 acres, keeping within the Ministry requirements, you are not going to have much scope for landscaping, clustering and shrubs and therefore the appearance would be much the same as any other site."**

Mr. Macfadyen went on to say that it had been said that another special feature of the site was that it would be "unobtrusive". It would be hidden by trees and surrounded by a six foot high fence.

"It is not an unobtrusive as it may at first seem," he said. Along the south side of the existing site there was a board on which it stated: 'Sale by auction of land on which planning permission for 256 flats has been obtained.'

"Lyminster Council had stated that the whole of the Barton area, where possible, was built up and had given this as one of their reasons for wanting the caravan site. Surely this new block of 256 flats, on which I believe work is to be started in the near future, will take away some of the difficulty of finding a new place. Therefore there is no urgent necessity to bring caravans to Chewton Glen.

#### "ALREADY WITH US"

"There are 871 holiday caravan sites in Christchurch and 1,600 sites in Lyminster and it's no good us keeping our watch to make sure we don't reach saturation point as far as sites go in the Borough. Saturation is already with us," he concluded.

## ONLY THREE ACRES

Councillor W. E. Tucker, chairman of the Planning Committee of the Christchurch Council, said that of the 26½ acres involved in the appeal only three acres were situate in Christchurch, but his borough was also affected by the use made of the remaining lands immediately adjoining the boundary. "At the present time the appeal site and the surrounding farm land constitutes a pleasant and useful break between the built up areas of Highcliffe and Milton and although my Council objected to much of the Hampshire County Council Green Belt proposals, they did not object to this particular area.

"In the Borough of Christchurch, generous provision has already been made for caravan sites and the Council would not readily accept another one partly in the Borough and partly immediately adjoining.

## DETRIMENTAL

"One of the accesses to and from the proposed site would be to Chewton Farm Road within the Borough of Christchurch and in view of the very busy nature of the road A.337, it may well be that the Chewton Farm Road access would be used very substantially; this would be seriously detrimental to the amenities there. There some pleasant residential property in that road which would be affected and the access itself is not good.

"I regret that in this there would appear to be some conflict between the Councils of Christchurch and Lymington, and I appreciate the difficulty of the Lymington Council in securing residential development on land which is now used for caravans, but I do not think it is right that an alternative site should be proposed in a position which will detrimentally affect my Borough."