

Divided Opinion On Highcliffe Motel, Caravan Plan

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SOUTH West Hampshire Area Planning Committee, meeting at Lyndhurst on Wednesday, was unable to decide whether to recommend the County Planning Committee to approve or reject proposed development at Highcliffe, which includes use of Chewton Glen House Hotel as a motel.

There was a clear division of opinion on the matter, and after a lengthy debate a resolution that approval should be recommended was put to the meeting. The voting? Six members voted for and six against. The application before the committee was in two parts. Firstly permission was sought for use of the Chewton Glen House Hotel with grounds of over 26 acres as a motel, with chalets, or chalets and caravan, for holiday use in place of the existing holiday caravan site at Parkland. Second part of the application was for use of the Parkland Caravan Park for residential development

Area Planning Officer Mr. F. F. Freeth reported that the majority of the land concerned in the application was within Lymington Borough but approximately three acres of the grounds of Chewton House Hotel were within Christchurch Borough.

He recalled that consideration of the application was deferred at the committee's last meeting pending reference to the Christchurch Development Sub-committee and for particulars of the application to be advertised to give an opportunity to interested persons to express their views.

INSPECTION

The Lymington Development Sub-committee and the sub-committee of the area committee, set up to inspect the sites concerned, recommended that the proposed development be approved subject to certain conditions. The Christchurch Development Sub-committee however, had resolved that the area committee be recommended that it would regret the development of that area as a caravan site.

Mr. A. H. M. Smyth, Deputy Clerk to the County Council, said several written objections had been received. One was from Mr. C. A. Buckwell of The Lodge, Chewton Farm Road, who said he strongly objected to the proposed development on the grounds of loss of amenity, road safety, and in the interests of good planning. For the drive to Chewton Farm Road to be used as an access to a caravan site would create an added traffic hazard and loss of amenity suffered by him and by neighbours would be considerable. What was now a quiet country lane would be turned into a main thoroughfare.

OBJECTIONS

Objection was also lodged by Mr. Barrington Myers on behalf of Mr. George B. Rolfe and Capt. H. A. J. Woodfall. In common with several local residents they were deeply concerned and strongly objected to the proposed development. Principle objections were that establishment of a caravan park would be detrimental to the amenities of the area and out of character with neighbouring property. Also it would create unduly dense traffic and hazards both on the main road and the Chewton Farm Road.

Mr. P. Halcrow, of Rosemary, Stuart Road, Highcliffe, wrote protesting most strongly. The development, if proceeded with, would very much destroy the amenities of the area and lower the value of property near to it "There are already so many caravans and chalets in the area that saturation point has been reached without further development," he wrote.

The other objection was sent on behalf of Mrs. F. L. Kemp-Welch, owner of Chewton Glen Farm, whose grounds of objection were said to be that the proposed development would be an undesirable infringement of the green belt proposals and would prejudicially affect the amenities of the neighbourhood including her own property.

ATTRACTIVE SITE

Ald. S. G. David (Lymington) said the development of Chewton Glen was contingent, from the Lymington point of view, on the Parkland Caravan site being closed and the land being made available for housing development. "As the Chewton Glen is a particularly attractive site, is unsuitable for farming and is well

screened from the high road we think it is a particularly suitable site for the development suggested there," he added.

Col. A. C. Tarnow, however, contended that the Parkland site was better in terms of concealment, and did not agree that Chewton Glen was particularly well screened.

Ald. J. W. Beagley said Chewton Glen was well wooded and added the Planning Committee and Development Sub-committee would be able to keep a close watch on the layout proposals and hope it would result in the establishment of something infinitely superior to any of the existing caravan camps in the area.

Ald. W. E. Morgan, chairman of Christchurch Council's Highways Committee, said the development would present difficulties regarding access on to Chewton Farm Road and the main road. He described the present access on to the main road as one of the worst spots in Christchurch - "it is perfectly dreadful there".

OLD PROPERTIES

Dr. A. T. Westlake said the proposed development seemed by far the best way of preserving the existing property. "One knows what happens to these old properties when they are split up and sold."

Coun. W. E. Tucker said if every member of the Christchurch Development Sub-committee had inspected the site, as he had done, he felt certain they would have resolved something different and more pungent than what was actually resolved at the meeting.

As he understood it, the new Caravan Act envisaged something like 30 caravans per acre, so could they look forward to something like 800 caravans on the proposed site? It would be a "tremendous thing" to put into the Green Belt.

He would say there would be no objection from the Christchurch point of view to flats being built on the Parkland site. But he went on: "I think it would be the absolute essence of bad planning if this development took place in Chewton Glen". In the area of the proposed development were some fine properties and he thought out of fairness to the owners the application should be refused.

165 CAMPS

Col. Tarnow claimed that Hampshire with 165 camps had the second highest number of caravan camps per county in the country. Yorkshire being the highest with 192.

There were nine camps, holding over 1,000 sites between Hoburne and Parkland, a distance of about two miles. These would however be concentrated into a 1½ mile stretch if the Parkland caravans were moved into Chewton Glen.

Mr. D. H. E. Hockley, Deputy County Planning Officer, said the sub-committee which had visited the site, envisaged the caravan site with additional landscaping and that it would be a superbly run site. He emphasised that it would be holiday development only.

He went on: "You must make provision for holiday caravanning in coastal areas. That is essential and I think under the new Caravan Act you are going to have to do more of it".

HOLIDAY FACILITIES

The ideal thing was to select sites fairly well landscaped and get rid of the worst examples of caravan sites. "It struck me on this site there were great possibilities and, which combined with the motel, would give very good holiday facilities indeed in a place near to the coast," added Mr. Hockley.

Reiterating that the present proposal was for holiday development only, Mr. Hockley said a high density residential site they would recommend for refusal. He thought permission on the present application, if granted, would be subject to some agreement with the owner on the point of density.

HIGH CLASS CAMP

Dr. Westlake said Mr. Hockley had said the developer in this particular case was very anxious it should be a high class camp and the last thing he would do was put a lot of caravans all "higgledy piggledy".

The application will go forward to the County Planning Committee without a recommendation from the area committee but the recommendations of both development sub-committees concerned will be attached.