

Highcliffe is at the cross-roads, says H.C.A. Where do we go from here—

SHANTY TOWN OR PLANNED HOUSING AREA?

December 17, 1954

APPROVAL of the development of a caravan park at Holmhurst would lead to "an island of caravans in a sea of residences," it was submitted at a public inquiry at Christchurch Town Hall on Tuesday.

In one blow the present 37 acres of caravan sites in the Borough would be almost doubled to 62 acres.

"And 37 acres is a large area unless it is the desire of the planners to make this part of the country entirely a shanty and caravan town," said Mr. J. Jenkins, appearing for a number of objectors to the proposal.

For the applicant, Mr. H. A. J. Burry, of Bashley Manor, New Milton, it was submitted no better screened site could be found, no commercial holiday camp was intended, and the Borough Council were anxious the site should not be developed too quickly for housing.

The inquiry was into an application by Mr. Burry for permission to develop land at Holmhurst for building and a caravan park, and into a further application by Messrs' R. E. Stanley (Bournemouth) Ltd., for permission to develop land at Wolhayes for building, and the use of the mansion as a convent and convent school.

The applications were heard by Mr. R. A. Hudson, Ministry of (*Text missing*).

Result of the inquiry, it was submitted by Lt.-Col. A. C. Tarnow, representing Highcliffe Citizens Association, would determine whether Highcliffe became "a collection of bits and pieces or a planned housing area of reasonable standard."

NO PERMANENT DWELLERS.

Presenting the Holmhurst application, Mr. Robert Hughes, representing Mr. Burry, stressed there was no intention to develop on a basis of a commercial holiday camp. A caravan park was intended where people could leave their caravans and spend the week-end or their holidays. Mr Burry did not propose to have any permanent caravan dwellers.

Mr. Burry said he proposed to develop some 25 acres of the 54 acre site for housing. The site, fronting Hinton Wood Avenue, would be developed in accordance with Planning Authority requirements and would be of a character suitable to the neighbourhood. He intended to erect a high fence completely shutting of the building estate from the rest of the land which would be used as the caravan park.

The road leading into Pinewood Close would be closed and all wooded land would be left in its natural state. The house and outbuildings would be used as a club and recreation rooms for visitors slaying at the caravan park.

Given permission to develop, he anticipated spending some £20,000 over the next five years.

100 HOUSES.

In cross examination Mr. Burry said he proposed to build about 100 houses and would not start building for a year.

The number of caravans would be about 160, and there would probably be a shop for the site.

In reply to Mr. Gordon Palmer he confirmed that a London nature association was interested in the area.

Mr. Palmer said that because the association's approach had not been turned down immediately Mr. Burry had alarmed the susceptibilities of many local residents. He suggested that if successful the application would lead to part of Highcliffe becoming "something of a Sodom and Gomorrah" and that was not wanted.

In reply to Mr. Hudson Mr. Burry said the proposed park site was suitable for housing but he did not think such development was needed at the moment.

WOLHAYES

Mr. R. E. Stanley, managing director of Messrs. R. E. Stanley (Bournemouth) Ltd., referring to his application for Wolhayes said it was proposed to develop about 80 acres as a superior residential housing estate, and about 15 acres, comprising the mansion stable block, lodge and immediate surroundings, as a convent and convent school.

Land suitable for residential development was very short in the area. In particular the demand for building land in Christchurch had been accentuated recently by the fact that Christchurch airfield, zoned for residential development on the original development plan, had now been confirmed as an airfield by the Minister.

Objecting to the caravan park proposal Mr. Stanley said it was considered such development had reached saturation point at Highcliffe.

He considered the proposal would have a serious effect on the sewerage problem during prolonged rainy spells when the town sewers were overloaded. This could not fail to affect the amount of building development permitted by the council.

Finally he drew attention to the Minister's decisions in two recent local appeals against refusal of planning permission for the use of land for holiday camps. Both decisions upheld the local planning authority's refusal.

300 HOUSES

In cross examination Mr. Stanley said about 300 houses would be built at four to the acre. Building could not be started for at least two years, and the rate would be about 75 houses a year.

Mr. M. A. Baines, for the County Council, said the County Planning Authority had not been prepared to agree to the details of the original applications but had agreed in principle to the proposals. Regarding the holiday camp outline permission had been granted for a limited period, expiring in 1959, the idea being to judge by results. On the town development map a holiday camp had been earmarked for the Wolhayes area because two of the existing camps would be badly affected by road proposals.

The proposed housing development might only replace residential development which was not going to be on the town map when it was approved by the Minister. In the absence of any real reasons to the contrary, the Planning Authority were disposed to agree to the use of the land for residential purposes but did not regard the plans as satisfactory and wanted co-ordination in the planning of the two areas.

Referring to education Mr. Baines said that a site of about seven acres should be reserved, in a central position, for a primary school. The Ministry of Agriculture had said they would be pleased to see the primary school site moved from the Chewton Glen Farm.

Finally, he suggested that the Minister's decision should not be to approve the applications as submitted but to give the Planning Authority and applicants an opportunity to get together and try to produce an overall plan.

The Town Clerk, Mr. J. Macfadyen, stressing the need for permission to be given to construct the new sewerage works, said it was considered the Borough could deal with the sewerage problem provided the rate of development was controlled and the Minister realised the desirability of the new works.

Col. Tarnow said his association asked the Minister to give the Planning Authority permission to develop Highcliffe as an entity. They did not oppose ordered development.

SATURATION POINT.

On the question of a caravan park, however, it was felt saturation point had been reached. There were now 342 caravans in the Highcliffe area out of the 749 in the Borough. Within a mile radius of Holmhurst there were nearly 1000 caravans as well as a large number of temporary buildings.

Mr. Gordon Palmer objected to the caravan proposal, pointing out that the lowest rated house would contribute more to the rates than a caravan site.

Other objections came from residents who considered the proposal detrimental to nearby properties.

Mr. Jenkins, summing up, said his clients (Major D. D. Milne, Cmdr. F.C., and Mr. B. P. Neale, and some residents of Pinewood Close) did not object to residential development by either applicant. Their objection was purely against the caravan park.

It had been stated the application was for a limited period. If it was allowed for five years and if £20,000 was spent it might as well be for ever.

"We have been told by the Town Clerk there is some difficulty as far as sewerage is concerned," he added. "If permission was granted it would mean delaying the building of 80 residences."

Mr. Hughes said the Council had not said a single word about the caravan proposal, so one could only infer the objections came from a certain section of the inhabitants.

He submitted that if there were to be traffic difficulties the police would have had something to say, and that the Corporation were most anxious the site should not be developed too quickly for housing.