

APPLICATION NUMBER:	LW/07/1004	ITEM NUMBER:	13
APPLICANTS NAME(S):	Mr T Carr	PARISH / WARD:	Lewes / Lewes Priory
PROPOSAL:	Planning Application for Change of use of agricultural land to camping site between April - September each year and erection of toilet/shower block		
SITE ADDRESS:	Land Adjacent Spring Barn Farm, Kingston Road, Lewes, East Sussex,		
GRID REF:	TQ 3908		



1. SITE DESCRIPTION / PROPOSAL

1.1 Spring Barn Farm is located off Kingston Road, Lewes. Planning permission is sought to change the use of part of a field close to the farm buildings to a campsite between April and September each year. It is also proposed to construct a shower/toilet block behind one of the farm buildings to serve both the campsite and the farm park. The site lies within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2. RELEVANT POLICIES

LDLP: – ST03 – Design, Form and Setting of Development

LDLP: – CT01 – Planning Boundary and Countryside Policy

LDLP: – CT02 – Landscape Conservation and Enhancement

LDLP: – E16 – New Camping/Touring Caravan Sites

3. PLANNING HISTORY

LW/02/1904 - Change of use from farm to farm/childrens visitor centre, including tea room – **Approved**

LW/01/0404 - Use of land for camping between April - September each year. Temporary Permission Expires 30/09/2002. - **Approved**

4. REPRESENTATIONS FROM STANDARD CONSULTEES

Lewes Town Council – No comment

ESCC Highways – No objection as the site access geometry and visibility are to standard and parking provision is not applicable in this case.

South Downs Joint Committee – The former Conservation Board did not object to the previous application near Kingston school as the small scale use proposed appeared appropriate and it would have been useful for walkers along the South Downs Way. The current proposal is further from the South Downs Way but is still within a reasonable distance. The proposed months of opening (April-September) are the same as previously.

No objection subject to conditions to control external materials of toilet/shower block; the number of weeks/months a year that the site is open; and the number of tents allowed at any one time.

The South Downs Society – No objection in principle. Aware of shortage of camping facilities in South Downs area. Wonder whether it would now be appropriate to prepare a masterplan to consider any future development and landscaping at the site. Too many noticeboards at the site.

Environment Agency – No objection

ESCC Rights Of Way Officer – No objection

Kingston Parish Council – Object. The site is visually obtrusive from the Lewes-Newhaven road and from the village of Kingston. It is within the Sussex Downs AONB and will have a serious detrimental effect upon the character and appearance of the AONB, the setting of Kingston and will erode the countryside gap between Lewes and Kingston. Contrary to Policies CT1, CT2 and E16. Increased traffic hazards. Conflict with public footpath users. Piecemeal nature of proposals at the farm. Should submit a comprehensive management plan.

5. REPRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

5.1 Friends of Lewes - The land adjacent to Spring Barn Farm has been developed in a piecemeal fashion. There appears to be no proper landscaping and the area is not well maintained. Consider that planning permission should be withheld until an overall strategy for the whole area has been produced and agreed, with the right controls in place for its future maintenance.

5.2 One letter received - the site is being steadily developed from its basic farming purpose to an ever increasing commercial use; dangerous access; caravans and mobile homes should not be allowed; tents should be out of sight of the road.

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Temporary planning permission was granted for a campsite use on another part of the farm building in 2001 (LW/01/1404), which was closer to Kingston village with access from Wellgreen Lane. This permission was never implemented as the farm owners concentrated on developing the farm park, which is now a successful enterprise.

6.2 This application seeks to locate the camping area closer to the main farm buildings and farm park. The site comprises a flat area of field to the west of the farm park which measures approximately 150m by 30m. The site is on low lying land, with the slope of the field rising to the north behind the site. The siting of tents within this area will be visible in distant views from the South Downs, but it will not be unduly prominent when viewed from the Lewes-Newhaven road some 200m to the east. It is not considered that any additional landscaping will be necessary to screen the area. The use is to be carried on between April and September each year.

6.3 The proposed toilet/shower block will be sited behind an agricultural barn to the west of the farm park. The facilities will be shared with the farm park. It will measure 12m by 6m and will be constructed of shiplap boarding with a tiled roof. The land rises up steeply to the north and the block will be well related to existing buildings and will not appear as an isolated feature in the landscape.

6.4 Policy CT1 allows for certain tourism proposals within the countryside while Policy CT2 seeks to protect the AONB landscape from harmful development. Quiet, informal activities, such as camping, are permitted within such landscapes. Policy E16 refers to new camping sites within the AONB and states that such uses will only be permitted where there is a genuine need for the facility which cannot be met outside the AONB and where the proposal respects the landscape character of the AONB.

6.5 It is considered that this use will provide further opportunities for the enjoyment of the South Downs. Both the South Downs Joint Committee and South Downs Society support the proposal as such facilities are in short supply in the area. The camp site is relatively small scale and the use would only occur for a limited amount of the year. Consequently, it is not considered that the use will have a serious visual impact on the AONB.

6.6 It is unlikely that vehicular activity will substantially increase as the campsite is likely to primarily attract walkers and cyclists from off the Downs. However, the vehicular access to the farm has been improved in recent years and there are no highway safety concerns should there be an increase in traffic in this location. The use is for camping with tents only and is not for caravans or mobile homes. The relatively small area to be used for camping will limit the number of tents that can be on the site at any one time and a condition is not considered to be necessary.

6.7 The concerns of Kingston Parish Council and the Friends of Lewes are noted. However, it is not considered that this proposal will unduly harm the character or appearance of the area. While there have been a number of farm diversification schemes at the farm in recent years, these have all been considered on their merits and have not resulted in harm to the area. It is not considered to be reasonable to require the applicants to provide a management plan for future proposals at the farm as this application is for an amendment to a previous scheme rather than a new proposal.

6.8 It is therefore considered that permission can be granted.

7. RECOMMENDATION

That permission is granted

The application is subject to the following conditions:

1. The use of the land for camping shall only take place between 1 April and 30 September in any calendar year.

Reason - In the interest of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and local amenity having regard to Policy CT2 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

2. The campsite hereby approved shall be used for the pitching of tents only and no caravans or mobile homes shall be permitted on the site at any time.

Reason - To safeguard the landscape character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty having regard to Policy CT2 of the Lewes District Local Plan

3. Development shall not begin until details of finished floor levels of the toilet/shower block in relation to the existing ground levels have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall then be carried out in accordance with these details.

Reason: In the interest of the character of the locality having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

4. Development shall not begin until details of foul drainage arrangements have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved drainage works shall be implemented prior to the commencement of the development.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory standard of development having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

5. Before the development hereby approved is commenced on site, details/samples of all external materials for the new toilet/shower block shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and carried out in accordance with that consent.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development in keeping with the locality having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

INFORMATIVE(S)

1. You are advised that, under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, if it is proposed to fill, divert, obstruct or culvert a watercourse, the prior consent of the Environment Agency would be required.

This decision is based on the following submitted plans/documents:

<u>PLAN TYPE</u>	<u>DATE RECEIVED</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Design & Access Statement	30 July 2007	
Location Plan	30 July 2007	1:2500
Proposed Floor Plans	30 July 2007	1:50
Proposed Elevations	30 July 2007	1:100

Summary of reasons for decision and any relevant development plan policies/proposal:

It is considered that the proposal meets the aims and objectives of Local Plan Policy and respects the character of the location, complying with Policies ST3, CT1, CT2 and E16 of the Lewes District Local Plan.