



Residential Caravans

**Planning advice
PA2023-14**

September 2023

Purpose of this Planning Advice

This Planning Advice has been designed to give best practice guidance for applicants when submitting a residential caravan proposal and what may be asked of applicants to support and demonstrate compatibility with Policy H4 Residential Caravans of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2023. Whilst National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) makes no reference to this specific type of proposal, it carries forward the six qualities of successful places that underpin the principal within Policy H4 in that caravans are inappropriate in all but a temporary context.

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1. Do I Need Planning Permission?

The stationing of a caravan on land for any period of time is classed as 'development' and requires planning permission. In a discreet number of circumstances there may be 'permitted development rights' that means that permission is not required, however this can be complex and you are advised to seek the advice of the [Planning Service](#) before exercising such rights as any breach would result in enforcement action and it is your responsibility to establish whether planning permission is required.

The general position is that a "caravan site" requires to have planning permission and a licence to operate. The statutory definition of a "caravan site" is:

"Land on which a caravan is stationed for the purpose of human habitation and land which is used in conjunction with land on which a caravan is so stationed".

Applicants should check separate caravan site licence requirements prior to the submission of a planning application. The Council's [Environmental Health Service](#) can advise further on licencing matters.

2. Definition of a Caravan

Many types of units, such as pods, static caravans and mobile homes can meet the definition of a 'caravan' for planning purposes but in order to do so they must all meet a number of requirements. To be classed as a 'caravan' a unit must:

- a) have been designed or adapted for human habitation; must be able to retain the element of mobility (i.e., be capable of being moved from one place to another (whether by being towed, or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer) in one or two sections);
- b) be shown to be capable of being dismantled into no more than two sections;
- c) and, when assembled, will not exceed the dimensions of length (20m) width (6.8m) and internal floor to ceiling height (3.05m).

If the proposal does not meet the required definition, it cannot be classed as a 'caravan' and will be classed as a building in terms of the law. Appendix 1 provides full details on the legal definitions in relation to caravans.

The term "residential caravan" within Policy H4 Residential Caravans includes any form of caravan (as defined above) proposed to be used as permanent accommodation in the form of unrestricted residential use all year round. A "residential caravan park" is the collective term for multiple residential caravans being used as permanent accommodation.

Touring caravan businesses and holiday caravan parks that are not promoted as permanent residences (use class 9), but are promoted as tourist businesses, should be considered under Policy B3 Tourist Facilities.

3. Policy H4 Residential Caravans

Any proposal for a residential caravan will be assessed against Policy H4 Residential caravans. Caravans are temporary structures that cannot be permanently fixed to the ground and are not designed specially to contribute to the context provided by the site and deliver the quality local identity, sense of place and aesthetics that could be achieved by a bespoke design of a house. Permission may be granted under this policy only to offer a temporary solution to housing and accommodation needs.

4. Length of Planning Permissions

Planning permission will be restricted for a period of time considered appropriate to the need case presented by the applicant. This will not normally exceed 3 years, with 5 years the maximum length of permission given in exceptional circumstances. Applicants should outline within the 'application form' the length of permission required and set out justification within a supporting statement.

Prior to the expiration of the planning permission, the removal of the caravan and restoration of the site will be required to accord with the conditions imposed with the permission.

Should the modification of planning conditions or renewal of the permission be sought intending to extend the length of the permission, this will only be considered appropriate in exceptional circumstances. The applicant should justify why the extension is required, demonstrating a strategy that will resolve the temporary housing need, for example through progression with building a permanent structure.

5. Preparing the Planning Application

Applications for residential caravans will be treated as a temporary change of use of the land with all the obligations associated with development of a housing site, unless the proposed caravan is ancillary to a dwelling house. If building and/or engineering works are required to make land suitable for use as a caravan site, then these works will in most cases also require planning permission and should be included as part of the planning application e.g., site leveling or creation of access. The application form and plans should make it clear whether the proposal is for ancillary accommodation or will be used as an independent residential unit.

Whilst each proposal will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, outlined below is a guide to what applicants should consider when preparing to submit a planning application to demonstrate the proposal meets the requirements of Policy H4 Residential Caravans.

Temporary Need

A statement should accompany the planning application setting out the following details:

- why temporary permission for a residential caravan is required;
- that alternative options have been explored; and
- when the circumstances that result in the need for a temporary residence (such as during the construction of a new house) will come to an end, and the temporary permission can elapse.

There should be no doubt that the proposal is only a temporary solution to the housing need. There should be a clear, defined period set out, for example that it is needed until an extension to the dwellinghouse is complete.

Siting of the Caravan

The siting of a residential caravan must respect the character and amenity of the surrounding area. Many of the design criteria set out within Policy P1 Layout, siting and design, Appendix 9: Building Design Guidance can be applied to residential caravans. However, residential caravans are unable to meet some of the requirements of Policy P1 Layout, siting and design, particularly in relation to adaptability and design. Appendix 2 below provides an adapted version of Policy P1's Appendix 9, setting out criteria that may be applied during the assessment of developments.

When considering the siting of a caravan, particularly in a rural context, landscape impacts will additionally be assessed under Policy E2 Landscape.

Servicing

Residential caravans will require to be satisfactorily serviced including:

- Provision of potable water, wastewater and surface-water drainage arrangements;
- Refuse disposal facilities;
- Satisfactory and safe access and car parking provision.

This information should be detailed in the application, including what the existing arrangements are for proposed ancillary accommodation where no change is proposed. In some instances, the creation of ancillary accommodation may be satisfactorily serviced by the existing dwellinghouse however evidence that this additional demand can be met will still be required in line with Policy RD1: Providing Suitable Services.

Other Policy Considerations

All relevant policies in the Plan apply to residential caravan proposals.

Highlighted in the table below, aside from those policies highlighted above, the following may also apply:

Table 1: Additional policies and why they may be relevant to residential caravan proposals.

Policy	Relevance to residential caravans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy R1 Special Rural Areas • Policy R2 Development Proposals Elsewhere in the Countryside 	<p>Applied to proposals outwith settlements, a housing use of the site should comply with rural development policies.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy P3 Infill Developments within Settlements and Householder Developments (including home and work proposals) 	<p>Applied to proposals situated within settlements, either on a vacant site or as ancillary development associated with an existing house, ensuring it does not impact on uses of neighbouring sites or impacts future development areas.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy E1 Natural Heritage • Policy HE1 Protecting Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Archaeological Sites (including other historic buildings) • Policy HE2 Protecting Historic, Cultural and Conservation Areas 	<p>When the proposal may impact on a site's natural or historic assets e.g., nature conservation sites, listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy PR1 Protecting Important Resources 	<p>To conserve natural resources, with a temporary permission unlikely to be able to overcome issues of sustainability, outweighing the loss of these resources.</p>

- Policy C4 Flooding

SEPA's ['Flood Risk and Land Use Vulnerability Guidance'](#) identifies caravans as a 'Most Vulnerable Use' to the impact of flooding.

Appendix 1 – Legislative Definitions Relating to Caravans

Definition of a Caravan Site

Part 1 – Section 1(4) of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 defines a caravan site as: “...*land on which a caravan(s) is stationed for the purposes of human habitation and land which is used in conjunction with land on which a caravan(s) is so stationed.*”

Definition of a Caravan

Section 29 (1) of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 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 any railway rolling stock ... or any tent].”

Section 13 (1) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 (as amended 2019), provides that: “*A structure designed or adapted for human habitation which 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 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)*” is a ‘twin-unit’ caravan provided it does not exceed the following maximum dimensions:

Table 2: Caravan Dimensions in Section 13 (2) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 as amended by the 2019 order.

a	Length (exclusive of any drawbar)	65.616 feet (20 metres)
b	Width	22.309 feet (6.8 metres)
c	overall height of living accommodation (measured internally from the floor at the lowest level to the ceiling at the highest level)	10.06 feet (3.05 metres)

Appendix 2 - Criteria for Siting a Caravan

All the criteria may not be applicable to each development proposal.

Table 3: Adapted version of Policy P1's Appendix 9.

Distinctive	Safe and pleasant	Welcoming
Fits within local context and pattern of development, respecting surrounding character, setting and identity.	Siting, layout and orientation should respond to the site context.	Ample private garden ground/curtilage should be provided or retained to maintain residential amenities. The scale of amenity space provision should fit within the context of the area.
Responds to natural and built heritage, utilising and protecting key features and assets.	Protection of surrounding amenity including privacy, and sunlight/daylight.	Should not result in adverse overshadowing or a loss of sunlight/daylight to neighbouring sites and properties.
Height, footprint and proportions respect surrounding area and can be accommodated within the site.	Openings and windows should be appropriately positioned to protect neighbouring amenity and avoid overlooking. Loss of privacy will be a judgement based on the individual proposal and on-site circumstances.	Should not be overbearing.
Should be subservient and correspond to the main building within the plot.	Adequate privacy provided, including screening by boundary treatments that are suitable for the site and its setting.	Trees and landscape features should be protected and enhanced.
	Ample and useable private garden ground/curtilage should be provided to maintain residential amenities. The scale of amenity space provision should fit within the context of the area.	
	Site is free from flooding and designed to be flood resilient. Buffer strips to be provided for any water body.	

	<p>Developments should connect to the mains public water supply and public sewer. Where a private water supply or drainage arrangement is proposed, all technical information and reasons for not connecting to a public water supply or sewer, as well as details of adoption agreements with Scottish Water or lifetime maintenance proposals should be provided.</p>	
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Resource efficient	Well connected
Proposal responds to topography and site levels, utilising existing natural and historic assets.	Sites are suitably accessible in accordance with Council standards, with adequate visibility.
Development responds to local climate including wind and solar gain.	Car parking meets Council Standards.
Incorporates appropriate and functional Sustainable Drainage Systems techniques.	Sufficient waste/refuse storage and collection provided in accordance with Council standards.
Proposals should not result in adverse overshadowing or loss of sunlight/daylight to neighbouring sites and properties.	Well connected to core paths, public transport options and amenities with a choice of travel options.
Development contains and/or enhances existing landscaping and green-blue infrastructure.	