
CONSULTATION PAPER – “AMENDING THE DEFINITION OF A CARAVAN”

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree the Council's response to a consultation paper issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on proposals to amend the definition of a caravan.
- 1.2 A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Members' Library.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 A caravan is defined in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 as amended by the Caravan Sites Act 1968 (The 1968 Act).
- 2.2 Section 13(2) of the 1968 Act prescribes the following maximum dimensions for “Twin Unit Caravans”.
 - (a) Length (exclusive of any draw bar) 60 feet (18.288 metres).
 - (b) Width: 20 feet (6.096 metres).
 - (a) Overall height of the living accommodation (measured internally from the floor at the lowest level to the ceiling at the highest level) 10 feet (3.048 metres).
- 2.3 The current legal definition of a caravan is detailed in Appendix 1.

3 PROPOSED AMENDMENT

- 3.1 The ODPM proposes to amend the dimensions set out in Section 13(2) of the 1968 Act as follows:
 - (b) Length (exclusive of any draw bar); 20 metres;
 - (c) Width: 6.8 metres; and
 - (d) Overall height of the living accommodation (measured internally from the floor at the lowest level to the ceiling at the highest level); 3.05 metres).
- 3.2 In addition the ODPM intend to issue new guidance on measuring caravans.

4 REASONS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The purpose of the proposed amendment is to enable existing caravan owners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

- 4.2 The most effective method of insulating a caravan is to apply external cladding of between 5 centimetres and 15 centimetres thickness. It is cheap and easy to install and can achieve up to 30% energy savings and can also increase fire retardant qualities.

- 4.3 The amended definition would enable owners of caravans that are the maximum size currently permitted to apply external cladding.

5 REVISION OF THE BRITISH STANDARD FOR PARK HOME MANUFACTURE

- 5.1 The new British Standard gives energy efficiency levels that are on a par with, and in some cases greater than, conventional bricks and mortar homes. To achieve this manufacturers have to provide greater wall insulation which means thicker walls are required. The increased dimensions that are proposed will enable existing designs to continue to be used, otherwise manufacturers would have to consider reducing the size of rooms.

6 OTHER MATTERS CONSIDERED BY ODPM

- 6.1 Model Standards – The site licence conditions, which are based on Model Standards, require minimum separation distances between units and between units and site boundaries and roads etc. Whilst these distances will have to be maintained if the definition of a caravan is changed, the ODPM intend to consult on revised Model Standard guidance later in the year which will take account of cladding having Class O fire rating when considering separation requirements.
- 6.2 Transport by roads – Caravans are usually transported by road on low loaders and the new proposals are considered to be within the dimensions of permitted loads.
- 6.3 Planning policy – The ODPM do not feel there will be any adverse planning implications. Although there may be fewer homes on site due to the increased size it is felt that caravan parks will still be able to meet PPG3 guidelines of 30 - 50 homes per hectare.

7 COMMENT

- 7.1 The proposed amendment is welcomed. Improvements to the insulation of mobile homes will enable owners to maintain reasonable temperatures using less energy and will help reduce fuel poverty. Energy conservation and the consequent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will have environmental benefits.
- 7.2 Under the Council's Housing Renewal Assistance Policy residents in receipt of a qualifying benefit or on a low income may be eligible for grant for the costs of insulating their mobile home.

8 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is proposed that the Committee RESOLVES

That the Council's response to the consultation is to support the proposed amendment to the definition of a caravan.

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Background Papers:-

None

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APPENDIX 1

Current Legal Definition of a Caravan

Section 29(1) of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 ("The 1960 Act") a caravan is defined 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:

- (a) Any railway rolling stock which is for the time being on rails forming part of a railway system, or
- (b) Any tent".

This definition has been modified by Section 13(1) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 ("The 1968 Act"), which deals with twin-unit caravans. Section 13(1) provides that:

"A structure designed or adapted for human habitation which:

- (a) 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
- (b) 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), shall not be treated as not being (or not having been) a caravan within the means of Part 1 of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 by reason only that it cannot lawfully be moved on a highway when assembled".

Section 13(2) of the 1968 Act prescribes the following maximum dimensions for "twin-unit caravans":

- (a) length (exclusive of any drawbar); 60 feet (18.288 metres);
- (b) width: 20 feet (6.096 metres);
- (c) overall height of living accommodation (measured internally from the floor at the lowest level to the ceiling at the highest level): 10 feet (3.048 metres).