

Planning permission and on-site caravan living?

We'll be living on site in a static caravan during our self-build. The caravan is included on our plans which were granted planning permission at the end of 2009. We've had a few setbacks but hope to start work this year. However, we're concerned about what the situation would be if we were still living in the caravan – whilst completing the build – when the planning expires. Will we need to reapply for planning permission in order to keep the caravan on site whilst the final work is completed?

As your scheme was permitted at the end of 2009 you now have three years within which to commence the project. Before you start work you need to ensure that any other conditions, e.g. submission of materials, are fully discharged so as to ensure the works are lawful.

As your application included the siting of a caravan for use during the construction of your new home I would consider that you would be able to keep this on site for the duration of the build. The three-year period only relates to the commencement of the scheme.

The GDPO (General Development Procedure Order) permits a caravan where it is 'reasonably required' in connection with development taking place on the land, such as the building of a new home. As long as works are being undertaken and are progressing then there should not be any problems, and the stationing of the caravan should be acceptable.

However, an Appeal decision in 2009 found that a caravan that had been stationed on the site of a new home for a period of 12 years and the building work had progressed but only as far as a few bricks. In this case the inspector found that the caravan had become the primary dwelling, which was not the intention of the GDPO. The caravan consequently had to be removed from the site; the phrase 'reasonably required' is therefore key!