
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 23 February 2010

Subject: Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (DPD) for Central Bedfordshire North

Report of: Councillor Nicols, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development

Summary: The report seeks the consideration and recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on a variance of the Gypsy and Traveller site and pitch distribution report agreed on 4 January 2010. This follows the loss of one site option known as Land off New Road, Clifton for reasons that will be expanded upon in this report.

Contact Officer: Richard Fox, 0300 300 8000

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: The Wards in the former Mid Bedfordshire Council area

Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The Local Development Framework is a fundamental part of the Council's key aim to manage growth effectively.

Financial:

The production of the Development Plan Document will require ongoing Officer input, particularly during the consultation period.

Legal:

The Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document, when adopted, will be part of the statutory development plan for the area.

Risk Management:

The adoption of the Development Plan Document will reduce the risk of the Council losing planning appeals for Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Equalities/Human Rights:

In recent years, there has been a shift from traditional, land use planning to a broader approach, which recognises the key role of spatial planning in promoting sustainable and cohesive communities. A consideration of equality and diversity must lie at the heart of this vision.

Community Development/Safety:

The Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document is intended to reduce the incidences of unauthorised encampments which can create community development issues.

Sustainability:

The Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document when adopted will form part of the Local Development Framework. The report identifies the location of Gypsy and Traveller, Transit and Travelling Showpeople sites in accordance with the accommodation needs expressed in the East of England Plan. The Local Development Framework embraces sustainable development as its overarching aim and has and will continue to be subject to a sustainability appraisal.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder:

- (i) Approves an amended Gypsy and Traveller site list to include land east of A6001, Hitchin Rd and opposite Henlow Camp (RAF).**
- (ii) Approves the pitch distribution between the site options as detailed in Table 3 of the report for consultation in the Preferred Sites consultation document.**

1. Background

- 1.1 Following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2010, the recommended shortlist of sites is no longer able to meet the need for 40 permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches to 2016 due to the loss of the option at land south of Clifton and east of New Road, Clifton. The consequence of this is the need to find a site capable of accommodating the 8 pitch deficit left by the removal of the Clifton site.

- 1.2 Today Members are asked to consider and recommend an alternative site list and pitch distribution to enable the Council to fulfil its requirement to 2016 in accordance with the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy. This provision to 2016 is in accordance with the current legislative framework and methodologies for determining need.

2. The Shortlisted Sites Agreed on 4 January 2010

- 2.1 The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2010 recommended the following shortlist of sites:

Table 1: List of Sites Shortlisted by OSC on 4 January 2010

Site Name	Parish
Permanent Pitches	
Land rear of 197 Hitchin Road, Arlesey	Arlesey
1 Old Acres, Barton Road, Pulloxhill	Pulloxhill
Hermitage Lane, off Westoning Road, Greenfield	Flitton and Greenfield
Oak Tree Nursery & Magpie Farm, Upper Caldecote	Northill
Land between Common Road and Myers Road, South of Gypsy and Traveller site, Potton	Potton
Land south of Dunton Lane, Biggleswade	Biggleswade
Land south of Clifton and east of New Road, Clifton	Clifton
Transit Pitches	
Sutton Storage Compound, south of Sutton	Sutton

- 2.2 However following the OSC meeting it was brought to the Council's attention that the land at New Road Clifton was sold to a private owner in 2001 and therefore no longer in the Council's ownership. The current site owner has stated that he has no interest in promoting part of the land for the purposes of a Gypsy and Traveller site. This means that the site is no longer deliverable unless the Council is prepared to undertake a Compulsory Purchase Order, which is both time consuming and expensive.

- 2.3 Land at New Road Clifton was suggested for a minimum of 8 pitches which have now been lost from the total. As such the distribution of pitches and list of sites will have to be revised to determine how 40 pitches can be distributed across the north part of Central Bedfordshire.
- 2.4 The Estates Team are currently checking site ownership for all other shortlisted public sites. The results of this will be fed back to the committee at the meeting.

3. New Site Options and Pitch Distribution

- 3.1 In order to replace land at New Road, Clifton, the highest scoring sites have been revisited. These scores reflect the application of site criteria agreed by OSC on 1 September 2009. The top five scoring sites and the reasons for their original rejection are as follows (please note that one of the top scoring sites at Arlesey has been proposed for shortlisting and therefore does not feature in this list):

3.2 Table 2: List of Top Scoring Sites

Site Name	Score	Reasons for Rejection
Land North of Arlesey Road, Stotfold	142	This site was rejected at Task Force on 7 December 2009. The location is at the entrance site to settlement and therefore concerns were raised about the site being too exposed and having a detrimental visual impact.
Land North of Arlesey Rd, Stotfold (larger parcel)	139	This site was rejected at Task Force on 7 December 2009. The site forms part of a leisure centre development site. Concerns were raised that the site is too exposed and would have a detrimental visual impact.
Land North of West Drive, Arlesey	137	This site was dismissed during earlier considerations of the Gypsy and Traveller site options, prior to the publication of the Preferred Options consultation in Nov 2008. Concerns were raised about water logging on site and the difficult access from Arlesey High Street.

Land between the A421 and Woburn Rd junction, Marston Moretaine	133	This site was rejected at OSC on 4 January 2010. There is a possibility that this site is ecologically sensitive and further investigation would be required. The site is also adjacent to a flood plain and would require draining and raising.
Land East of A6001, Hitchin Rd and opposite Henlow Camp (RAF)	127	This was rejected at Task Force on 7 December 2009. Concerns were raised about the nearby doctors surgery being full and that the site is prone to water logging.

- 3.3 With the loss of the Clifton site, Officers have undertaken a review of those top scoring sites (Table 2) in order to find a suitable replacement. Of those, the Henlow Camp site is considered to be the least constrained in planning terms and offers the most potential in meeting the pitch deficit by accommodating at least 10 pitches. Officers consider that the reasons for its rejection at Task Force on 7 December 2009 are surmountable when compared to those constraints identified for the other high scoring sites. Namely, there is potential within the existing health care system to meet the demand and secondly, the potential issues of flooding/water logging can through mediation works be overcome. Furthermore the site is highly accessible being located on the edge of the settlement, adjacent to a school and opposite RAF Henlow. Moreover, it is within walking distance of facilities in Henlow.
- 3.4 With regards to the doctor's surgery capacity, NHS Bedfordshire have stated that the surgery in Henlow has three GPs in it, with a total of 5,000 patients. The NHS target is 1800 patients per GP so there appears to be some capacity at this surgery. The NHS stated that GPs can normally take the demand generated from up to 50 dwellings without the need for extension of the surgery. Additionally, there are two neighbouring medical centres, one at Arlesey and one at Hitchin, which residents at Henlow can use.
- 3.5 With regards to possible flood risk, the site is not located within an area of defined flood risk, although the Council have had reports that it is prone to flooding / water logging. These issues can be addressed through appropriate surface water attenuation techniques, such as the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

4. Pitch Redistribution

4.1 Overall the potential pitch distribution can be adjusted, as shown in Table 3 below. This shows an increased pitch delivery of 47 permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches (and 2 transit pitches). Please refer to Appendix 1 for the site plans, showing the suggested allocation area. Suggesting high pitch numbers offers the opportunity to consult on a contingency if Members support this and depending on the results of the consultation, gives the Council the opportunity to adjust pitch numbers on certain sites.

4.2 Table 3: Pitch Distribution between Site Options

Site Name	Parish	Potential Pitch Numbers
Land rear of 197 Hitchin Road, Arlesey	Arlesey	Currently has temporary permission for 4 pitches. The site owner has expressed his support for more pitches. Authorise 4 pitches and add 6 new pitches to create a total of 10 pitches. Total = 10
1 Old Acres, Barton Road, Pulloxhill	Pulloxhill	Currently has temporary permission for 8 pitches. Authorise 8 pitches Total = 8
Hermitage Lane, off Westoning Road, Greenfield	Flitton and Greenfield	Currently 2 unauthorised, tolerated pitches. Authorise both existing pitches. Total = 2
Oak Tree Nursery & Magpie Farm, Upper Caldecote	Northill	Currently 3 pitches with permanent planning permission. The site owner has expressed his support for more pitches. Add 7 new pitches. Total = 7
Land between Common Road and Myers Road, South of Gypsy and Traveller site, Potton	Potton	Currently 14 pitches with permanent planning permission. Propose no new pitches as the site is currently overcrowded. Allocation of this extension will allow reconfiguration. Total = 0
Land south of Dunton Lane, Biggleswade	Biggleswade	Currently no development on this site. Propose 10 new pitches. Concerns has been raised about the lack of a footpath into

		Biggleswade or Dunton, but recent appeal decision where a LPA refused a planning application for a Gypsy and Traveller site between two settlements that was not served by a footpath was overturned by an Inspector. The Inspector determined that whilst both settlements lay within reasonable distance from the site and the roads lacked footpaths, the road was wide enough and quiet enough not to deter pedestrians and cyclists. However it would be preferable to provide a footpath to nearby services if this site is allocated. Total = 10
Land East of A6001, Hitchin Rd and opposite the RAF Henlow Camp	Henlow	Currently no development on this site. Propose 10 new pitches. Total = 10
Total Gypsy and Traveller Pitches		47
Sutton Storage Compound, south of Sutton	Sutton	Currently no development on this site. Propose 2 new transit pitches.
Total Transit Pitches		2

5. Conclusion and Next Steps

- 5.1 This report seeks the recommendation of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder:
- (i) Approves an amended Gypsy and Traveller site list to accommodate land east of A6001, Hitchin Rd and opposite Henlow Camp (RAF).
 - (ii) Approves the pitch distribution between the site options as detailed in Table 3 of the report for consultation in the Preferred Sites consultation document.
- 5.2 Following consideration of the revised way forward by OSC and their recommendation to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, consultation will be undertaken on the site options from mid March until late April, early May.

5.3 The table below sets out the amended timescales for the DPD.

STAGE IN DPD PROCESS	ESTIMATED DATE
Period of consultation, following short listing of sites by Task Force and Overview and Scrutiny Committee	March – May 2010
Preparation of the Draft Submission Development Plan Document.	May - July 2010
Task Force consideration of the Draft Submission Development Plan Document.	August 2010
Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration of the Draft Submission Development Plan Document.	End August 2010
Executive & Council approval of the Draft Submission Development Plan Document.	September 2010
A statutory period of six weeks of public consultation will take place offering members of the public an opportunity to comment on the Draft Submission Development Plan Document.	October – November 2010
The Council submit the Draft Submission DPD to the Secretary of State.	February 2011
The Gypsy and Traveller DPD will be subject to an Examination in Public in front of an independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.	Spring 2011*
The Planning Inspector publishes the binding report making final recommendations.	Summer 2011*
Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document Formally Adopted	Autumn 2011*

* Subject to the Planning Inspectorate's timescales.

Appendix 1 – Site Plans