CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 28 February 2013.

PRESENT

Cllr D McVicar (Chairman)
Cllr A R Bastable (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs	Mrs R B Gammons	Cllrs	B Saunders
	Ms A M W Graham		P Williams
	Ms C Maudlin		

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE
K C Matthews

Substitutes: Cllrs T Nicols (for Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE)
A Shadbolt (for Cllr K C Matthews)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs	P N Aldis	
	Mrs A Barker	Chairman of the Council
	R D Berry	
	M C Blair	
	A D Brown	Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
	Mrs G Clarke	
	N B Costin	
	A L Dodwell	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services
	Mrs R J Drinkwater	Chairman of Social Care, Health and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
	P A Duckett	Chairman of Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee
	Dr R Egan	
	Mrs S A Goodchild	
	Mrs D B Gurney	Chairman of Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee
	C Hegley	Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing
	D J Hopkin	Deputy Executive

		Member for Corporate Resources
	J G Jamieson	Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive
	R W Johnstone	
	D Jones	
	Mrs J G Lawrence	
	D J Lawrence	
	J Murray	
	J A G Saunders	
	N J Sheppard	
	I Shingler	
	M A Smith	
	Mrs P E Turner MBE	Executive Member for Economic Partnerships
	M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
	B Wells	Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
	R D Wenham	Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Resources
	J N Young	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
	A Zerny	

Officers in Attendance:	Mr G Alderson	–	Director of Sustainable Communities
	Mrs P Everitt	–	Research and Business Support Officer
	Mr R Fox	–	Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy
	Mr J Gleave	–	Senior Strategic Transport Officer
	Mr J Partridge	–	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Ms J Taylor	–	Housing Officer
	Ms S Wileman	–	Service Development Manager

ADJOURNEMENT OF MEETING

The Chairman opened the meeting at 10am and immediately adjourned to enable additional members of the public to gain access to the Council Chamber.

(Meeting adjourned at 10am and reconvened at 10.15am)

SCOSC/12/84 **Members' Interests**

It was noted that Councillors had received a significant number of emails and letters from residents in relation to specific sites under consideration to be included in the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.

Cllr Versallion also commented that he had an interest in relation to the proposed site at Stanbridge as his son used the nearby rugby club.

SCOSC/12/85 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman informed public attendees of the manner in which public speaking would be received at the meeting. Elected Members who were also Members of the Development Management Committee were reminded of the importance of not prejudicing any discussion that they may take part in at a later date in that Committee.

SCOSC/12/86 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 January 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SCOSC/12/87 **Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/12/88 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Chairman commented that more than 3000 letters and emails had been received from residents in relation to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. A summary of the issues contained in these representations had been circulated to Members of the Committee. In addition to these representations there were 34 persons who had registered to speak in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure. All of these persons would be invited to speak under Item 9 (**Minute SCOSC/13/91 refers**) except two persons who had indicated a wish to speak at this point of the agenda.

Two speakers raised several issues, which in summary included the following:-

- Council policy in relation to the development of a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, including the cumulative impact of sites on the community, the viability of sites and the spread of sites across Central Bedfordshire.
- Support for the allocation of site 92, which would be privately funded and owned. There were considered to be several schemes that could be put in place to mitigate any concerns regarding the use of this site.

SCOSC/12/89 **Call-In**

The Panel was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Panel under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix "A" to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

SCOSC/12/90 **Requested Items**

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

SCOSC/12/91 **Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan**

Cllr Young introduced the Committee to a report that set out the findings of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and introduced the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. Cllr Young thanked the officers that had been involved in the process to date and introduced Mr R Bennett, Local Government Association, to provide a presentation in relation to Gypsies and Travellers (**attached**).

Mr R Bennett drew particular attention to several matters in relation to Gypsies and Travellers which included: long-term health concerns and inequality in relation to health, education and employment; the lack of statistical evidence to support public perceptions; legal challenges and examinations in other areas of the country.

Ms J Taylor informed the Committee of several pieces of information including:-

- Sites 40, 79 and 112 had been removed from the list of 35 sites that had been issued in the list of sites provided to the Committee meeting on 17 January as they had not passed stage 2. As a result those sites on the map contained in Appendix C to the report should be marked in red and not orange.
- The full site assessments relating to sites 66 and 106 had been omitted from the Committee report. They had been circulated to Members at the meeting and would be made available to the public via the Council's website.
- As a result of questions from residents the access to GP scores relating to sites 2, 36, 55, 76 and 114 had been reassessed and reduced by one point. The access to GP score for site 63a had also been reassessed and reduced by two points. A table of these amended scores had been made available to all Members prior to the meeting and would be made available to the public via the Council's website.
- The Council had received over 3000 representations from the public prior to 5.30pm on 25 February which had been summarised and made available to Members of the Committee. An update to Appendix D had been circulated to Members of the Committee.
- The 2006 GTAA had been refreshed and the final pitch requirement was 157 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and 22 pitches for Travelling Showpeople up to 2031 for allocation in the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.

Mr N Moore provided the Committee with further detail in relation to the GTAA Update and in particular informed the Committee that there was no evidence of vacancies on current sites. The current level of immediate need totalled 44 pitches as follows:-

- 9 pitches for households without planning permission;
- 15 pitches for households with temporary planning permission;
- 14 pitches for persons on the waiting list with a 'genuine need'; and
- 6 pitches for households with sites coming back into use

Mr N Moore commented that based on national trends a growth rate of 2.5% applied to the current number of pitches in Central Bedfordshire was considered to be appropriate. There was no provision within the figure for migration in or out of the area and any movement from bricks and mortar homes had been included in the numbers of persons on the waiting list. A total of 65 pitches would be required to meet need up to 2018. After that the following 92 pitches would be required for Gypsies and Travellers using the 2.5% growth rate:-

- 31 pitches between 2019 and 2023;
- 36 pitches between 2024 and 2028; and
- 25 pitches between 2029 and 2031.

Mr N Moore also commented that there were 25 Showpeople currently in Central Bedfordshire. There was an immediate need for ten unauthorised pitches and a further 12 pitches to allow for growth up to 2031 as follows:-

- 3 pitches between 2019 and 2023;
- 4 pitches between 2024 and 2028; and
- 2 pitches between 2029 and 2031.

Cllr Nicols raised concerns that by being responsible in relation to the duty to provide Gypsy and Traveller sites the Council now had to find more sites. It was queried whether by being responsible the Council had disadvantaged itself compared to other planning authorities. In response Mr R Bennett commented there was no evidence that responsible planning authorities had become 'honey-pots' for Gypsy and Traveller sites. Mr N Moore also responded that some authorities had lost under appeal where they had failed to meet their duties, which had resulted in significant cost to the authority. Under the Localism Act Councils had become the highest planning authority and whilst they were under a duty co-operate with other Councils they did not have to agree. The level of growth in Central Bedfordshire was not considered to be disproportionate to levels in other local areas.

In response to additional questions from Members the following responses were provided:-

- Mr R Bennett advised that small sites of roughly five pitches integrated best with the local community but the Council should ask the Gypsy and Traveller community what they felt to be an appropriate site size. Larger sites could be difficult to manage.
- Mr N Moore confirmed that there was no migration in or out of the area included in the level of 'need' identified.

- Mr R Bennett confirmed that there was significant evidence of inequality in relation to health and education outcomes for the Gypsy and Traveller community. To address this inequality the Council would need to ensure that spaces were available in local schools.
- Ms J Taylor commented there were 3 public sites in Central Bedfordshire onto which persons on the Gypsy and Traveller waiting list could be allocated. Allocations were managed by the Council's Housing Service.
- Mr N Moore stated that there was no latitude in unitary authorities to allocate sites to Gypsy and Travellers from other local authority areas.
- Mr N Moore stated that the size of Travelling Showpeople sites varied but was usually 100 square feet. Cllr Young clarified that the size of sites for Travelling Showpeople varied from site to site.

Ms C Harding, advised the Committee on the Equality Duty and the duties of the Council in relation to persons with a protected characteristic, such as Gypsies and Travellers. The meeting was to be conducted in a manner that respected all groups of residents in Central Bedfordshire, discriminatory language would not be permitted.

In accordance with the Public Participation Procedure the Chairman invited 31 speakers to address the Committee. Members of the public raised comments and concerns, which in summary included the following:-

- The process of developing a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan not been transparent, this included the removal of some sites prior to the Committee meeting. The Council should have considered more sites before reaching this stage.
- Several of the site scores were inaccurate and it was not clear why some sites had failed at stage 2 whilst others with similar problems, landscaping for example, had progressed to stage 3.
- Inaccuracy of the total numbers of pitches required and a lack of evidence for the level of need, which should encourage the Committee not to sanction the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. It was also not clear if the level of growth identified was appropriate. The Council should consider only allocating sites for the next five years.
- Concerns regards an unequal distribution of proposed sites across Central Bedfordshire.
- Whether the costs associated with mitigating the concerns on some sites would be acceptable.
- The importance of effective community integration, which included providing access to schools for Gypsy and Traveller children. It was suggested that developing large Gypsy and Traveller sites would have a negative impact on community integration.
- Whether the Council was only developing a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan in order to comply with an EU directive.
- Concerns regarding the use of consultants.
- Whether a site could be located next to Centerparcs.
- There were four proposed sites near to Sutton, which if allocated would dominate the local community.
- Sites 2 and 36 – speakers raised specific concerns regarding inaccuracies in the site scores, the lack of utility infrastructure, the lack

of other facilities including healthcare and education, poor screening of the proposed site, poor drainage, poor vehicular access and lack of pedestrian footpaths. Concerns were also raised that the land was high grade agriculture land and previous planning applications in this area had been refused, the open and exposed nature of the site should encourage the proposal to be rejected. Archaeological remains had also been found at site 36. It was also commented that a report had been commissioned from Link Support Services (UK) that had been submitted to the Council.

- Site 13 – speakers raised specific concerns regarding development on the greenbelt and the impact on local wildlife. The site was felt to be unsuitable due to poor and dangerous access, noise and air pollution, flood risk, sewage regularly overflowed onto the site and the presence of electrical pylons. It was also commented that a petition against this site had been circulated in the area.
- Site 15 – speakers raised specific concerns relating to the impact of a site on wildlife and the environment, an ecology report had been commissioned but not yet completed. The site was felt to be unsuitable due to flood risk and previous planning applications in the area had been refused. It was suggested allocating the site would be inconsistent with existing Council policies and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Council should not allocate sites in the greenbelt. Allocating this site could also impact on the Barton-Le-Clay Neighbourhood Plan.
- Site 16 – speakers raised specific concerns that allocating this site would be inconsistent with existing Council policies and the NPPF due to it being in the greenbelt. Faldo Farm would be unfairly affected as a result of this site as there would be two sites either side of it. The site was also adjacent to a dual carriageway and unsuitable due to dangerous access, the site would impact on a rural road and local properties.
- Site 20 – speakers raised specific concerns that the proposed site was high grade agricultural land and allocation would detrimentally impact on local wildlife, visual impact and the Greensand Ridge walk. The site was also of archaeological importance and it was felt to be unsuitable due to the presence of a water main on the site, was prone to flooding, insufficient amenities on the site and a lack of public transport. It was suggested that allocating the site would be contrary to the Council's Core Strategy and the NPPF and would result in legal challenge. Excavation of the site would also be necessary in order to mitigate most of the concerns with the site.
- Site 28 – speakers raised specific concerns that this site would dominate the settled community and local schools and that it was unsuitable. The site suffered from unsuitable and dangerous access. There were concerns that the site had been included in the local Masterplan and its allocation could conflict with the Masterplan proposals for the A5-M1 link.
- Site 33 – speakers raised specific concerns regarding the use of agricultural land and the impact of the proposed site on local schools, it was also suggested that the score for the site were inaccurate. The site was felt to be unsuitable due to dangerous access and flood risk and it

was suggested that its allocation would have a detrimental impact on the community and would not blend appropriately into the landscape.

- Site 70 – speakers raised specific concerns that the site was unsuitable due to flood risk, land contamination, unsafe access and lack of footpaths, the presence of historic remains, the lack of utility infrastructure and concerns regards coalescence of the gap between the A1 and Ivel Valley. It was suggested that the site would result in an unsuitable impact on the visual landscape and on wildlife. It was suggested that this site should not have progressed past stage 1 or stage 2 of the assessment as the Council had no legal right to seek possession of the land.
- Site 79 – speakers commented that that there had been a significant number of objections regarding the site and it was positive that the Council had removed it from the process.
- Site 80 – speakers raised specific concerns that the site would dominate the local community and that it should be retained for agricultural use. It was suggested the site was unsuitable as there were no facilities or utility infrastructure, poor access and it had been refused following previous consultations.
- Site 81 - speakers raised specific concerns that the site was unsuitable due to unsafe access and the impact on local wildlife and previous planning applications in the area had been refused. It was suggested that this site should not have progressed past stage 1 or stage 2 of the site assessment and any development would be contrary to the NPPF and the Council's Core Strategy.
- Site 102 – speakers raised specific concerns that the site did not meet the criteria set by the Gypsy and Traveller community and the land was agricultural. It was suggested the site was unsuitable as the local schools were overcrowded, there would be a negative impact on the recreation ground, dangerous access, flood risk, detrimental impact on the community and difficult of blending the site into the landscape. It was also suggested that the site score for Flitton were inaccurate.
- Sites 113 and 114 – one person spoke in favour of these sites and commented on the difficulty for his children to attend school due to regularly being moved on. The speaker, who was a Travelling Showperson, commented that his daughter had attended school and as a result she had been able to teach other members of the family how to read. The allocation of these sites would provide necessary access to utilities and schools. The sites could be delivered at no cost to the Council.
- Sites 113 and 114 - speakers raised specific concerns that these sites were located in the greenbelt and there were no 'exceptional circumstances' that suggested they should be used. These sites were considered to be unsuitable due to being isolated, unsafe access, poor access to facilities and poor access to schools. The Council needed to have due regard to the local community if these sites were allocated, their impact would be disproportionate.
- An extension of the current site in Flitton might be acceptable.
- Potton – speakers stated that there had been no consultation with the local Gypsy and Traveller community, which was critical to the development of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. Sites in Potton

were unsuitable as they were located on agricultural land. Not having provided the tenants of farms in Potton of potential eviction was unacceptable. Sites within Potton were also considered to be unsuitable due to overcrowding in schools, the funds previously spent on sites in Potton, previous planning applications were rejected, sites were adjacent to a working quarry, impact on the landscape and a conservation area.

- A third site in Arlesey would be inappropriate, sites should be spread around Central Bedfordshire.
- Sites in Everton and Moggerhanger were unsuitable due to dangerous access and pressure on schools and traffic. The sites had scored poorly during stage three.

(Meeting Adjourned at 13:27 and reconvened at 14:07)

Cllr McVicar informed the Committee that as a result of the site visits carried out by Members to each of the proposed sites and the evidence that had been received he was aware of several sites that were totally unsuitable. In light of the evidence the Chairman proposed that sites 13, 16, 55, 58, 76, 78, 80, 92 and 116 be allocated. Members were invited to propose any other sites to be allocated that they felt were appropriate. The Chairman invited Members who were not on the Committee to provide their views before the proposal was discussed by the Committee.

Cllr Versallion commented on the perception that there was a disproportionate distribution of sites across Central Bedfordshire. Cllr Versallion felt the Stanbridge site was inappropriate and unsuitable for several reasons that included the impact on the greenbelt, dangerous access, absence of a footpath to the local school, impact on local schools and the site not presently being developable. In response Cllr Young commented on the differences between Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons sites and the positive aspects of screening and potential for developing a slip-road to provide access to the site. It was commented that if the Council did not allocate any sites in the greenbelt then they would all be located in the North of Central Bedfordshire. Whilst there was a significant Gypsy and Traveller population within two to three miles of the proposed site this was proposed as a Travelling Showperson site.

Cllr T Turner raised specific concerns regards the inappropriate nature of site 80, which had previously been rejected. There were specific concerns regarding coalescence and unsuitability due to congestion and proximity to a road. It was suggested that the number of sites proposed would over-provide for the level of need identified.

Cllr G Clarke commented that the North Hertfordshire border was adjacent to one of the proposed sites. Any amendment to screening on the site would need approval from North Hertfordshire Council. This site was considered to be unsuitable due to inappropriate access, terracing would be required, flood risk, safety concerns and lack of utility infrastructure.

Cllr J Lawrence raised specific concerns regarding site 55 and the scores attributed to access to schools. The site was considered to be unsuitable due to its isolation from necessary facilities.

Cllr J Jamieson commented that he recognised the difficulty with regard to developing a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and the Council's options had been limited due to the sites that had come forward. Cllr Jamieson raised specific concerns relating to site 13, which was considered unsuitable due to poor visibility and access, including footpaths, flood risk from sewage pipes, the use of greenbelt and agricultural land, the impact on wildlife and archaeological sites. With regard to site 116 Cllr Jamieson commented that the site currently had temporary permission and it had been well managed in the past despite poor screening and being relatively untidy. The Council should stick to the principal of smaller family sites and it was practical to award permissions to existing sites. It was difficult to object to the allocation of this site however the size of the site and number of pitches needed to be determined. With regard to site 78 Cllr Jamieson commented that the owner usually resolved problems quickly and had committed to investing in the site if permission were granted. It was suggested it was difficult to oppose this site although the Council might suggest no more than four pitches on the site with screening and suitable landscaping.

Cllr D Lawrence commented that the Council still had not appropriately identified the number of pitches required, these should be published with the public consultation.

Cllr J Saunders raised specific comments with regards to site 76, which he considered to be unsuitable due to inappropriate access and its location in the greenbelt. Cllr Saunders also raised specific concerns regarding site 81, which he considered to be unsuitable due to in appropriate access, poor access to schools and its proximity to a sewerage works.

Cllr I Shingler raised specific concerns regarding inappropriate development in the greenbelt and concerns that the indentified level of need kept changing, it was not clear why need had increased when the caravan count suggested that the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers had fallen. With specific regard to sites 15 and 16 Cllr Shingler commented that the sites were unsuitable due to their location in the greenbelt, proximity to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), impact on the landscape and agricultural land. It was suggested that neither site was deliverable. There were also medieval settlements in the are of site 16. With specific regard to site 17 Cllr Shingler commented the site was unsuitable due to the difficulty of screening, road safety, lack of pedestrian access, flood risk and proximity to major roads. Proposals would also affect a local industrial estate where several proprietors had indicated they would leave if the Gypsy and Traveller site was allocated. Cllr Shingler suggested that Members could either reject proposals, reduce the number of pitches allocated or accept the proposals. The Committee needed to effectively scrutinise the proposals and identify how tensions could be reduced with the settled community.

In response to Cllr Shingler, Mr N Moore commented that the caravan count by itself was an inadequate method of measuring need as many Gypsies and

Travellers may have been travelling at the time of the count. Mr R Fox also stated that consultation had been undertaken with the Gypsy and Traveller community, including the community in Potton. There was ongoing dialogue with neighbouring authorities.

Cllr Shinger also commented on behalf of Cllr Mustoe that site 92 was unsuitable due to its location in relation to the Chilterns AONB and development on the greenbelt was unsuitable. In response Mr R Fox stated that there was a presumption against development in an AONB but as this was an extension to an existing site it was not considered that it would affect the view in the manner that a new Gypsy and Traveller site might.

Cllr Zerny commented that it was unrealistic to predict the level of Gypsy and Traveller need for the next 20 years, a view that was shared by the Gypsy Council. Public consultation by the Council on the proposes sites had been poor and it was inappropriate for the Council to hold this meeting in an unsuitable venue during the day when many would be unable to attend. The scoring of the sites had been inaccurate. There was also a disproportionate number of sites in a small number of wards. Cllr Zerny commented that several sites had been removed from the process, which was good but several that had been proposed were unsuitable. Site 58 was unsuitable for several reasons including, its location on high grade agricultural land, there were archaeological remains on the site, green space needed to be maintained and the reasons for failure of other sites had not been applied in Potton, lack of pavements to local schools, lack of privacy, proximity to a quarry. Cllr Zerny stated that site 55 was unsuitable due it being high grade agricultural land, proximity to unsafe roads, no privacy, views that all sites in Potton should have failed at stage 2 of the process. It was also commented that there was a lack of detail regards the manner in which the Council may receive funding through the New Homes Bonus as a result of delivering Gypsy and Traveller pitches. It was suggested that the Council should find more suitable sites before a decision was taken.

Cllr Gurney raised concerns regarding the number of sites proposed in Potton ward and the difficulty of understanding where land was owned by the Council. Cllr Gurney commented that site 58 was unsuitable due to concerns of traffic, impact to the environment, noise pollution, proximity to a functional quarry that would impact on health, the lack of a pathway to the local school and concerns regards the lack of consultation with the Gypsy and Traveller community. It was also commented that additional consultation with community and with Cambridgeshire County Council was necessary.

In response to the issues raised by Members Cllr Young provided a response to several issues as follows:-

- Central Government had asked Councils to identify need for 15 years, whilst it was difficult to identify sites for that period of time it was necessary.
- A plan-led approach to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan enabled the Council to consider landscaping, access and screening issues. The proximity of a site to an AONB would be dealt with through landscaping.
- He was confident that the evidence was robust, the numbers would be examined by the Secretary of State.

- One of the proposed sites was in the Potton ward, the other to which Cllr Zerny referred was in Biggleswade. He felt that there was an equitable spread of sites across Central Bedfordshire in those that the Chairman had recommended.
- The NPPF gave the Council until March 2014 to have a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan in place. If the plan was not in place we would lose control over our environment and the Government would allocate sites without consultation.
- A statutory consultation would be undertaken in May/June 2013, which would include Gypsy and Traveller families, all representations would go directly to the Secretary of State. With specific regard to Potton Gypsies and Travellers had been invited to attend workshops but they chose not to attend. Forms were also provided to families but none were returned. Cllr Young thanked Cllr Gurney for her support in consulting the Gypsy and Traveller community in Potton.
- Site 58 could be located in such a way as to not be unduly affected by the quarry.
- Credit should be given to residents of the Myers Road site as many of the problems that existed in the past have been resolved and there had been no problems reported to Cllr Young in the previous 12 months.

Mr R Fox also stated that the Council had invited informal feedback and as a result a substantial number of people had sent emails and letters to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. If the proposed sites were recommended to Executive for approval and then to Council there would be two further opportunities for residents to make their views known. Following Council there would be a further formal, 6 week planning consultation where all representations would go to the Secretary of State. There would also be an examination in public at which residents could make their views known. The Council had chosen to link the timescales for the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan to those of the Development Strategy to ensure that it was considered 'sound' by the Inspector.

The Chairman then invited the views of Members of the Committee in light of discussion and the views that had been presented.

Cllr Graham stated that the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan was counter to Council Policy. It was unsuitable to build on the greenbelt without a definition of 'exceptional circumstances'. There were errors in the refreshed GTAA, which should be expected as it was done so quickly, there may have been more suitable locations that we were currently unaware of. Without an adequate assessment of need there was no way that the Council could be confident the plan was appropriate. Councillor Graham felt that the list of sites was erroneous and commented that she would vote against the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan as it was unsubstantiated. In response Cllr Young stated that any new sites would be welcomed and could be added in the future during any subsequent refreshes. There was no contradiction to Council policy, the NPPF allowed for the Councils proposals. Not having a plan would lead to chaos and the Planning Inspector would grant permission for sites by default.

Councillor Shadbolt proposed that the Committee approve the total number of pitches for allocation in the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (seconded by Cllr Bastable). In debating the proposal the Committee discussed the following issues:-

- Cllr Young stated that the GTAA identified the level of immediate need but there was also a level of need required to meet growth. Cllr Young was confident that immediate need could be met from new applications, major development schemes and the expansion of sites that already exist.
- Cllr Williams queried whether the Council was too compliant and asked whether other neighbouring authorities were developing their Gypsy and Traveller Local Plans as well. We should be sure that others weren't waiting for us to develop our plan first. In response Mr R Fox commented that he was not aware this was the intention of any neighbouring authorities. All authorities had a duty to develop a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and others have got into trouble for waiting for others to take the lead.
- Cllr Maudlin stated that she was not comfortable with allocating land all the way up to 2031 as it may be needed for other purposes.

The Committee voted on the proposal to allocate 157 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and 22 pitches for Travelling Showpersons up to 2031. The Committee voted 8 in favour and 1 abstention on this proposal.

The Committee discussed which sites should be allocated in the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan to meet the identified need. Having received evidence in relation to the sites the Chairman suggested that sites 13 and 80 be removed from the proposed list. In debating the proposal to the Committee discussed the following:-

- Cllr Nicols raised specific concerns regarding the allocation of site 13 and whilst it had been removed at this stage he reserved the right to oppose its inclusion during any inspection. Cllr Nicols considered site 13 to be unsuitable due to concerns on access on the site, an access point would be required from the East of the ward, it was situated next to a cemetery, the site was subject to flooding and poor sewerage. Solutions to mitigate concerns included the removal of hedges and bushes which would be costly and untenable. The site should be rejected on the grounds of access, drainage, impact on the adjacent community and development on the greenbelt.
- Cllr Maudlin could not support the allocation of site 80.
- Cllr B Saunders raised specific concerns regarding the allocation of site 76 as it was located on a slope and would require terracing, which was against Council Policy. There were also issues relating to health and safety on the highway, dangerous access to the site, flood risk, the site was adjacent to a cemetery and a reservoir.
- Cllr Williams requested that some identification be provided of the number of pitches that would be delivered on the sites before a recommendation was agreed. In response Cllr Young indicated the following allocation of sites across the proposed sites:-

Site number	2013 – 2018	2019 - 2023
16	5	5
58	5	5
55	5	5
76	5	5
78	4	-
92	9	-
116	11	2
Total:	**44**	**22**

Cllr Shadbolt proposed that the Committee voted on the proposal to allocate sites 16, 58, 55, 76, 78, 92 and 116 to meet pitch requirements up to 2031. In addition Cllr Young suggested that the Committee ask that the sites be allocated in a manner that complied with Policy B (Paragraph 9) of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. The Committee voted 6 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention.

Cllr Young informed the Committee that there were 3 sites available to be allocated for use by Travelling Showpersons, sites 114, 82 and a site North of Houghton Regis at Thorn Turn, which had only just been notified to the Council. Cllr Young asked if the Committee were wiling to be vague with their recommendation as there was possibility for another private site to come forward. The Committee might wish to take this into consideration as part of their recommendation.

Cllr Williams raised concerns that the site at Thorn Turn had been allocated as part of the BEaR project and therefore should not be considered. It was queried why the site was not presently in front of the Committee for discussion. In response Cllr Young stated that he did not perceive there to be any problem in relation to the use of this filed for Travelling Showpersons.

Cllr Nicols commented that he was comfortable with the allocation of the site at Thorn Turn due to the nature of the site but would not be comfortable with the addition of other sites that were not currently included in the documents. Cllr Nicols had already accepted some element of risk in his ward with two potential sites and would not be comfortable to see further sites. Cllr Young stated that both sites would not be used. Mr R Fox commented that an exact position would be provided at the Executive meeting in relation to Travelling Showpersons.

Cllr McVicar proposed that site 82 be allocated, which was agreed by the Committee. Whilst the Committee had agreed to allocate site 82 Cllr Shadbolt stated that he was against the use of site 114 due to the shortage of space at the site.

Cllr McVicar proposed that the Committee approve the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan for publication. The Committee voted on this proposals, which was agreed with 7 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

Recommended to Executive:-

1. That pitches be allocated in the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan up to 2031 as follows:-

1.1 157 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers; and

1.2 22 pitches for Travelling Showpersons

2. That the following sites be allocated in order to meet the pitch requirement for Gypsies and Travellers to comply with planning policy for traveller sites Policy B (paragraph 9):-

2.1 Site 16 (Land West of A6, South of Faldo Road and West of Barton-le-Clay)

2.2 Site 55 (Land South East of Park Corner Farm and South of Dunton Lane)

2.3 Site 58 (Land East of Potton Road and South of Ram Farm)

2.4 Site 76 (Land South of Fairfield and West of Stotfold Rd)

2.5 Site 78 (Land East of M1, Tingrith)

2.6 Site 92 (Land East of Watling Street and South of Dunstable)

2.7 Site 116 (1 Old Acres, Barton Road, Pulloxhill

3. That site 82 (Kennel Farm Holding, East of Biggleswade) be allocated to meet some of the pitch requirement for Travelling Showpersons to comply with planning policy for traveller sites Policy B (paragraph 9).

4. That the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan be approved for publication.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 4.52 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....

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Gypsies & Travellers

Richard Bennett

Common Defn:

The term “Gypsies and Travellers" means:

"Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently . . . ."

Differences Defn:

Planning:

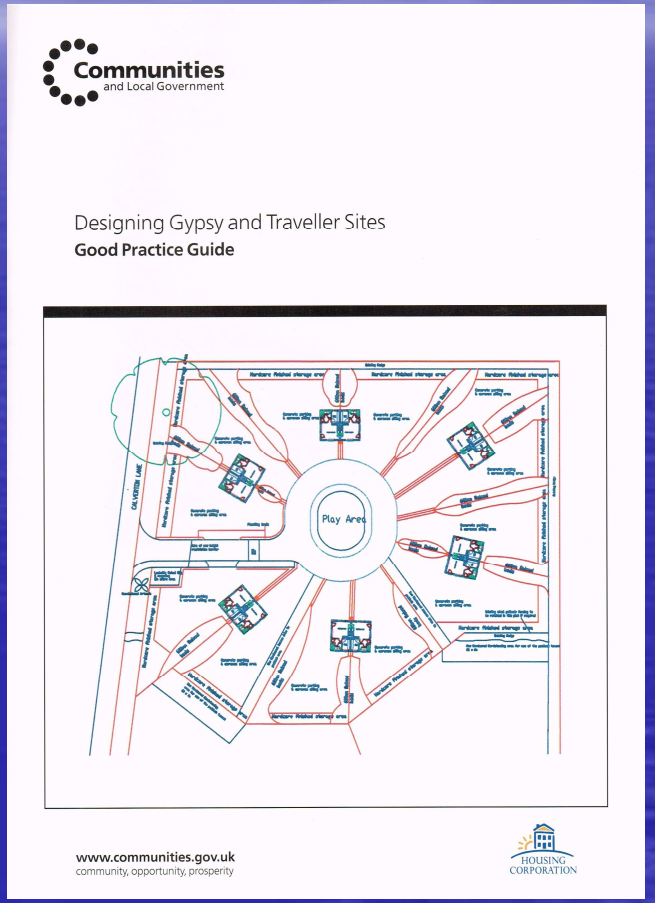
but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such.

Housing:

and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism and/or caravan dwelling.

Definition: Site and Pitch

- A site contains a number of pitches
- Individual pitches need space for:
  - A static caravan
  - A touring caravan
  - An ablutions block
  - Vehicles
  - Pets
  - 500 sq m



The Numbers

- 6800 – Public pitches
- 9400 – Private pitches
- 1400 – Unauthorised Encampments
- 1800 – Unauthorised Developments
- 3200 – Unofficial Pitches
- 16% - Unofficial Pitches

The Problem

- One in five Gypsy and Traveller caravans are on unauthorised sites
- Tensions with the settled community - £18m spent annually on enforcement
- Gypsies and Travellers are the most socially excluded group in the country

Public Perception

- Crime
- Rubbish
- Taxes
- Unauthorised encampments
- Unauthorised developments

The Reality - Health

- Average life expectancy of Gypsies & Travellers is 20 years less than for the settled population
- 42% of Gypsies & Travellers have long term illnesses – compared to 18% of the settled population
- 18% of Gypsy & Traveller mothers have experienced the death of a child

  -compared to less than 1% of the settled community

The Reality - Education

- A – C Grades at GCSE
  - 52% of the settled population
  - 30% of Irish Traveller children
  - 13% of Gypsy children

The Solution

- 3500 pitches
- Adequate provision
- Appropriate provision

Government Policy

- 2004 Housing Act
- Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (3/12)
- PPTS Equality Impact Assessment (3/12)
- Ministerial Working Group Report (4/12)
  Tackling Inequalities Experienced by G & T
- Public Sector Equality Duty (5/12)

Government's Policy Aim

- To ensure fair and effective provision of authorised sites for Travellers to facilitate the traditional and nomadic way of life of these groups whilst respecting the interests of the settled community

Public Sector Equality Duty

- Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised as having a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. The Government recognises that these groups experience poor social outcomes and discrimination. It, therefore, wants changes to policy to promote equality and reduce discrimination.

Housing Act 2004

- 225(1)

  Every local housing authority must . . . . carry out an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers residing in or resorting to their district.

Housing Act 2004

- 225(2)

  . . . a local housing authority are required . . .to prepare a strategy in respect of the meeting of such accommodation needs.

Housing Act 2004

- 225(5) (b)

  'accommodation needs' includes needs with respect to the provision of sites on which a caravan can be stationed.

Housing Act 2004

- 225(3)

  The local authority who are the local housing authority must take the strategy into account in exercising their functions.

  'Functions' includes functions exercisable otherwise than as a local housing authority.

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

- Use a robust evidence base to establish need
- By March 2013:
  - Identify & update annually a five years' supply of specific, deliverable sites
  - Identify broad locations for years 6 -10
  - Failure to comply is a significant material consideration
  - Grant Temporary Planning Permission in the absence of a 5 year land supply
- Have a criteria based policy to deal with other applications

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

- Work collaboratively
- Be consistent with the NPPF
- Develop fair and effective strategies
- Identification of land for sites
- Protect the Green Belt
- Reduce unauthorised developments & encampments

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

- Promote private traveller site provision
- Address under provision
- Maintain appropriate level of supply
- Reduce tensions
- Enable provision of suitable accommodation
- Protect local amenity / environment

Further Information

- Email me - RMBennett@obdn.co.uk
- Join the Gypsy and Traveller Knowledge Network @local.gov.uk
- Read the Report of the LGA Gypsy and Traveller Task Group

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