

COUNCIL MEETING – 30 JANUARY 2014

Recommendation to Council from the Special Executive meeting held on 21 January 2014

E/13/115

Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

The Chairman reminded Members who were also Members of the Development Management Committee of the importance of not prejudicing any planning decision that they may take part in at a later date. Any planning application would be determined on relevant planning considerations, on its own merits.

The Executive considered a report and a supplementary report from the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development that set out the findings of the Gypsy, Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2014 (GTAA) and the proposed changes to the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP), following the Pre-Submission Draft Plan. The Executive Member outlined the background to the GTLP, including the legal obligation to develop a GTLP that, when adopted, would form part of the statutory development plan for Central Bedfordshire

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the draft GTLP at their meeting on 14 January 2014 and had recommended that a growth rate of 2% be used for future Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision and 1.5% for Travelling Showperson provision. The total Gypsy and Traveller requirement recommended was 131 pitches and 20 Travelling Showperson plots in Central Bedfordshire in the period up to 2031. The sites proposed were as follows:

Table 3

Site	Pitches	Change from draft GTLP
Site 16 - Barton	15	Additional 5 pitches
Site 26 - Dunton Lane	15	Site 55 to be replaced with site 26 allocation increased from 10 to 15 pitches
Site 58 - Potton	0	Site to be removed from the plan
Site 92 - Caddington	9	No change
Site 116 - Pulloxhill	13	No change
Site 76 - Fairfield	10	No change
Site 78 - Tingrith	4	No change

Total	66
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Windfall to meet first 10 years requirement at 2%	18
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In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Public Participation, the Chairman invited 6 speakers to address the Executive. Members of the public raised comments and concerns, which in summary included the following:-

- site 58 should be removed from the GTLP, but the existing Potton site should not be considered for expansion outside of the plan making process;
- there was concern that if the Potton site was expanded this might lead to unrest due to the possibility of having different groups of gypsies and travellers living on the same site;
- local residents had recommended an alternative site to site 26. The alternative site was near Bibby, this was more accessible and complied with relevant planning considerations, such as improved screening, access to facilities and less environmental impact;
- site 16 was inappropriate due to it being located in the Green Belt; it was also close of the Barton bypass, giving cause for concern about air and noise pollution. The residents of site 16 would also need to cross the bypass to access local facilities such as schools, public transport and shops;
- it was felt that the representations and petition submitted by residents in Barton had not been taken into account;
- residents living in Faldo Road would be dominated by sites 16 and 116;
- the interpretation of the Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and in particular Policy E: Traveller Sites in Green Belt and the view that the sites outside the Green Belt should be considered first before sites were considered in the Green Belt;
- reference was made to the National Planning Policy Framework and the development of Neighbourhood Plans;
- the concern that some existing sites had originally been unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller sites before being granted permission;
- the importance of effective management of Gypsy and Traveller sites;
- sites should be small family sites; and
- claimed the Council had lost the Planning Inquiry for Mile Tree Road due to the draft GTLP proposing sites in the Green Belt.

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development thanked the speakers and addressed the concerns raised. He explained that the responses to the public consultation had been taken into account and as a result of this, changes to the GTLP had been recommended.

The Executive Member highlighted paragraphs 14 and 15 from the Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites which provided for land to be allocated for traveller sites within Green Belt in special circumstances. He explained too the significance of Mile Tree Farm appeal and the action being taken in response, together with the risks associated with proceeding with an approach to gypsy and traveller site provision based on an annual growth rate of 2% which is below the percentage of growth rate that the Planning

Inspector has previously considered sound in other plans and an assumed level of windfall provision.

In response to questions from Members, the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development explained that:

- the reasons why alternative sites along the A6 between Barton and Luton had not been included in the final proposals;
- the recommended changes to the Plan were based on the adoption of a 2% compound growth rate, but that the extent of proposed allocation of sites would be sufficient to deliver against the number of pitches required in the area for the first 5 years of the Plan, should the Local Plan Inspector subsequently recommend that a 2.5% growth rate was appropriate;
- he was aware of the history of the existing Potton site and the proposed expansion of the site would need to be managed carefully;
- issues such as access to sites along busy roads would be dealt with through the planning application process;
- if the number of windfall sites increased or decreased from the level expected in future based on past trends, then the allocation of sites would be reviewed;
- he would try to contact Pat Niner who had carried out the assessment of the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities in England in the past;
- he noted the comments raised regarding site 80, Land West of Blunham Road and South of Chalton Farm, Chalton; and
- planning conditions attached to sites would be enforced.

Reason for decision: To enable progress on the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan prior to its formal submission to the Secretary of State in June 2014 and during the Examination period.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Gypsy, Traveller and Showperson Accommodation Assessment 2014 conducted by ORS be endorsed;**
- 2. the use of a compound growth rate of 2% for future Gypsy and Traveller provision and 1.5% for Travelling Showperson provision and the consequential requirement for 131 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and 20 Travelling Showperson plots to be provided in Central Bedfordshire up to 2031, as recommended by the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved.**
- 3. That the allocation of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson sites, as set out in Table 3 above, be approved for inclusion in the draft Plan, along with the recommended changes to the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan attached at Appendix D to the report.**

RECOMMEND to Council

- 1. That the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan be approved for the purposes of publication and submission to the Secretary of State.**
- 2. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development, to make any minor amendments to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan:**
 - (i) prior to Publication**
 - (ii) after Publication but before Submission; and**
 - (iii) during the Examination process.**

[Please note that a copy of the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan is attached to this minute. Maps will be circulated separately.]