

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	25 SEPTEMBER 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	CONSULTATION ON GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PROVISION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	ABBEY/ALL
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JOB TITLE:	PLANNING POLICY TEAM LEADER	E-MAIL:	mark.worringham@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report considers the issue of provision for gypsy and traveller accommodation within Reading. It reports on the results of a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), June 2017, which identified accommodation needs including for 10-17 permanent pitches and for 5 transit pitches for gypsies and travellers.
- 1.2 Consideration has been given to whether this need can be met within Reading. The emerging Local Plan, which is to be discussed at the November meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee, will need to set out how the issue should be addressed. An assessment of potential Council-owned sites to meet this need has been carried out and the potential for private sites to come forward has also been investigated. Only one potential site, which could potentially meet transit needs, has been identified. It is therefore proposed that a consultation on this site and the overall approach (based on the Consultation Document attached as Appendix 2) be carried out prior to finalising Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan to inform its approach.
- 1.3 The provision of a transit caravan site would meet part of the identified need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the Borough. There are considerable other potential benefits to the provision of a transit site. An available transit site would potentially reduce the amount of unauthorised encampments and associated costs of enforcement and clean-up in the first place and would potentially allow the police to make better use of powers to require travellers to leave land and seize vehicles if they do not.

- 1.4 Appendix 1 to this report is an Equality Impact Assessment of the proposal. Appendix 2 contains the proposed Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee note the progress that has been made on assessing and providing for the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers; and
- 2.2 That community involvement on the Gypsy and Traveller Provision consultation document (Appendix 2) be authorised.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Periodically assessing the housing needs of people living in caravans or houseboats is a requirement for local housing authorities under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (124). At the same time, examining the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers is an expectation of national planning policy (Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, 2015).
- 3.2 The Council is in the process of preparing a Local Plan for Reading. A Draft Local Plan was approved for community involvement by Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 4th April 2017 (Minute 26 refers), and a Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan will be discussed at Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in November 2017. There is an expectation that the Local Plan should properly consider the accommodation needs for gypsies and travellers. The absence of sufficient evidence on gypsy and traveller accommodation needs has led to delays in the progress of Local Plans for other authorities at examination, even where the numerical needs were relatively small.
- 3.3 The national planning policy expectations for traveller accommodation work in much the same way as for other types of housing, in that, once a need has been identified, national policy expects that the need will be met within the area in which it arises, unless there are strong reasons for not doing so. These strong reasons generally mean that meeting the need would conflict with other policies within the NPPF, including that no suitable sites are available. If needs are identified and cannot be met in the area, the Council would need to engage with other authorities under the duty to co-operate to meet these needs elsewhere.
- 3.4 Where need is to be met within the authority, the CLG document Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015) states that specific sites must be identified for at least the first five years' need (in this case, 10-11 permanent pitches). For years 6-10 and where possible years 11-15, specific sites or broad locations for provision should be identified.

4. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Current Position

- 4.1 In order to inform the Council's Local Plan, a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) has been undertaken for Reading to understand the accommodation needs for gypsies, travellers and houseboat dwellers, and take account of those needs in the Local Plan. Arc4 Consulting was appointed to carry out the GTAA. A final draft GTAA was received in June 2017 and this report identifies the needs for accommodation for gypsies, travellers and houseboat dwellers up to 2036. Its purpose is to identify accommodation need only and it does not consider potential policy approaches or specific sites.
- 4.2 The headline results from the GTAA are set out below. The full report is available on the Council's website¹.
- A need for 10-17 permanent pitches for gypsies and travellers;
 - A need for transit provision of 5 pitches for gypsies and travellers (with each pitch accommodating two caravans);
 - A need for 2 additional plots for travelling show people; and
 - No need for additional residential moorings for houseboats.
- 4.3 There are no current permanent or transit pitches for gypsies and travellers within Reading Borough. There is one authorised travelling show people site at Scours Lane in Reading, with six plots. A number of traveller households are housed in bricks and mortar in Reading.
- 4.4 At the same time, there are current issues with unauthorised encampments within Reading. There were 87 unauthorised encampments within Reading between April 2016 and March 2017, the majority of which were on Council land. This has significant financial costs in terms of enforcement and clean-up costs for many encampments as well as placing pressure on Council officers' time.
- 4.5 A significant amount of background work has been undertaken on trying to identify whether there are sites that could be identified to help to meet the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers. In terms of land outside Council ownership, consultations on the Local Plan Issues and Options (January 2016) and again on the Draft Local Plan (May 2017) have specifically asked for sites to be put forward for gypsies and travellers. None were forthcoming. As a further measure, in August 2017 the Council wrote to all landowners of sites that had been identified as potential development sites in the Draft Local Plan to specifically request that landowners consider whether provision for gypsies and travellers could be made within their site. No landowners identified any potential. It is therefore considered that there is no realistic likelihood of a private site or sites being provided within Reading.
- 4.6 Therefore, a process was undertaken to thoroughly examine the potential for Council-owned land to be used to help to meet the

¹ www.reading.gov.uk/readingldf

identified needs. Based on guidance and best practice examples for pitch design, it was considered that the minimum size of site to accommodate 5 transit pitches is 0.15 ha and the minimum size to accommodate 5 permanent pitches is 0.34 ha. Therefore, a list of around 80 Council-owned sites was drawn up that included all sites that do not house permanent in-use buildings and which are not covered by a proposed planning open space designation or provide statutory allotments.

4.7 Each of the 80 potential sites was considered in detail in terms of suitability in planning terms (including matters such as flood risk, biodiversity, important trees, access, residential amenity and visual effects) and the likely availability of sites for use during the period of the plan (considering matters such as current leases, covenants and any existing plans for use of land). The sites that were considered are set out in the proposed consultation document in Appendix 2. After full consideration of all sites, only one site was identified which had potential to partially meet identified need. This site is land at Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue and comprises 0.73 ha. This is sufficient to accommodate up to 10 permanent pitches or up to 24 transit pitches (assuming that the whole site is used).

(b) Option Proposed

4.8 With limited land available to meet needs officers recommend that the site identified at Cow Lane/Richfield Avenue should be prioritised for transit pitches on the basis of:

- The significant volume of unauthorised encampments in the borough over the past 2 years: the availability of transit pitches would provide an option for travellers seeking short term provision and it could be reasonably assumed that this would reduce the number of unauthorised encampments and associated costs;
- A greater number of transit pitches can be provided than permanent pitches per ha as the spatial/facility requirements differ;
- As detailed under the Legal section of this report, the provision of transit pitches increases the enforcement options available to the Police where a pitch is vacant at the time of an unauthorised encampment.

4.9 It is considered that it would be appropriate to consult on the identified potential site for transit provision, as well as on the process undertaken so far, prior to including any firm proposals in the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan. Committee is recommended to approve the consultation document (Appendix 2) for community involvement during September and October, to enable the results to feed into the Local Plan process.

4.10 The consultation document briefly summarises the process so far and asks for feedback on the one potential site that has been identified. More detailed discussion of the site assessment process will be on the Council's website as a background paper to inform the consultation.

4.11 With no other sites identified and proposed as suitable to meet the needs of permanent traveller pitches in Reading, the Council will need to engage with neighbouring authorities under the 'duty to co-operate' to consider the potential for the need to be met in other authorities. Those authorities will need to see evidence of the process that Reading has gone through to identify sites before any possible agreement can be reached, and this evidence will also be required at the Local Plan examination.

(c) Other Options Considered

4.12 In terms of options for alternative sites, the consultation document as well as the supporting background paper identifies the alternative sites and why they have not been taken forward. The main alternative option that could be considered is not to proceed with identifying potential sites in Reading.

4.13 In order to be found 'sound' so that it can be adopted, the Local Plan needs to set out how the authority is dealing with the issue of provision for traveller sites.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Making provision for gypsies and travellers to meet identified need will contribute to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2015-18:

- Providing homes for those in most need; and
- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active through making suitable transit provision available to travellers visiting the area.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 If consultation on the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document is approved, it is proposed that consultation will run for a period of four weeks starting from the end of September. This would not be a statutory consultation under planning regulations, but make use of the Local Plan consultation lists as well as engaging those with particular interests in the topic and the potential site.

6.2 Any decisions on how the Council is to proceed with the issue of gypsy and traveller provision will need to be set out in the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan. This will be discussed at Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in November 2017 and a six-week period of consultation will follow. The Council's consultation process for planning policy is set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (adopted March 2014).

7. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

7.1 Detail on Equality Impact Assessment is set out in Appendix 1. It is not considered that there would be any adverse impact on any of the identified groups.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Meeting identified accommodation needs

- 8.1 The requirement to periodically identify accommodation needs for those dwelling in caravans and houseboats is set out in Section 124 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016. The publication of the GTAA fulfils this requirement.
- 8.2 Local Plans are produced under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The process for producing local plans is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Powers to deal with unauthorised encampments

- 8.3 A summary of the powers available to local authorities, the Police and private landowners deal with unauthorised encampments is published by the DCLG².
- 8.4 This section is not intended to provide a detailed summary of these powers. However, it is relevant to note the following Police powers in the context of the proposal. Should trespassers refuse to adhere to a request to leave the land, sections 61- 62 of Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 gives the Police discretionary powers to direct trespassers to leave and remove any property or vehicles they have with them in certain circumstances. The power applies where the senior police officer reasonably believes that two or more people are trespassing on land with the purpose of residing there, that the occupier has taken reasonable steps to ask them to leave, and any of the following apply:
- a) that any of the trespassers have caused damage to land or property;
 - b) that any of the trespassers have used threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards the occupier, a member of the occupier's family or an employee or agent of the occupier; or
 - c) that the trespassers have between them six or more vehicles on the land.
- 8.5 Failure to comply with the direction by leaving the land as soon as reasonably practicable is an offence. Similarly it is an offence for a trespasser who has left the land in compliance with an order to re-enter it as a trespasser within three months of the direction being given.
- 8.6 The Police have additional similar discretionary powers under sections 62 A-E of Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to direct both trespassers and travellers to leave land and remove any vehicle and property from the land where the senior police officer reasonably believes that two or more people are trespassing on land with the purpose of residing there, that the occupier has taken reasonable steps to ask them to leave **and there is a suitable pitch available on a**

2

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418139/1503_26_Dealing_with_illegal_and_unauthorised_encampments_-_final.pdf

caravan site elsewhere in the local authority area. The site must have a relevant site manager (Local authority, Social Landlord or Private registered provider of social housing). In this context, the provision of transit pitches would enable the Police to direct travellers engaged in an unauthorised encampment to any available transit pitches, avoiding the need for more costly intervention and better meeting needs.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Undertaking the GTAA and site assessments have been carried out within existing planning budgets. Undertaking the proposed consultation will also be carried out within existing budgets. Failure to have the necessary evidence in place when a Local Plan goes to examination is likely to either result in a Plan being found unsound, and work on it needing to start from the beginning, or in a significantly extended examination process, either of which will have very substantial financial costs.
- 9.2 This report does not commit the Council to provision of any site. However, it is worth understanding the potential financial implications of provision of a transit site, in the context of the existing costs of dealing with unauthorised encampments and the potential benefit of reduced costs if such provision is made available. Cost reduction should properly be taken into account in considering the net finance implications of provision.
- 9.3 The estimated costs involved in dealing with encampments over 2016/17 are set out below:

Cost	2016/17
Legal (actual)	£24,565
Bailiff (actual)	£9,380
Clean up (estimated)	*£61,000
Total	£94,945
Protection measures - capital	£52,585

**note the clean-up costs are based on an estimate of average cost of cleaning up site in 2016/17. These costs are not separated out by the service area or land owner so it is not possible to give a more accurate figure.*

- 9.4 The above does not include officer time. On average an encampment will result in the following:

Officer hours per activity per encampment	Hrs
Initial visit and paper work	3
Legal paper work	1
Court Hearing	2
Serving papers	2
Eviction	4
Other work	2
Total	14

- 9.5 Other work includes updating residents and councillors, file notes and liaising with Thames Valley Police
- 9.6 The savings estimate is based on 62% of all RBC encampments being resolved through the use of S62a-e where there is a temporary site available for 10 caravans. This does not include officer time or capital spend. There is a £100k capital budget for protection works to prevent encampments in 17/18 - around half of this has been spent/allocated as at July 2017.

Estimated Saving	
Legal	£15,230
Bailiff	£5,816
Clean up	£37,820
Total	£58,866

- 9.7 In terms of comparing these costs against estimates for the provision of a transit site, there is some difficulty as there is a wide variation in potential costs of site provision, depending on the level of facilities provided and on any issues related to a specific site.
- 9.8 The capital cost of a transit site has been estimated being upwards of £250,000 for five pitches. This translates to a maximum revenue cost of borrowing cost of circa £10-15k to service this.
- 9.9 It should be noted that transit site provision is relatively new making it difficult to estimate costs accurately.
- 9.10 A more detailed cost analysis would be needed to ascertain the revenue cost implications of provision and this is likely to be dependent of the type of site and facility provided.
- 9.11 The Homes and Communities Agency has confirmed that, whilst there is no separate funding available for the provision of traveller sites, traveller pitches can be included in Affordable Rent bids submitted under the 2016 to 2021 Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (2016-21 SOAHP).

Risk Assessment

- 9.12 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Reading Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2016
- Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Background Paper on Site Assessment for Gypsy and Traveller Provision

APPENDIX 1: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:

Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document

Directorate: Environment and Neighbourhood Services

Service: Planning and Building Control

Name: Mark Worringham

Job Title: Planning Policy Team Leader

Date of assessment: 11/09/2017

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service?

To consider the provision of a site to accommodate transit needs for gypsy and traveller provision.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The travelling community would benefit from any provision through the identification of a specific site. The Reading community as a whole would potentially benefit through reductions in unauthorised encampments. The Council, and other landowners, would benefit from greater ability to use legal enforcement powers.

What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?

The outcome of the consultation will be that the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan will be informed by the consultation results. If a site is to be provided, the travelling community, the local community, the Council and other landowners will all benefit in the way outlined above.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

The existing gypsy and traveller community in Reading were considered as part of the GTAA, and identified a need for both permanent and transit accommodation. The Council are the landowners of the one identified site, and are required to address the issue in Local Plan production and would benefit from greater use of enforcement powers.

Assess whether an EIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc)

Yes No

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, feedback.

Yes No

If the answer is Yes to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- Consultation
- Collection and Assessment of Data
- Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive

Consultation

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Gypsy and traveller communities, police, Council members and officers, health and education professionals	Stakeholder involvement, including interviews with travellers, was carried out as part of preparing the GTAA and led to the conclusions of the document.	Late 2016-early 2017

Collect and Assess your Data

Describe how could this proposal impact on Racial groups

Romany gypsies and Irish travellers are considered to be ethnic groups under the Equalities Act. The traveller community housed in bricks and mortar in Reading is generally of Irish traveller origin, but unauthorised encampments involve a range of groups. Considering provision to meet the identified needs therefore has a potential impact on racial groups.

The effect of the current consultation would be that the Council would not be able to provide for the identified permanent accommodation needs for gypsies and travellers. This would therefore be likely to have a continuing negative impact on ethnic groups.

However, if as a result of this process a site for transit provision were to be identified, there would also be a positive effect on some of the same groups through providing a site to allow the cultural need to travel whilst better managing the issues that arise.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

No impact.

Is there a negative impact?

Yes

No

Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Disability

Disabled access was highlighted as a principle that should be highlighted in the Brief.

The Brief expands on this, and ensures that any impacts on disability will be positive.

Is there a negative impact?

Yes

No

Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

No impact.

Is there a negative impact?

Yes

No

Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Age

The proportion of people in the surrounding three wards (Norcot, Southcote and Tilehurst) that are 0-15 and 60-84 is higher than the Reading average. The improvements to the centre seek to ensure that the centre appeals to all ages, and the development principles highlight the need to provide for both older people and families with young children.

Is there a negative impact?

Yes

No

Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Religious belief?

No impact.

Is there a negative impact?

Yes

No

Not sure

Make a Decision

Tick which applies

1. No negative impact identified Go to sign off

2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

Reason

The negative impact relates to the proposal to not provide for permanent provision for gypsies and travellers. However, this results from the fact that there are not any suitable and available sites to meet these needs, and this includes that provision of land in a number of locations would have a negative effect on those groups through matters such as contamination and flood risk. The Council has thoroughly assessed potential sites, but does not consider that it is possible to meet the identified permanent needs.

3. Negative impact identified or uncertain

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

The Council is obliged by the Housing and Planning Act to periodically review the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers. Policies to be included in the Local Plan (which includes a proposed policy on accommodation for gypsies and travellers) will include their own monitoring measures. Where Reading's needs will not be met within the Borough, the Council will monitor the provision within other authorities to consider whether needs are adequately met elsewhere.

Signed (completing officer)	Mark Worringham	Date: 11 th September 2017
Signed (Lead Officer)	Mark Worringham	Date: 11 th September 2017

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PROVISION CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Reading Borough Council

September 2017

DRAFT

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council is currently preparing a Local Plan for Reading, which will set out how Reading is to be developed up to 2036. A consultation on the first stage, Issues and Options, took place early in 2016, and a Draft Plan was subject to consultation in May and June 2017. One of the issues that both consultation documents highlighted was the possible need to find sites for gypsies and travellers.

The Identified Need

- 1.2 The Council recently carried out an assessment of whether there is a need to provide additional pitches for gypsies and travellers in Reading. This document, the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), looked at the needs of gypsies, travellers, travelling show people and those dwelling on houseboats, and reported in June 2017. Carrying out such assessments is both a legal requirement¹, and an expectation of national policy when preparing a Local Plan.
- 1.3 Reading's GTAA identified that, over the period to 2036, there is a need for 10-17 permanent pitches for gypsies and travellers, and for transit provision of 5 pitches (with each pitch able to accommodate two caravans) within Reading. It also shows a need for 2 additional plots for travelling show people. There is no need identified for additional residential moorings for houseboats.
- 1.4 There are no existing sites for gypsies and travellers in Reading, either for permanent or transit pitches. There is an authorised site for travelling show people at Scours Lane, which has six pitches. There is also very little recent history of interest in providing private sites in Reading.
- 1.5 A rise in the number of illegal encampments in Reading and the Thames Valley area over the past year, including a number of encampments in public parks, has brought the issue of traveller accommodation into sharper focus. While some incursions have not caused any issues for local residents, the Council or Police, others have. Local residents living near to encampments have frequently reported anti-social behaviour. Added to the substantial legal costs of the eviction process, the cost of clean ups or repairs is significant.
- 1.6 The Council and Thames Valley Police have different powers in respect of illegal encampments and work closely together to use the most appropriate powers of enforcement, in line with the relevant legislation. There are additional powers to direct both trespassers and travellers to leave land and remove any vehicle and property from the land where the senior police officer reasonably believes that

¹ Section 124 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016

two or more people are trespassing on land with the purpose of residing there, that the occupier has taken reasonable steps to ask them to leave and there is a suitable pitch available on a caravan site elsewhere in the local authority area. Regarding this last point, there are clear potential benefits to making transit provision available.

The Search for Sites

- 1.7 Reading is a very tightly constrained urban area, and as such there are very significant difficulties in finding sites for gypsies and travellers. A large proportion of sites in other parts of the country tend to be within the countryside, but the few parts of Reading that are not already within the urban area are at high risk of flooding and are not therefore suitable for caravans. Nevertheless, the Council must take a thorough approach to examining whether there are sites that could meet the need. There are two potential sources of sites - Council-owned land and non-Council owned land.

Non-Council-owned land

- 1.8 Unlike many other authorities, there are no existing sites to expand or previous significant planning applications or proposals to re-evaluate. In recent consultations on the Local Plan, the Council has specifically requested that potential gypsy and traveller sites be put forward. In the Issues and Options consultation (January-March 2016), question 9 asked "*Are there any sites that would be suitable for provision for gypsies and travellers?*" The Draft Local Plan consultation (May-June 2017) highlighted the matter in paragraph 4.4.87, and again asked for any sites to be put forward. No landowners came forward with sites at either stage.
- 1.9 In August 2017, the Council once again investigated this, by writing to all owners of potential development sites identified within the Draft Local Plan (apart from high-density proposals within the town centre), to ask whether there is potential availability of all or part of the site to be used for gypsies and travellers. Once again, no potential sites were identified.
- 1.10 In allocating a site for a specific use within the Local Plan, the Council must be confident that there is a likelihood of that use taking place. It is clear from the responses to consultation that there is very little prospect of a site coming forward for gypsy and traveller use on non-Council-owned land.

Council-owned land

- 1.11 With the above in mind, the Council undertook a thorough assessment of its own land. The process that was used is described in detail in the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Background Document, on the Council's website². In summary, all identifiable Council-owned land

² www.reading.gov.uk/readingldf

over 0.15 ha³ was identified that was not either (a) occupied by in-use buildings or (b) covered by designated public open space or statutory allotments. In total, this resulted in the identification of around 80 sites.


- 1.12 The sites were assessed for their suitability and availability for provision for gypsies and travellers. In terms of suitability, matters considered included effects on residential amenity, ecology or heritage designations, contamination, the presence of important trees, flood risk, visual amenity, topography and vehicle access. Availability considerations include whether the site is covered by existing leases or covenants which would prevent alternative uses, and whether there are already firm proposals that would require the use of the site.
- 1.13 A summary of the sites assessed and the reasons for their rejection are set out in Annex 1. Further detail is within the Background Document. After this process was undertaken, the only remaining site that was considered to be potentially suitable and available for this use was a site at the junction of Richfield Avenue and Cow Lane, identified below.

³ Based on the Council's interpretation of best practice on designing sites for gypsies and travellers, it was considered that 0.15 ha was the minimum size of site needed to accommodate five transit pitches. A site for at least five permanent pitches would need to be larger, with an estimated minimum size of 0.34 ha.

2. POTENTIAL SITE

- 2.1 This document asks for your views on the potential site that has been identified at the junction of Richfield Avenue and Cow Lane. Details of the site are set out below. The proposal is that this site would be used for transit rather than permanent pitches. The site is more than large enough to accommodate the full transit need of 5 pitches.

Land at Junction of Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue	
Ward:	Abbey
Site Size:	0.73 ha
<i>Issues</i>	
Highway access:	Vehicle access from Cow Lane
Access to facilities:	Close to town centre
Effect on character:	Site adjoins industrial, leisure and agricultural uses, and should not detrimentally affect character. No nearby heritage assets. Possible to screen from main road.
Effect on amenity:	No nearby residents.
Trees/biodiversity:	Some trees and vegetation on site, but much of site is gravel/hardstanding.
Other:	Site is within Flood Zone 2, requiring sequential and exception test in line with NPPF.
Availability	Site used in part for Festival, which would need to be addressed.



- 2.2 The site forms part of a wider site between Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue, but the remainder of the area to the south is at high risk of flooding (Flood Zone 3) and, in line with national policy, would not therefore be appropriate for development involving caravans.
- 2.3 If, after consultation, the site is considered suitable for transit provision, it is intended that it would potentially be included as an allocated site within the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan. Further work would need to be undertaken to assess how and when the site could be delivered.

3. REMAINING ACCOMMODATION NEED

- 3.1 If allocated in the Local Plan, the Richfield Avenue and Cow Lane site could meet the need for transit provision. However, no available or suitable sites have been identified that could meet the permanent needs for 10-17 pitches.

- 3.2 In line with national policy, where there are unmet development needs within an area, the Council must work with other local authorities to consider whether the needs can be met in other areas. The Council will therefore need to engage with its neighbours to address this issue within the Local Plan.

4. CONSULTATION DETAILS

- 4.1 We would like to hear your views on the matters set out in this document. In particular, we would like you to consider the following questions:

1. *What are your views on the Cow Lane/Richfield Avenue site identified in this document?*
2. *Do you agree that there are no other potentially suitable and available sites within Reading Borough?*

- 4.2 Your comments will be taken into account in drawing up the next version of the Local Plan, the Pre-Submission Draft, which is due to be subject to consultation starting at the end of November 2017. Please could you therefore provide any comments by 5:00 pm on Tuesday 24th October 2017, using the following contact details.

Email: planningpolicy@reading.gov.uk

Address: Planning Policy Team
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

ANNEX 1: SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT OF OTHER COUNCIL-OWNED SITES

A1.1 The following Council-owned sites were considered during the site assessment process, and rejected for the summary reasons set out below. More detail, including maps of the sites, is available in the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Background Document on the Council's website.

Ward	Address	Size (ha)	Reason for rejection
Abbey	Rivermead overflow parking areas	1.18	Required for continued use as car park.
Abbey	Land at Orts Road	0.18	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Abbey	County Lock	0.25	Visual amenity No vehicular access
Abbey	Reading Family Centre, North Street	0.22	Required for alternative use
Battle	Field at Littlejohn's Farm	2.94	Flood risk Biodiversity significance Landscape significance
Battle	Thames Side Promenade	2.11	Flood risk Biodiversity significance Landscape significance
Caversham	Land at Elliotts Way	0.22	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Caversham	Former Caversham Nursery	0.16	Flood risk
Caversham	Hills Meadow Car Park	1.25	Required for continued use as car park Visual amenity
Caversham	Land west of Deans Farm	0.31	Flood risk
Caversham	Nire Road	0.5	Flood risk Biodiversity significance
Caversham	Land at Charles Evans Way	0.9	Flood risk Biodiversity significance
Church	Land at Windermere Road	0.38	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Church	Land rear of The Lawns	0.14	No vehicular access
Church	Land rear of Monksbarn	0.41	Biodiversity significance Landscape significance Topography
Church	Foxhays Road	1.12	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Church	Wentworth Avenue	0.29	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Katesgrove	Canterbury Road	0.24	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Kentwood	Scours Lane	1.01	Flood risk
Kentwood	Land north of Scours Lane allotments	3.42	Flood risk
Kentwood	Land west of Riverside Park	0.4	Flood risk Biodiversity significance
Kentwood	Garages at Rodway Road	0.28	Required for alternative use
Kentwood	Land at Wealden Way	0.47	Biodiversity significance Landscape significance Topography
Kentwood	Land between Denby Way and Chelsea Close	0.2	Residential amenity Visual amenity

Ward	Address	Size (ha)	Reason for rejection
			Public footpath crosses site
Mapledurham	South of Ridge Hall Close	0.44	Biodiversity significance Landscape significance Topography
Minster	East of A33	3.26	Flood risk Biodiversity significance Landscape significance
Minster	West of A33	6.45	Flood risk Biodiversity significance Landscape significance
Minster	Land adjacent to water treatment works	4.59	Flood risk Biodiversity significance Landscape significance
Minster	Rear of 284-290 Wensley Road	0.19	Residential amenity Topography
Minster	South of Coley Park Allotments	0.99	Flood risk No vehicle access
Minster	Land rear of Arbour Close	0.18	Flood risk No vehicle access Residential amenity
Minster	Land at Coley Place	0.18	Topography
Minster	Land west of Swallows Croft	0.49	Biodiversity significance
Norcot	Land at Tarlon Court	0.22	Residential amenity Visual amenity Heritage considerations
Norcot	Land at The Meadway	0.19	Visual amenity
Park	Former Tennis Courts, Bulmershe Road	0.51	Site required for alternative use
Park	Land at Green Road	0.49	Site required for alternative use
Park	Mockbeggar Allotments	0.37	Site required for alternative use
Peppard	Land west of Harveys Nurseries and north of Cemetery	0.38	Site required for alternative use Landscape significance
Peppard	Grove Road Green	0.23	Visual amenity Public footpath crosses site
Peppard	Land between Lowfield Road and Milestone Way	0.28	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Peppard	Car park at the Milestone Centre	0.21	Required for continued use as car park
Peppard	Land at Lowfield Road	0.73	Site required for housing use, currently underway
Redlands	Land at Hexham Road	0.2	Biodiversity significance Residential amenity
Southcote	Granville Road verges	2.61	Visual amenity
Southcote	Devil's Dip, Circuit Lane	0.51	Biodiversity significance Visual amenity
Southcote	Land at Fawley Road	0.18	Residential amenity Visual amenity Public footpath crosses site
Southcote	Alice Burrows Home, Dwyer Road	0.48	Site required for alternative use
Southcote	Land at Holybrook Crescent	0.26	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Southcote	Playing Field, Hastings Close	1.46	Site required for continued playing field use
Southcote	Land east of Brunel Road allotments	2.31	Flood risk
Southcote	Land south of Hatford Road	2.42	Flood risk Biodiversity significance

Ward	Address	Size (ha)	Reason for rejection
Southcote	Land west of Florian Gardens	0.22	No vehicular access Residential amenity
Southcote	Land east of Florian Gardens	0.16	No vehicular access Residential amenity
Southcote	Coronation Square	0.58	Visual amenity
Southcote	Land at Barn Close	0.34	Residential amenity
Thames	Land at The Warren	1.16	Biodiversity significance Landscape significance Topography
Thames	Land south of Ammanford	0.34	Protected trees Residential amenity Visual amenity
Thames	Land at Gravel Hill	0.17	Landscape significance Residential amenity
Thames	Furzeplat	1.46	Biodiversity significance Protected trees Topography
Tilehurst	Junction of Walnut Way and St Michaels Road	0.21	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Tilehurst	Downing Road Playing Field	1.17	Site required for alternative use
Tilehurst	Land at Lansdowne Road	0.19	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Tilehurst	Land at Portland Gardens	0.39	Residential amenity Visual amenity Biodiversity significance
Whitley	Wincanton Road	0.6	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Whitley	Swallowfield Drive	0.35	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Whitley	Land at Whitley Wood Lane	0.24	Residential amenity
Whitley	Land at Vernon Crescent	0.5	Residential amenity Visual amenity
Whitley	Land at junction of Acre Road and Basingstoke Road	0.16	Visual amenity
Whitley	Basingstoke Road verge between Acre and Bennet Road	0.46	Visual amenity
Whitley	Basingstoke Road verge between Bennet Road and Manor Farm Road	0.99	Visual amenity
Whitley	Southside (former Greyhound/Speedway stadium)	9.7	Site required for alternative use
Whitley	Land east of Smallmead and south of Island Road	0.25	Flood risk
Whitley	Land north of Island Road	3.18	Site required for alternative use - recent planning permission for industrial
Whitley	Land south of Manor Farm Cottages	1.16	Flood risk
Whitley	South of Kennet and Avon Canal	4.3	Flood risk Landscape significance
Whitley	South of Fobney Pumping Station	0.6	Flood risk Landscape significance
Whitley	South of Smallmead	3.79	No vehicular access Likely contaminated land
Whitley	South of Sewage Treatment Works	1.61	Site required for alternative use

NB: The reasons for rejection set out above are not necessarily the only reason why a particular site is considered unsuitable. Once a site had been excluded for robust reasons, there was not considered to be any need to identify further issues

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