

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 JUNE 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	CONSULTATION ON GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PROVISION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	ABBNEY/BOROUGHWIDE
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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 provides a summary of the results of the consultation on provision for gypsies and travellers undertaken during September and October 2017, including on a proposal for a traveller transit site at Cow Lane. It considers the points raised in consultation, as well as new issues which have come forward since the original report to Policy Committee in September 2017, including the proposal for a new secondary school, and recommends a decision on whether to proceed with the transit site proposal.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee note the results of consultation on gypsy and traveller provision in September and October 2017;
- 2.2 That the Committee agree that the proposal for traveller transit use of the site at Cow Lane not be progressed further; and
- 2.3 That the Committee note that the Council will continue to undertake work to identify a site to meet traveller transit needs in Reading.

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 and seeking to accommodate

those needs is an expectation of national planning policy in preparing Local Plans (Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, 2015). The Council has prepared a Local Plan for Reading, which was submitted to the Secretary of State on 29th March 2018. The preparation of this Local Plan has meant a need to assess the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers, and give consideration to how and where those needs can be met.

4. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Current Position

- 4.1 A Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment was carried out in 2017 to assess the needs for those living in caravans and houseboats. In summary, it identified needs of 10-17 permanent pitches and 5 transit pitches for gypsies and travellers up to 2036. At the same time, there are current issues with unauthorised encampments within Reading, with 87 unauthorised encampments in Reading between April 2016 and March 2017, the majority of which were on Council land. This has significant financial costs in terms of legal, bailiff and clean-up costs as well as officer time. Powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to seize vehicles of those who have failed to comply with a direction to leave land rely upon a suitable pitch being available on a caravan site within a local authority area, which means that the ability to use these powers in Reading is currently restricted by the lack of sites. These matters were reported to Policy Committee on 25th September 2017.
- 4.2 Over the course of summer 2017, the Council undertook a site search to identify potential sites to accommodate that need. This resulted in only one potential site being identified, namely land at the junction of Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue, for transit provision. This is shown in Appendix 2. No other sites were considered available or suitable for this use.
- 4.3 At Policy Committee on 25th September 2017, it was agreed that the Council should consult on the potential transit use of this site, as well as on the work that had been undertaken to get to that point (Minute 29 refers). A Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document dealing with these matters was published for consultation on 26th September, and consultation lasted for a four-week period, until 24th October.
- 4.4 The consultation included sending information to all contacts on the Council's planning consultation lists, a press release and publication on the website. Information was also sent to every address within 400 metres of the proposed Cow Lane site. During the consultation, it also became apparent that an anonymous flyer had been circulated highlighting the proposal.
- 4.5 A total of 222 responses were received to the consultation. The large majority of these (164) constituted objections to the proposed site at Cow Lane. A smaller number of representations in support were received (31), whilst the remainder asked for additional information or raised other issues. As well as members of the public, there was a large response from businesses operating from the Richfield Avenue and Portman Road areas,

and particularly strong concerns were raised by Festival Republic with regard to the Reading Festival, and from the Council's own Leisure and Recreation section. Appendix 3 summarises the main points made.

- 4.6 The Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan was published for consultation on 30th November 2017, and this identified the Cow Lane site as a potential location for traveller transit use (policy WR4), albeit that it was clear that this work was still ongoing and that a decision was yet to be made. Consultation on this version of the Local Plan took place up until 26th January 2018, and several responses were also received to the identification of the Cow Lane site, often from the same respondents re-iterating their concerns. No significant changes were made to policy WR4, and the Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 29th March, which marks the beginning of a public examination involving likely hearings in September.
- 4.7 The Council is also in the process of considering how the identified need for new secondary school places in Reading should be met. A report on secondary school places is on the agenda for this meeting of Policy Committee (Item 9). The report on secondary school places recommends that an area of land at Richfield Avenue be identified as the preferred site for a new 6 form entry secondary school, which includes the land that was proposed for traveller transit use in the September 2017 consultation. The implications are discussed in paragraphs 4.14 and 4.15.

(b) Option Proposed

Consideration of consultation responses

- 4.8 A summary of consultation responses received during September and October 2017 is included as Appendix 3. The following section discusses the main issues raised and considers how they would affect the potential for traveller transit use of the site.

- **Anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, theft, safety**
Comments made under these headings raise related issues. Ultimately, there is a risk in establishing a transit site that it will result in localised increases in these issues, wherever that site happens to be. However, this must be considered in the context of issues that are already arising where there are unauthorised encampments within the Borough. It may be possible that a well-managed transit site would result in an overall reduction in instances of anti-social behaviour and related issues, and in the long run improve the relationship between travellers and the settled community, compared to a series of ad hoc illegal incursions.
- **Cost to taxpayers**
This issue was dealt with in the Policy Committee report from 25th September. There are potentially substantial savings to be made from reducing the Council's enforcement and clear-up costs, and a proposal for a transit site, were a suitable and available site to be found, would continue to represent value for money.
- **Reading Festival**
The concerns raised by Festival Republic are significant and wide-ranging. The site is a key part of the centre of operations for the

festival, being strategically located at the main goods vehicle entrance and directly behind the main stage and backstage area.

The Cow Lane entrance is the main access for supplies and construction materials for the festival site, and is the only vehicular access point capable of accommodating the high vehicles required. Festival Republic requires absolute control of this access for a period of up to eight weeks.

As the main vehicular entrance, the site is also used for a variety of activities, including security and counter-terrorism checks, staff catering, broadcasting and communications and the stationing of emergency vehicles. The location of the site close to both the main stage and the highway network makes it the optimal location for these uses.

The northern strip of the site is used as a direct exit for up to 20,000 day visitors, which operates in conjunction with road closures and police operations. A reduced site that retained the existing access route (see Figure 3) could address this to some extent (although there would still be likely concerns about the implications of directing so many people so close to a transit site), but would not resolve the other issues around the festival.

Appendix 4 shows in summary how the site is used during the festival.

Officers have met with Festival Republic to explore their objections and to understand the extent to which there are issues that can be overcome. In doing so, it has become clear that these issues are insurmountable, and that the use of the land for traveller transit would fundamentally affect the operation of the festival.

- **Effects on nearby businesses and trading**

The concerns of businesses around the area, which relate particularly to potential theft and the need to take security measures to protect their premises, and potential customers being deterred from using the business, are understandable, and should be taken seriously. In many cases, businesses have noted an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour when there have been previous incursions. However, it should be noted that it is quite common for traveller sites to be located in commercial and industrial areas. When officers examined the location of other sites in Southern England, 39% of the 160 sites identified were adjacent to commercial or industrial premises. It is also worth bearing in mind that the transit site is a response to illegal encampments elsewhere in the Borough, and any crime and anti-social behaviour associated with this use may well already be occurring elsewhere. There are no locations within Reading where there are not businesses or residences in close proximity, so if a transit site is provided anywhere within the Borough this is a potential risk.

Although there is no data to support this, it is conceivable that, where travellers are located on an official site, and have needed to pay a deposit and give contact details to secure a temporary pitch, there is

less likelihood of these issues arising. However, part of taking any proposals forward would have been to consider how management arrangements can be set up to ensure that there is as little impact on surrounding operations as possible.

- **Traffic and highways**

Should any proposal proceed to planning application stage, there would need to be full assessment of the effects on the road network. However, with space on site for only up to ten caravans, staying for up to 2-3 months at a time, it is unlikely that the movements generated on the road network would be particularly significant, particularly in the context of being located adjacent to an employment area with significant movement of HGVs.

Access considerations would need to be looked at in more detail in developing any proposal. Cow Lane is a public right of way, and provides access to other properties, and there would be a need to ensure that caravan movements would not result in adverse effects on the access. However, this is considered to be an issue which is capable of resolution.

- **Landscape and visual amenity**

This is considered to be capable of resolution. The nature of such a site is that it would be low-rise and easy to screen from Richfield Avenue, Cow Lane and the Thames meadows. There is already a strong vegetated buffer to Richfield Avenue, and there is enough space for adequate landscaping to be introduced. The overall commercial nature of the surrounding uses means that there will not be a significant visual impact on the meadows from the use itself.

- **Effects on Rivermead Leisure Centre**

The concerns related to effects on the leisure centre were mainly related to the issues outlined above, i.e. theft, anti-social behaviour etc, potentially deterring visitors. The comments on this are therefore broadly the same as set out under that heading above, with the addition that unauthorised encampments elsewhere in the Borough already have the effect of deterring use of leisure facilities, and the provision of a transit site might at least give some greater ability to manage the situation. The leisure procurement process has commenced in order to find a partner to manage the Council's leisure estate, including the development of a new competition standard swimming pool with diving provision at the Rivermead site. The use of the site to accommodate gypsy and traveller needs is unlikely to materially impact on the Council's ambitions for the site currently being sought through the procurement process.

- **Flooding**

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 has been carried out for the site, which considers that the site could be developed safely for the proposed use, subject to a number of detailed recommendations:

1. *Pitches should be located outside of the present day 1 in 100 annual probability flood extent [Flood Zone 3] to minimise residual risk;*

2. *The proposed use of the site will not introduce permanent building footprint, and therefore flood storage during the 1 in 100 annual probability +35% climate change design event;*
3. *Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be incorporated into the site to address any changes in impermeable surfacing, aiming to achieve greenfield runoff rates, if feasible. It is important that SUDS are designed with due consideration to soil and groundwater conditions. Infiltration techniques should be sought wherever possible, however are likely to be unsuitable in areas of shallow groundwater and/or impermeable soils. Landscaping should be designed within the site to avoid locking overland flow routes;*
4. *The impacts on the safe access route should be assessed for the 1 in 100 annual probability +35% climate change allowance as part of a 'Flood Management and Evacuation Plan'. Future users of the site should be made aware of the potential risks of flooding, and the site operators should be registered with the EA's Flood Information Service to receive flood alerts, flood warnings and severe flood warnings well in advance of an event.*

The first recommendation, in terms of ensuring that caravans are not located within Flood Zone 3, could be addressed in Local Plan policy WR4. This would slightly restrict the available space as shown in Figure 2, but there would still be adequate space to incorporate the proposed use alongside landscaping etc. The remainder of the above recommendations would feed into a more detailed Flood Risk Assessment to accompany any planning application.

Figure 2: Flood Zone 3 on Cow Lane site



- **Noise**
In the context of surrounding busy industrial areas, there is no inherent reason why a small transit site should necessarily result in high levels of noise affecting the tranquillity of the meadows, any more than the nearby leisure uses or the railway do. However, this would require further investigation at planning application stage were the Council to decide to take this proposal further.
- **Wildlife**
Should the proposal proceed to planning application stage, there would need to be full assessment of the effects on biodiversity of the site. However, at this stage, there is no known particular biodiversity significance nor is there any reason why biodiversity interest could not be incorporated into the site. Development on site would be limited to

provision of hardstanding and potentially low-key facilities such as toilet blocks, and effects would be likely to be capable of mitigation.

- **Education and healthcare infrastructure**
There would be likely to be some additional requirements in terms of education and healthcare. However, in the context of the number of new homes proposed within and around the centre up to 2036, the effect of a maximum of ten caravans will be negligible.
- **Privacy**
These comments related to concerns about the privacy of the occupants of the site. However, with sufficient landscaping, this should not be a significant issue.

4.9 There were strong objections to the proposal from the Council's Leisure and Recreation sections. Some of the issues raised are dealt with above, but there are some specific issues, namely:

- The need to maintain an access for the adjacent Caversham Plant Centre, which takes in the northern strip of the site; and
- Potential negative effects on the proposed Outpost Childrens Activity Centre on the site to the north.

4.10 In terms of the need to maintain access across the northern strip, the site, even after it is reduced to account for the location of Flood Zone 3, may still be large enough to meet the transit needs without affecting the access across the north of the site. Figure 3 shows an illustrative reduction of the site (shown with dotted yellow line) retaining an access across the north to Caversham Plant Centre (which may also satisfy the day visitor exit referred to by Festival Republic). This reduces the size of the site to 0.39ha, but the original minimum size for identifying sites was 0.15ha, so provision of a site may still be possible.

Figure 3: Possible reduction of Cow Lane site to retain northern access



4.11 In terms of the impacts on the proposed Outpost Children's Activity Centre, this has now been overtaken by events, with this site now being

recommended as the preferred site for a new secondary school. This is discussed further in paragraphs 4.14 to 4.15.

4.12 Finally, a number of other sites were suggested for consideration. Of those that were not already considered as part of the site selection process, none are considered suitable, for the reasons set out below.

- **Site of Murdoch's Pub at the bottom on Langley Hill on the Bath Road**
In West Berkshire, so would offer no benefits to Reading in terms of using enhanced enforcement powers.
- **20 Scours Lane/ Beneath the railway off Portman Road**
These sites are largely within Flood Zone 3 and partly in the functional floodplain, and would not be suitable for caravans.
- **Near the A33/M4 interchange**
Not clear which site is referred to in the comment. Much of the area immediately around the junction is used for balancing ponds, and there is no prospect of allowing additional accesses that would interfere with the operation of the junction. There is a part of a field within Reading Borough to the south west of the junction that the Local Plan has earmarked to potentially be part of any Grazeley proposal. However, there is no road access to this within Reading Borough, and any development here would require a larger development with land in Wokingham to come forward to realise this.
- **Rear of 107-109 Castle Hill**
This is a very small site which, at 0.08 ha is well below the 0.15ha needed.
- **Site of the old Civic Centre, to the rear of the Police Station**
The Council is actively working with development partners to bring this site forward for a major mixed use development.

4.13 In summary, many of the issues raised during consultation would have been potentially capable of resolution as part of a proposal on the Cow Lane site. However, the effects on Reading Festival would be severe, and would potentially constrain the operation of the Festival to such an extent that it could not continue in its current location. The Festival makes a very significant contribution to both the economy and the cultural life of Reading, and detrimental effects on its operation would not be acceptable.

Proposal for a secondary school

4.14 Since both the Gypsy and Traveller Consultation Document and the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan have been subject to consultation, a process undertaken by the Council to identify a site for a new 6 form entry secondary school has resulted in a recommendation to confirm a site at Richfield Avenue as the preferred option. The Cow Lane site that was subject to consultation for transit use forms a part of this site, which also includes the adjacent former Leaderboard driving range. A report to this meeting of Policy Committee sets out more detail about secondary school place needs and the requirement for a new 6th form entry school to be available from September 2021 (see item 9). The process for selecting a preferred site has examined a number of options in the Borough and

concludes that the Richfield Avenue site is deliverable; this being essential in terms of seeking Free School funding via the recently launched Wave 13 programme.

- 4.15 Even if the secondary school and traveller transit use were compatible, which is unlikely to be the case, the site is not capable of accommodating both of these uses, as it is already close to the minimum size required to meet secondary school needs. In terms of weighing up these competing demands, the Council as local education authority has a statutory duty under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to secure that sufficient schools are available for their area, whereas the expectation that local authorities identify sufficient land to meet traveller accommodation needs is in policy rather than legislation. As such, the selection of the Richfield Avenue site as the preferred site for a secondary school would mean that the proposal for transit use could not be progressed.

Conclusion

- 4.16 Due to the significant adverse effects on Reading Festival, as well as the proposals for use of a site including this land for a secondary school, it is recommended that the proposal for a traveller transit site at Cow Lane not be proceeded with.
- 4.17 The work undertaken in assessing sites for potential gypsy and traveller use in Reading shows that there are no likely alternative sites that are suitable and available. A criteria-based policy in the Local Plan will enable any proposals that do come forward to be considered on their merits, but it is not considered likely that sites will be proposed in the foreseeable future. This would mean that Reading does not provide a transit site. The Council will continue to work with its neighbours to identify whether its needs for gypsy and traveller provision can be met in adjoining authorities, and this will include transit needs. However, it should be recognised that, whilst a transit site close to Reading in an adjoining authority could help to prevent some unauthorised encampments arising in the first place, an out-of-Borough site would not allow use of the enhanced enforcement powers referred to in paragraph 8.4.
- 4.18 Should Committee resolve to not proceed with the site, the Council will need to prepare an update for the Local Plan Inspector, which recommends the deletion of policy WR4 of the Local Plan. It will be for the Inspector to decide whether the policy should be removed in order to make the Plan sound.

(c) Other Options Considered

- 4.19 The main alternative option to the recommended action is to continue with the proposal for a transit site in this location. However, as set out above, this would have significant negative impacts on the operation of the Reading Festival, which could threaten its future in Reading, and would also prevent the use of this and neighbouring land as a secondary school.
- 4.20 In terms of options for alternative sites, the September 2017 consultation document as well as the supporting background paper identifies the alternative sites and why they are not suitable or available.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 Making provision for gypsies and travellers to meet identified need would have contributed 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.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Consultation on the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document took place for a four week period between 26th September and 24th October 2017. This was not a statutory consultation under planning regulations, but was handled in a similar way. The Council's consultation process for planning policy is set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (adopted March 2014). The results of consultation are summarised in this report.
- 6.2 After consultation closed, the potential transit site was included within the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan. The Local Plan was approved for consultation at Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 22nd November 2017 (Minute 14 refers), and it was then subject to consultation between 30th November 2017 and 26th January 2018. There were also a number of comments received on this site to the Local Plan consultation, but in many of these were from some of the same respondents as the September/October consultation.

7. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Detail on Equality Impact Assessment is set out in Appendix 1. An adverse impact on racial groups as a result of any decision to not provide for transit needs is identified. However, it is considered that there is a justifiable reason for this position, specifically that there are not suitable and available sites in Reading to meet these needs.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 is the main legal context for enforcement powers relating to unauthorised gypsy and traveler encampments. Section 61 is the direction to leave the land and S62 is the power to seize vehicles if the direction is not complied with.
- 8.2 Should trespassers refuse to adhere to a request to leave the land when asked to do so by the landowner or anyone acting on behalf of the landowner then 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. 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:
- 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.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 Police have powers (as above these are discretionary) 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 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). Provision of a transit site within Reading's boundaries would therefore enable use of these enhanced enforcement powers.
- 8.5 Not providing a site would mean no change to the current range of enforcement powers available.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report. The report to Policy Committee on 25th September 2017 contained considerable detail on the potential financial costs and savings associated with provision of a transit site, but as the recommendation is to not take this proposal forward, there are no further financial implications.

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
- Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document
- Gypsy and Traveller Provision Background Document
- Pre-Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan

APPENDIX 1: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:

Recommendation to not take proposal for traveller transit site forward

Directorate: Environment and Neighbourhood Services

Service: Planning and Building Control

Name: Mark Worringham

Job Title: Planning Policy Team Leader

Date of assessment: 15/05/2018

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service?

Initial aim was to consider the provision of a site to accommodate transit needs for gypsy and traveller provision, but this report recommends not taking this proposal forward.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The travelling community would have benefitted from any provision through the identification of a specific site. The Reading community as a whole would potentially have benefitted through reductions in unauthorised encampments. The Council, and other landowners, would have benefitted from greater ability to use legal enforcement powers. As the proposal is not recommended to be taken forward, these benefits would not be realised.

What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?

As the recommendation is not to continue with the proposal, there would be no change to the current situation.

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:

N/A

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. The Gypsy and Traveller Consultation Document was also subject to consultation during September and October 2017.	Late 2016-early 2017 September/October 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 recommended action would be that the Council would not be able to provide for the identified transit accommodation needs for gypsies and travellers. This would therefore be likely to have a continuing negative impact on ethnic groups.

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

No impact.

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

No impact.

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 transit 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, as set out in the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Background Document, but does not consider that it is possible to meet the identified transit 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. The Council will continue to keep the potential to provide for accommodation needs within the Borough under review. Where Reading's needs will not be met within the Borough (particularly for permanent accommodation needs), the Council will monitor the provision within other authorities to consider whether needs are adequately met elsewhere.

Signed (completing officer)	Mark Worringham	Date: 15 th May 2018
Signed (Lead Officer)	Mark Worringham	Date: 15 th May 2018

APPENDIX 2: SITE LOCATION PLAN



APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES ON GYSPY AND TRAVELLER PROVISION CONSULTATION DOCUMENT, SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2017

Consultation took place between 26th September and 24th October 2017 and a total of 222 responses were received. Of these, 164 (74%) objected to the proposal for a transit site at Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue. 31 (14%) supported the site if it is appropriately managed, 15 (7%) requested additional information and 12 (5%) raised other issues (had no comments or proposed an alternative site).

The following issues were raised in the representations to the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document (in order of the most frequently mentioned to the least frequently mentioned):

- **Anti-social behaviour** (raised in 46% of objections)—Residents near illegal encampments have frequently reported anti-social behaviour and many representors expressed concerns that a transit site at Cow Lane would increase incidences of anti-social behaviour.
- **Fly-tipping** (raised in 40% of objections)—Representors expressed concerns about fly-tipping and improper waste disposal. Individuals emphasised the importance of rubbish pick-up and recycling, as well as strong enforcement for incidences of fly-tipping.
- **Theft** (raised in 35% of objections)—Some individuals and nearby businesses blamed travellers for incidences of theft, including fuel, scrap metal and break-ins. These representors fear that they will be unable to secure their properties if a site at Cow Lane is approved.
- **Cost to taxpayers** (raised in 35% of objections)—Many representors did not want Council monies spent on providing sites and services for the travelling community. Many requested that Travellers using the transit site be required to pay council tax, waste collection fees, water, sewerage, gas and rent.
- **Safety** (raised in 29% of objections)—Representations included concerns that increasing the population so close to the town centre would place strain on already limited policing resources. The presence of a transit site may deter residents from using the Thames Promenade and Rivermead Leisure Centre because of concerns about personal safety.
- **Reading Festival** (raised in 26% of objections)—Representors, particularly Festival Republic Limited, expressed concern that the transit site would disrupt the safe and efficient operation of the Festival and cited Reading Festival's major economic and cultural contributions to the town. The site is used for 7 weeks in the preparation and take down of the festival and functions as the principal exit point for 20,000 day-ticket holders, as well as for security, on-site communication, loading equipment, catering and induction of staff.
- **Effects on nearby businesses and trading** (raised in 23% of objections)—Representors stated that unauthorised encampments on this site had previously deterred customers from supporting nearby businesses. This resulted in a loss of revenue.
- **Traffic and highways** (raised in 21% of objections)—The site is on a busy road and increased traffic may worsen air quality and road safety, as well as exacerbate traffic congestion.

- **Landscape and visual amenity** (raised in 21% of objections)—Respondents recognised the nearby stretch of the Thames and surrounding area as one of the most beautiful landscapes in Reading. Residents fear that a transit site would degrade the visual quality of the area.
- **Effects on Rivermead Leisure Centre** (raised in 19% of objections)—The Rivermead Leisure Centre and surrounding area provides a range of leisure and recreation activities for the general public and schools. The site could harm the commercial and strategic objectives of the Leisure Centre and the Outpost Centre (opening autumn 2018).
- **Flooding** (raised in 15% of objections)—Some residents expressed concern that Cow Lane floods frequently and that the site is bordered on three sides by Flood Zone 3. This may create access and safety issues.
- **Noise** (raised in 13% of objections)—Respondents claimed that occupants of the site may cause noise and disturbance in the area. Occupants of the site will also be exposed to noise caused by heavy traffic (including HGVs), Reading Festival and the railway.
- **Wildlife** (raised in 12% of objections)—Some respondents stated that the site and surrounding area is home to wildlife, including bats and owls. Residents also expressed concern that the Thames would be contaminated and aquatic wildlife harmed.
- **Education and healthcare infrastructure** (raised in 4% of objections)—Some respondents raised concerns that nearby schools and surgeries are operating at capacity and are not well-suited to serve transient residents of the site who may be vulnerable.
- **Privacy** (raised in 1% of objections)—A few objectors stated that the site would not provide adequate privacy for transient residents who may be vulnerable, particularly children.

In addition, many respondents expressed doubt that this approach would reduce the number of unauthorised encampments in the town.

Those who supported the site if properly managed (14%) noted that these individuals are vulnerable and subject to discrimination and should be given a safe and clean place to live with access to services.

The majority of individuals who requested more information were concerned about the site being funded with taxpayer monies and wanted to ensure that Travellers would pay for waste collection, water, sewerage and council tax.

A number of respondents endorsed sites already considered during the site assessment process and listed in the Consultation Document. The following additional sites were ignored:

- Site of Murdoch's Pub at the bottom on Langley Hill on the Bath Road
- 20 Scours Lane
- Beneath the railway off Portman Road
- Near the A33/M4 interchange
- Rear of 107-109 Castle Hill
- Site of the old Civic Centre, to the rear of the Police Station

One response was received that was considered to be wholly abusive or racist in nature, and is not included above.

APPENDIX 4: MAP SHOWING USE OF SITE DURING READING FESTIVAL

