

Gypsy & Traveller Site Identification Briefing Note

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to update the Severnside Area Forum on the current position in respect of the Council's work to identify suitable sites to meet the pitch needs identified by the Council's Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment, that identified the need for 13 pitches.

Introduction

All Councils in Wales have a duty under Part 3, Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to undertake a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Assessment every five years. Where unmet need for mobile home pitches is identified, the necessary pitch provision needs to be facilitated. The last [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Assessment](#) was adopted by [Cabinet](#) on 6th January 2021. The summary conclusions identify a need for 13 pitches for families already living within Monmouthshire, which can be broken down as an unmet need of nine pitches under the assessment period 2020 to 2025 and a further unmet need of four pitches over the remaining length of the Replacement Local Development Plan (2026-33) to accommodate family growth as children become adults and require their own pitch.

The Council has been implementing a process to evaluate all Council owned land i.e.1500 assets, to meet the identified pitch need and provide suitable homes in a sustainable

location to meet the identified pitch need for Monmouthshire. The vision is small sites, ideally for individual families, well-designed and sensitive to existing communities.

On 4th October 2023, Cabinet received a report and approved a number of recommendations including:

- The commencement of a public consultation exercise on the following Council owned sites, for the potential provision of up to six Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pitches each:
- Bradbury Farm, Crick, Caldicot
- Oak Grove Farm, Crick, Caldicot
- Langley Close, Magor
- Further exploration of the 19th July Place Scrutiny Committee's request to support households wishing to self-serve on existing sites which, subject to the necessary permissions, would reduce the number of new pitches needed.

In addition to the public consultation and running alongside the consultation, it was considered appropriate to commission site evaluation surveys to also help inform suitability. External specialists were appointed to undertake the following:

- Noise assessment
- Land contamination assessment (not including Oakgrove)

- Air quality assessment (not including Oakgrove)
- Transport assessment
- Ecology assessment

Current Situation

The following provides an update on the current situation:

- **Public Consultation** – 9th November 2024 a 6 week consultation exercise was co-ordinated by Grasshopper Communications on behalf of the Council to seek the public views about the suitability of the three sites. The consultation centred around three drop in events and the availability of a Feedback Form. The drop in events were held in Portskewett and Magor. The third was at County Hall and aimed at the Gypsy & Traveller Community. The Feedback Form was available online and in hard form. The consultation was supplemented and promoted by dedicated webpages on the Council's website, media and social media releases and posters displayed locally.
- **Site Evaluation Surveys** - Surveys have been commissioned and completed where applicable (on the advice of Environmental Health, it wasn't necessary to undertake Land Contamination and Air Quality Assessments for Oakgrove on the basis of their locations). These surveys have all been completed and individual reports have been received providing information that helps to determine suitability.

All of the surveys have been shared with the applicable internal services (Environmental Health, Highways and Ecology) who have been asked to consider the site evaluation surveys and to provide further evaluation, comments and recommendations. This internal feedback has now been received.

- **Households Wishing to Self-Serve on Private Sites** – the Council has been liaising closely with a local household and their appointed planning agent to acquire planning permission on their privately owned land. The Council has and continues to provide direct support to the applicant in respect of their application. A planning application has been received which is currently being consulted upon and the aim is to schedule for Planning Committee after the impending election.

Officers are currently considering both the consultation feedback and the site evaluation surveys in order to draw conclusions and determine potential suitability of each of the sites, which will inform the recommendations of the impending Cabinet Report and which sites would be put forward for inclusion in the emerging Replacement Local Development Plan. The feedback received through the public consultation is both varied and extensive. In general the content of the site evaluation surveys is technical and complex. It, therefore, has been necessary to give time to consider and understand both the information and draw conclusions.

Current and Anticipated Next Steps and Timeline

Officers are currently working to the following actions and provisional timescales, some of which still needs to be finalised:

Current Actions

- Continue to analyse consultation feedback and site evaluation surveys in order to draw conclusion on suitability.
- Consider the need for basic site designs for the three sites.
- Liaise with other LA's about site development
- Continue to liaise with the local household in respect of their current planning application

13th June

- Update to Severnside Area Forum on site identification progress

16th July

- Planning Committee – private householder planning application being considered

End July to Early September

- 25th July Place Scrutiny Committee
- Cabinet – suitable dates currently being identified