

GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS - CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SITES

Consultation on the proposed Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Bournemouth will run from Friday 18 November 2011 to Friday 10 February 2012.

All Forum Members are strongly urged to take part in this consultation. It is hoped the following information may be of help when responding to the consultation:-

The Housing Act 2004 requires Councils to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and to provide accommodation based on the findings of that assessment. Gypsies and Travellers are recognised as having a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Case law has also established that the Government has a duty to “facilitate the gypsy way of life” for ethnic Gypsies and Travellers under the Human Rights Act.

The Consultants approach to identifying appropriate site selection criteria

When selecting possible sites, the Consultants - Bakers - look for three key criteria:

The following is taken from - Dorset-wide Gypsy Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations – Joint Development Plan Document. Issues and Options Consultation Document. November 2011

Is it:-

1. Available – the site is available now?
2. Suitable – the site offers a suitable location for development now and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities; i.e.
 - are there any International, National or Local environmental designations?
 - any other Land Use allocations, eg: open space, community facilities, employment areas?
 - Is the site in the Green Belt?
 - Is it Agricultural Land, particularly grades 1,2 or 3?
 - Is there a Flood risk?
 - Contaminated Land/Poor Air Quality/HSE zones/difficult Topography?
 - Is there good Site Access from an adequate or good standard of road? (see Good Practice Guide)
 - Is there access to Facilities – GP, Schools, Shops, Public transport?
 - Is there access to Utilities – water, electricity, sewerage?
 - Would it have an unacceptable impact on the Green Belt or on Landscape?
 - Is it detrimental to Biodiversity, Protected Species or Important Hedgerow?
 - Would it have an adverse impact on the Historic Environment or Conservation Areas?
 - Would it affect Water Quality Sources?

- Is there Noise Pollution from surrounding uses, e.g. roads, airport or rail transport?
 - Is it adjacent to Sewage Works?
 - Would it adversely affect Adjoining Residential Amenity?
 - Would it be adversely affected by adjoining uses (light, visual or other disturbance)?
3. Achievable – there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years, i.e. there are no site constraints needing to be overcome.

Forum Members may also wish to ask:-

- Are there any footpaths or pedestrian provision to the sites, or accessibility for wheelchair users?
- Why are all the proposals concentrated in the Forum area, not spreading the responsibility across the Borough?
- Is there any evidence to show that property prices near the sites would or would not fall?
- Would a site affect the amenity for users of the Jewish Cemetery?
- Would Gypsy and Traveller Site development in the Green Belt be the thin end of the wedge leading to other development in the future?
- Is the site capable of extension in the future if required (additional pitches will be required to 2028 – see Issues and Options Consultation Document)?
- Can the site be accessed without the need to travel through established residential areas (from previous Bournemouth Borough Council site assessment)?
- Are there other constraints e.g. adjacent to rubbish tip, on a landfill site, close to electricity pylons or heavy industry?
- Would mains Gas supply also be provided (Good Practice Guide)?
- Can the site accommodate children’s play space (Good Practice Guide)?

This summer, the Government carried out a Consultation into “Planning for Traveller Sites,” in which it stated:-

“1.3 The proposed withdrawal and replacement of the circulars formed part of a broader set of policy announcements to provide a fair deal for traveller communities and settled communities. There is a perception among many that currently policy treats traveller sites more favourably than it does other forms of housing and that it is easier for one group of people to gain planning permission particularly on sensitive Green Belt land. This has led people to believe that the system is unfair and this has led to tension and undermined community cohesion.

Protect Green Belt from development

3.15 Circular 01/2006 states that new sites in the Green Belt are “normally inappropriate development”, as defined in Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts.

The inclusion of the word “normally” could give rise to applications by travellers being treated more favourably than applications from members of the settled community. This perception is evidenced by data from the Planning Inspectorate that suggests that, between 2006 and 2009, 60 per cent of planning appeals for traveller development in the Green Belt were allowed. This is compared to just 19 per cent over the same period for minor housing (10 dwellings or less) appeals.

3.16

The Government is committed to ensuring fairness in the planning system and, therefore, proposes removing the word “normally” so that the wording is consistent with the policy in Planning Policy Guidance 2. The Government considers that this change will clarify that applications from travellers for development on Green Belt should be dealt with in exactly the same way as applications from members of the settled community.”

The results of the CLG Consultation are not yet published, but the aims of the document are relevant to Forum members when considering a response to the local consultation on Traveller Sites in Bournemouth.

Note: Figures quoted are for the period 2006 – 2011. Additional pitches are proposed to 2028.

Bibliography:-

CLG Planning for Traveller Sites Consultation 13 April to 03 August 2011 (also available in audio format)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/travellersitesconsultation>

CLG Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/designinggypsiesites?view=Standard>

Dorset-wide Gypsy Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations – Joint Development Plan Document. Issues and Options Consultation Document. November 2011

<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=167729&filetype=pdf>