

**LOWER BRISTOL ROAD GYPSY & TRAVELLER SITE
SCHEME UPDATE**

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BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

The Council's Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment, undertaken in 2012 by Opinion Research Services, identified an unmet need of 28 pitches for Gypsy & Travellers over the time period 2012-2027.

The aim of the project is to develop the existing tolerated 'Gypsy and Traveller' site on Council owned land adjacent to Lower Bristol Road to provide an authorised site providing 13 pitches that are compliant with current design standards and best practice. The scheme is being commissioned by the Council and will be developed and managed by a Registered Provider¹ (RP). To de-risk the project for the RP, and to expedite delivery, the Council appointed planning consultants LPC (Trull) Ltd who submitted a planning application on the 23rd January 2014. It is expected that the application will be considered at Development Control Committee on the 4th June.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

To support the delivery of the scheme the Council has provisionally made available up to £1.8m of capital funding. This was agreed by Council on the 14th February 2012. A subsequent and successful bid to the Home & Communities Agency² (HCA) secured £750k of additional funding. The HCA funding is conditional on the scheme meeting current design standards for Gypsy & Traveller sites, being developed by a RP and being delivered by March 2015. Key current design standards include the following:

- Amenity building (1 per pitch) – minimum to include: hot and cold water; electricity supply; space heating; separate toilet/wash hand basin; bath/shower room; kitchen/dining area; storage space; space for connection of cooker, fridge/freezer and washing machine. A day/living room is recommended. All to comply with Building Regulation requirements.
- Pitch large enough to accommodate: a large trailer & touring caravan; car parking for two vehicles; drying space for clothes; lockable shed; must meet fire regulation separation standards.
- Each pitch must include a hard standing area constructed of concrete or a similar suitable hard wearing material designed to meet the loads imposed and which extends over the whole area to be occupied by a trailer, touring caravan or other vehicle.
- Site to be provided with: highways standard access road; water and waste drainage; lighting; boundary fencing between pitches.

¹ Registered Provider - often referred to as Housing Association or social housing provider.

² Homes & Community Agency – Government funding agency for homes, infrastructure & regeneration

To facilitate the development of this scheme the Council will at a future point need to formerly enter into a partnership contract with our commissioned RP to develop and manage the scheme. As part of this agreement the Council will transfer:

- The HCA grant of £750k;
- An additional and yet to be agreed capital grant;
- The land on a long lease with nominal rent

To ensure that the Council is receiving value for money the cost of providing the scheme is being independently evaluated by our appointed cost engineers. This information will assist in agreeing the grant to be provided to the RP. In addition, and as extra security, the partnership contract will allow for the recovery of a proportion of the additional capital funding should the actual development cost be below the total capital grant transferred.

Until planning approval has been secured (hence the final scheme agreed) and the RP has secured contractors quotes to build the scheme out, it is impossible to finalise the actual cost. However, at this stage the scheme budget remains £1.8m.

The scheme will be revenue neutral to the Council. The partnership agreement allows for the RP to charge rent based upon the HCA Affordable Rent model³. This rental stream is then kept by the RP to fund the management and maintenance of the scheme. Assuming an occupancy rate of 80% the rental stream for the RP will be around £55k p.a.

TIMESCALES

Planning Permission	June 2014
PID/CSG Capital Approval	June 2014
Joint Single Member Decision (partnership contract & allocations policy)	June 2014
Partnership contract signed	July 2014
Start on site	August 2014
Completion on site	March 2015

³ The Affordable Rent Model allows rent to be charged at up to 80% of market rents.