

Draft Minute from the Planning, Transport & Environment Panel – 8/11/11

Agenda Item 10 - Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD): Issues and Options Consultation Paper and 'Call for Sites'.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport introduced this item to the Panel.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked what were the Council's legal requirements with regard to accommodating the travelling community.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that the Council has responsibilities under both housing and equalities legislation towards Gypsies & Travellers.

Councillor Geoff Ward commented that he believed the Council had legal requirement to identify sites but were under no obligation to provide them.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that he believed that to be true and added that the private sector could be asked to play a part in the process.

Councillor Caroline Roberts commented that she was glad to see that the issue had finally been raised to this current level of discussion. She also asked if the sites were likely to be inside or outside of the Green Belt.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that sites within the Green Belt would be considered, but that sites outside of it would have priority.

Councillor Caroline Roberts commented that she was pleased to see that the travelling community will be consulted as part of this process and hoped that a positive relationship could be established. She asked if the Council was looking at the work of any other Local Authorities with regard to this subject area.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport acknowledged that B&NES had been slow in bringing these proposals forward and that other LAs such as South Gloucestershire were currently ahead of us in the process, but added that each Local Authority must bring their own sites forward.

Councillor Malcolm Hanney asked that the legal context of site provision be made clear during the consultation process and spoke of the need for Parish Councils to be advised at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that the site requirements are now included within the Core Strategy and agreed that Parishes should be addressed at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

Councillor Douglas Nicol asked if the term 'Yard' was supposed to be used in the context of people or equipment.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that the term was used for a site occupied by Travelling Showpeople and that Gypsies and Travellers used the term pitch for a small site or accommodation with land that can accommodate trailers.

Councillor David Martin asked for clarity on the difference between a pitch and a site.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport referred him to the Glossary of Terms within the report.

Councillor David Martin asked would there be a need to review the provision in 2016 if the adoption of the process had only concluded in December 2013.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that an early review would be necessary to assess if the correct level of provision was in place.

The Chairman asked for clarification as to whether the Council was legally required to provide sites and if the general size of a pitch could be included in the glossary of terms.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that he would seek advice on the Council's legal requirement and said that the size of a pitch could be included in the glossary of terms.

Councillor Geoff Ward commented that he believed there were currently six illegal sites with a total of 56 trailers on those sites.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that unauthorised sites would be collated as part of this process.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked what was the basis of the Council reaching its decision of needing 42 pitches.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that the site requirement was established through a rigorous study prepared for the West of England which analysed population trends and movements. The Divisional Director advised that this study is publically available.

The Chairman summarised the points the Panel wished to be highlighted to the Cabinet. She asked for the pitch size to be included in the consultation process, the Council's legal requirement to be formally set out and for the Parishes to be consulted at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked if the consultation period could be extended to the end of January as many members of the public may not notice it over the Christmas period.

The Divisional Director for Planning & Transport replied that he would look into that possibility, but stressed his wish to get things moving as soon as possible

The Panel **RESOLVED** to ask the Cabinet to consider the concerns they have identified.

- i) Can a visualisation of average pitch size be included in the consultation process?
- ii) Is it possible for the consultation to clarify the Council's legal requirement to identify / provide sites?
- iii) They ask that the Parishes be consulted at the earliest opportunity.

The Panel also notes that the Draft Consultation Document is scheduled for public consultation over an extended period of 8 weeks to run from late November and requested that consideration is given to extending the consultation.