

REPORT TO THE MALMESBURY AREA (1) COMMITTEE		Report No. 5
Date of Meeting	5 June 2008	
Title of Report	Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision	
Public Report	Yes	

Summary of Report:

To introduce the Gypsy and Traveller Issues and Options Consultation, set out the background to this issue, set out the potential for addressing the needs in the short term and to advise on the long term future for dealing with the issue within the Local Development Framework process.

Options:

- 1. That the Committee express a view on any of the identified publically owned sites and recommend that view to the Council's Executive.**
- 2. That the Committee decline to express a view.**

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Contact Officer	Mr L Robertson Head of Policy and Performance Tel: 01249 706532 e-mail lrobertson@northwiltshire.gov.uk			

1. Background

- 1.1 A Report was taken to the 24th April meeting of this Council's Executive on the potential use of a site owned by a public authority to be made available for sale to interested members of the Gypsy and Traveller community, subject to the obtaining of appropriate planning permission. The Executive declined to enter into this arrangement and instead asked for a full consultation in two parts:
- (a) To obtain the views of the public on the potential of the six identified publically owned sites; and
 - (b) To undertake a "call for sites" consultation to reveal if other appropriate sites private sites may be made available.
- 1.2 This consultation is being run as part of the normal planning process for considering the allocation of sites for specific land uses as part of the Local Development Framework for this area. As such it is being run under the guidance of this Council's published Statement of Community Involvement. Part of that consultation process is the seeking of views through a public meeting of each Area Committee. The consultation runs for six weeks and ends on 20th June 2008.
- 1.3 Details are contained within the main Consultation Document which has been made available to all Members and is also available on the Council's website.

2. Options

- 2.1 The options are:-
- a) **That the Committee express a view on any of the identified publically owned sites and recommend that view to the Council's Executive.**
 - b) **That the Committee decline to express a view.**

3. The Specific Sites

- 3.1 Whilst Members may wish to take a District-wide view, it is recognised that this Area Committee may wish to express a view specifically on the public sites identified in this area. These views will be reported to the Executive to assist its consideration of whether or not it wishes to put forward a specific publically owned site for this purpose.

4. Circular 1/2006 – Advice on the Consideration of Gypsy and Traveller Issues.

- 4.1 Central Government has published advice that members may wish to take into account when considering this matter. A copy of this advice and accompanying material can be found on the Department for Communities and Local Government website:

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

- 4.2 A few points from the circular are highlighted here:

1. The Government has stated its commitment to ensuring that members of the gypsy and traveler communities have the same rights and responsibilities as every other citizen.
2. It is expected that it is through the Local Development Framework process that suitable sites are identified as this ensures early consultation with the community as a whole.
3. The process that is followed starts with a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). (This Council has undertaken this work in association with the Wiltshire County Council and other District Councils in Wiltshire including Swindon Borough Council).
4. The allocation of sites follows the normal process of preparing Development Plan Documents (DPDs) as part of a Local Development Framework.
5. Where there is an unmet need in an area and the DPD process is not completed (as in this case) local planning authorities are expected to give this substantial weight in considering planning applications.
6. Sites for Gypsy and Travellers in rural areas should be considered on the same basis as "exception needs" housing.
7. Sites on the outskirts of built-up areas may be appropriate. Sites may also be found in rural or semi-rural settings. Rural settings, where not subject to special planning constraints, are acceptable in principle. In assessing the suitability of such sites, local authorities should be realistic about the availability, or likely availability, of alternatives to the car in accessing local services. Sites should respect the scale of, and not dominate the nearest settled community. They should also avoid placing an undue pressure on the local infrastructure.
8. A range of other planning factors are included in the Circular. These, and other considerations drawn from the GTAA, have directly informed the "Site Search Criteria" as found in the Consultation Document.

5. Call for Sites

- 5.1 The Circular also identifies a number of ways in which local authorities can identify specific sites and make land available. The circular states:
 - a) Local authorities have discretion to dispose of land for less than best consideration where it will help to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area.
 - b) Authorities should also consider making full use of the registers of unused and under-used land owned by public bodies as an aid to identifying suitable locations. Vacant land or under-used local authority land may be appropriate.
- 5.2 But it is also possible that private landowners may wish to promote land for inclusion as an allocated site for use by Gypsies and Travellers. This consultation offers an opportunity for such individuals or organisations to suggest suitable sites. **If such sites are identified and are considered, using the "Site Search Criteria" to be suitable, a further round of public consultation will be entered into.**

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Council has £250,000 available for this project. The costs of servicing any site are not yet known, but if the site cannot be delivered within budget then a further report will be prepared for consideration by the Executive.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The consultation complies with the requirements of this Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

8. Community and Environmental Implications

- 8.1 The ultimate objective is to provide for permanent gypsy and traveller sites. The Council seeks to meet its obligations towards a section of the community in accordance with Government guidance on housing and planning, and the Council's ability to protect the environment through the development control system.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Gypsies and travellers need to be treated as an integral part of the community whose need for decent housing has to be recognised and accommodated by and within the larger community.

10. Risk Analysis

- 10.1 Failure to provide a permanent site for gypsies and travellers within the district within a reasonable timescale will severely undermine the Council's ability to control unauthorised developments of this nature within the open countryside. It will also lead to further community conflict and division.

Appendices:	None
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gypsy & Traveller Issues and Options Consultation Document• Circular 01/2006

Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision	Executive 24 th April 2008	E213