

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

SOUTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

10 February 2011

Consultation by Dorset County Council: Planning application for gypsy and traveller site on land to the south/east of the Dorset County A30 Depot site, Salisbury Road, Shaftesbury.

Purpose of Report

1. To seek the Committee's views on the Council's response to consultation by Dorset County Council on the planning application submitted in respect of the above proposal/site.
2. The site lies a short distance from the administrative boundary between Dorset and Wiltshire. Donhead St. Mary Parish Council is the closest Parish Council within Wiltshire. The Parish Council's response to consultation on the application by Dorset CC will be reported as late correspondence as this has not been received prior to the report deadline.
3. Councillor Deane has requested that this matter be considered by the Area Committee due to the controversial nature of the proposal and the likely effects on the adjacent area within Wiltshire.

Background

4. A planning application has been submitted by Dorset CC for the development of a gypsy and traveller site at the above address. The application will also be decided by the County Council. This Council has been consulted on the application (which also lies within the North Dorset District Council area) in view of the proximity of the site with the Wiltshire boundary (around 200 metres to the east- parish of Donhead St. Mary).
5. The site is on land to the south of the A30, on the eastern side of Shaftesbury opposite an ongoing large- scale residential development. The site is relatively flat, is currently laid to grass and extends to around 1.28 hectares. To the east of the site is existing housing; whilst to the west is an old landfill site, on which is an existing small gypsy site and a highways depot. The whole of this area is allocated for future employment use.
6. The proposal refers to the construction of eight caravan pitches with hard standings, services and drainage points, two amenity blocks (serving four pitches) a management building (both under green roofs), refuse/recycling area and grassed areas including a play area. Two metre high palisade fencing would be constructed along the site boundaries behind earth

bunding of similar height, to be constructed to the north and east. The site would be accessed from the A30 via the existing access to the gypsy site and highway depot, which would be improved.

7. A ten-year temporary planning permission is sought, as the site lies on the route of a proposed A350 outer bypass and whilst the scheme does not currently feature in any capital programme, the route is safeguarded.
8. Dorset County Council has secured funding from the Homes and Communities Agency to carry out the development.

Considerations

Need for gypsy and traveller accommodation in the locality and policy background

9. The background is complex and is set out in the Design and Access Statement which accompanied the application. In summary, the available evidence including Dorset's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (completed March 2007), North Dorset LDF Evidence Base, records of unauthorised sites and the bi-annual caravan count, suggests there is an unmet need for at least 20 pitches by 2011 in the North Dorset authority area, with a specific need for additional pitches within the Shaftesbury/Gillingham area.
10. The proposal therefore would make a contribution to meeting unmet demand for such sites. However this would appear to be partly offset by the pitches lost through the eventual redevelopment of the existing site to the west (around 5 pitches, 3 of which appeared to be occupied at the time of the Officer site visit).
11. Whilst the government has signalled its intention to replace Circular 01/06 concerning gypsy and traveller site provision, this nevertheless remains a material consideration at present. In assessing the application in accordance with circular advice, Dorset CC will have to, amongst other things assess the need for accommodation in the locality. The circular encourages developing gypsy and traveller sites in sustainable locations in or near existing settlements with access to local services, e.g. shops, doctors and schools. Whilst the effects of noise and disturbance from vehicles coming and going to the site or activities thereon can be a consideration, applications should not be refused on highway safety grounds where there is only a modest increase in vehicle movements.
12. In the North Dorset District -Wide Local Plan 2011 (adopted January 2003), the site is not subject to any designations apart from the A350 improvement route safeguarding. Whilst the site lies outside of the settlement boundary for Shaftesbury, this does not exclude the principle of a gypsy and traveller site, subject to other policy considerations. The most relevant policies in the Plan include policies 1.8 which sets out general

development criteria, 1.33 landscape character areas and 1.40 landscaping and 2.21 concerning proposals for gypsy and traveller sites.

Site specific issues

13. The site is considered to be in a sustainable location, being well located to make the best use of public transport along the A30 and the good range of facilities and services within the town of Shaftesbury.
14. As noted above, the site does not lie in a nationally designated area (such as an AONB, for example) and its context is dominated by the ongoing large -scale residential development opposite and the highways depot adjacent, with residential and commercial property to the east. The site itself is fronted by a mature but poor quality outgrown hedge, with little public view into the site. Consequently, the site and surroundings currently have a semi -rural character not atypical of many urban fringe locations.
15. The proposal entails substantial screening works and landscape planting mainly along the north and east boundaries, with the retention of existing planting along the road frontage and elsewhere. As a result there would be very limited views into the development once completed. The proposed palisade fencing would largely be obscured from public view by the proposed bunding/planting and overall it is considered that there would be no adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surroundings.
16. Given the significant distance to the nearest existing residential property to the east (around 40 metres from the pitches), with a proposed bund and open undeveloped land separating them and; subject to controls over commercial activities on the site, it is considered that the proposal would not adversely affect neighbouring residential amenities through increased noise and disturbance.
17. A noise report has concluded that whilst noise levels from traffic on the A30 are high, mitigation in the form of the earth bunding and construction materials can be used to mitigate impacts and reduce road noise experienced by incoming residents to an acceptable level in accordance with the guidance in PPG 24.
18. Studies also submitted with the application including an ecology report, drainage report and transport assessment indicate that respectively there would no adverse impact on the wildlife interest of the site, proposed foul and surface water drainage arrangements are acceptable and that the increased number of traffic movements across the improved junction with the A30 would be minimal and would not detract from highway safety conditions. Further improvements to the A30 are proposed in future as part of the employment and residential development of land to the west; these include a signal controlled junction and pedestrian crossing.
19. A contamination study submitted suggests that the site should be the subject of a further investigation prior to any development taking place.

However it would appear that any contamination (largely arising from the former landfill site to the west-over which the access runs), would not in principle preclude development of the site.

20. The ten-year temporary permission sought need not preclude delivery of improvements to the A350 at some stage in the future, if funding were forthcoming. The use of a temporary permission in such circumstances is considered appropriate in circular 01/06.
21. According to the information accompanying the application, alternative sites, including existing unauthorised sites, would either not appear to be suitable to meet the identified need due to location and sustainability factors, protective designations or ownership issues, or; could not be delivered in the same timeframe as that envisaged with this proposal which has been designed to tackle a current and ongoing need.
22. In the event that the application were not approved, current levels of unmet need would remain, which may make enforcement more difficult even on some unsuitable sites. This would be of some relevance to Wiltshire as there is evidence of gypsies and travellers reliant on Shaftesbury for employment and services setting up unauthorised encampments in Wiltshire (in particular in and around the Semley area).

Conclusions

23. For all the above reasons, Officers consider that there is no sound planning reason to object to the proposal, as it appears to be consistent with relevant national and local plan policies including policy 2.21 of the NDDWLP and the advice in Circular 01/06.
24. In the event that planning permission is granted for the development, it should be recommended that conditions are imposed, including: limiting the duration of the permission for 10 years; requiring removal of any contamination prior to occupation; requiring the carrying out of the screening/ noise attenuation works prior to occupation; restricting occupancy to individual/s who meet the definition of a gypsy or traveller; restricting the extent commercial activities, securing the implementation of the landscape planting proposed and use of a suitably coloured palisade fence (not galvanised).

Recommendation

That NO OBJECTION is raised to the proposals subject to appropriate conditions as described in paragraph 24 above being imposed.

Report Author:

Stephen Hawkins, Lead Principal Planning Enforcement Officer.

Date of report 10th February 2011

Background Papers

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices

None
