

Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document (Sept 2017)—Summary of Consultation

As part of the Council's Local Plan process, an up to date Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showperson and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment was completed in September 2017. It concluded there is a need for 10-17 permanent pitches for gypsies and travellers and for transit provision of 5 pitches in the town (with each pitch able to accommodate two caravans). It also found a need for 2 additional plots for traveling showpeople. There was no need identified for additional residential moorings for houseboats.

The Council looked carefully at the scope to meet these needs within its boundaries and produced a Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document (September 2017). This proposed a transit site at land at Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue, and also contained information on the process for considering other sites within Reading.

Consultation took place between 27 September 2017 and 24 October 2017 and a total of 222 responses were received. Of these, 164 (74%) objected to the proposal for a transit site at Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue. 31 (14%) supported the site if it is appropriately managed, 15 (7%) requested additional information and 12 (5%) raised other issues (had no comments or proposed an alternative site).

Following the consultation, policy WR4: Potential Traveller Transit Site at Cow Lane was added to the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan. Representations raising issues with WR4 are included in the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan Consultation Document.

The following issues were raised in the representations to the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document (in order of the most frequently mentioned to the least frequently mentioned):

- **Anti-social behaviour** (raised in 46% of objections)—Residents near illegal encampments have frequently reported anti-social behaviour and many representors expressed concerns that a transit site at Cow Lane would increase incidences of anti-social behaviour.
- **Fly-tipping** (raised in 40% of objections)—Representors expressed concerns about fly-tipping and improper waste disposal. Individuals emphasised the importance of rubbish pick-up and recycling, as well as strong enforcement for incidences of fly-tipping.
- **Theft** (raised in 35% of objections)—Some individuals and nearby businesses blamed travellers for incidences of theft, including fuel, scrap metal and break-ins. These representors fear that they will be unable to secure their properties if a site at Cow Lane is approved.
- **Cost to taxpayers** (raised in 35% of objections)—Many representors did not want Council monies spent on providing sites and services for the travelling community. Many requested that Travellers using the transit site be required to pay council tax, waste collection fees, water, sewerage, gas and rent.
- **Safety** (raised in 29% of objections)—Representations included concerns that increasing the population so close to the town centre would place strain on already limited policing resources. The presence of a transit site may deter residents from using the Thames Promenade and Rivermead Leisure Centre because of concerns about personal safety.

- **Reading Festival** (raised in 26% of objections)—Representors, particularly Festival Republic Limited, expressed concern that the transit site would disrupt the safe and efficient operation of the Festival and cited Reading Festival’s major economic and cultural contributions to the town. The site is used for 7 weeks in the preparation and take down of the festival and functions as the principal exit point for 20,000 day-ticket holders, as well as for security, on-site communication, loading equipment, catering and induction of staff.
- **Effects on nearby businesses and trading** (raised in 23% of objections)—Representors stated that unauthorised encampments on this site had previously deterred customers from supporting nearby businesses. This resulted in a loss of revenue.
- **Traffic and highways** (raised in 21% of objections)—The site is on a busy road and increased traffic may worsen air quality and road safety, as well as exacerbate traffic congestion.
- **Landscape and visual amenity** (raised in 21% of objections)—Respondents recognised the nearby stretch of the Thames and surrounding area as one of the most beautiful landscapes in Reading. Residents fear that a transit site would degrade the visual quality of the area.
- **Effects on Rivermead Leisure Centre** (raised in 19% of objections)—The Rivermead Leisure Centre and surrounding area provides a range of leisure and recreation activities for the general public and schools. The site could harm the commercial and strategic objectives of the Leisure Centre and the Outpost Centre (opening autumn 2018).
- **Flooding** (raised in 15% of objections)—Some residents expressed concern that Cow Lane floods frequently and that the site is bordered on three sides by Flood Zone 3. This may create access and safety issues.
- **Noise** (raised in 13% of objections)—Respondents claimed that occupants of the site may cause noise and disturbance in the area. Occupants of the site will also be exposed to noise caused by heavy traffic (including HGVs), Reading Festival and the railway.
- **Wildlife** (raised in 12% of objections)—Some respondents stated that the site and surrounding area is home to wildlife, including bats and owls. Residents also expressed concern that the Thames would be contaminated and aquatic wildlife harmed.
- **Education and healthcare infrastructure** (raised in 4% of objections)—Some respondents raised concerns that nearby schools and surgeries are operating at capacity and are not well-suited to serve transient residents of the site who may be vulnerable.
- **Privacy** (raised in 1% of objections)—A few objectors stated that the site would not provide adequate privacy for transient residents who may be vulnerable, particularly children.

In addition, many respondents expressed doubt that this approach would reduce the number of unauthorised encampments in the town.

Those who supported the site if properly managed (14%) noted that these individuals are vulnerable and subject to discrimination and should be given a safe and clean place to live with access to services.

The majority of individuals who requested more information were concerned about the site being funded with taxpayer monies and wanted to ensure that Travellers would pay for waste collection, water, sewerage and council tax.

A number of respondents endorsed sites already considered during the site assessment process and listed in the Consultation Document. The following additional sites were ignored:

- Site of Murdoch's Pub at the bottom on Langley Hill on the Bath Road
- 20 Scours Lane
- Beneath the railway off Portman Road
- Near the A33/M4 interchange
- Rear of 107-109 Castle Hill
- Site of the old Civic Centre, to the rear of the Police Station

The following individuals and organisations objected:

21 st Century AV Ltd	Country Estates
Ahmed, M	Covell, E
Aitken, L	Cozens, D
Alston, J	Crowne Plaza
Andrews, H	Cundy, S
Andrews, R	Davis-Wall, L
Anonymous	Dawson, M
Atwood, I	DDS
Avenell, M	Dicken, H
Bagnell, K	Downs, J
Baron Cars	Drayton, M
Beasley, J	Duffy, B
Beasley, J	Duhig, J
Bell Tower Community Association*	Dunk, T
Berkshire Van Hire	Dunning, C
Berry, J	Exotic Furniture
Berry, R	Fadden, P
Birch, E & P	Farrugia, M
Birch, P	Festival Republic Limited*
Blackburn, G	Fletcher, M
Blakely, A	Flynn, L
Bond, M	Folley, M
Boon, T	French, M
Broadway, F	Fruchter, S
Buckley, J & C	Fullard, B
Cable Shop	Fun-n-Frolic
Carlson, K	Garcia, Dr
Carlson, M	Garrard, C
Caulton, E	Genting Casino
Caversham Bridge Garden Centre	Ghos, W
CCM Pools	Gibson, F
Charterhouse Muller	Godfrey, L
Chrobnik, S	Grace, J
Clayton, R & J	Grassie, L & A
Cleaver Cars	Green, J
CMS Garages	Green, Mr & Mrs

Green, S
Greenoaks LTD
Griffith, C
Grosvenor Motor Company LTD
H& T Properties LTD*
Harpa, M
Hedges, S
Hill, M
Hill, S
Hobby, G
Hobby, G
Horsepool, K and J McKay
Horton, L
Indespension
James, L
Jay, Mr & Mrs
Kearns, T
Kemp, S
Kentworthy, N
Komorowska, K
Kopp, S
Lama, T
Lamden, D
Larsen, S
Lewis, D
Lloyd, J
Madeley, G
Maxtag
Maxwell, M
McKenna, T
McLellan, R & N Salter
Metal-Pro
MOT-Centre
Mott, J
Naxton, M & P
Neale, D
Noble, R
Obay, C
Paul, Mrs
Penson, C
Pepper, G
Pickering, J
Pretech Engineering
Rackley, D
RBC Leisure and Recreation

Readipop
Reeves, L
RES Systems
Ribbons, C
Ribbons, I
Ribbons, J
Richardson, D
Richfield Flooring
Robinson, S
Rosser, P
Rush, V
Sanders, B
Scott, G
Seaford, A
Seaford, A
Seward, C
Smeeth, E
Smerdon, S
Sol-Tec
Solutions 4 Health
Spurlite Co.
Steward, D
Stewart, J
Stokes, G
Teixeira, L
Testa, S
Thatcher, Z
Thomas, H
Thorne-Farrar, S
Thorpe, I
Treasure, M
Tsang, G
Upton, J
Vistuer, S
Way, M
Webb, C
Webb, J
Webb, S
Westcoast LTD
Wightman, A
Wilkins Removal
Williams, P
Winslow, P
Wokingham Borough Council*
Zadehkoachak, S

The following individuals and organisations expressed support for the site if appropriately managed:

Baldwin, K
BBOWT
Bridger, A

Bromley, T
Brunnen, S
Clarke, T

Cook, P
Derek, S
Digby, J
Durcan, K
Ellis, A
Environment Agency*
Fisher, J
Gale, D
Goldup, M
Harland, H
Heyes, R
Hunt, I
Martin, A

McCubbing, K
Mid-Berks Ramblers
Moss, T
O'Neill, A
Pang Valley Ramblers*
Phelan M & R Thomas
Sieling, C
Steele, J
Taylor, D
Thames Valley Police
Wilson, G
Young, S

The following individuals and organisations requested more information:

Cliburn, C
Cook, TJ
Gomes, M
Gore, L
Harris, G
Haskins, N
Heard, A
Hulme, R

Marriot, J
Parkins, K
Porter, R
Riley, L
South Oxfordshire District Council
Thameside Primary School
Williams, H

The following individuals and organisations raised other concerns (For example, suggested an alternative site or had no comments):

Canal & River Trust
Ellis, L
Highways England
Historic England
Natural England
O'Neill, B

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
TFL
Voke, P
Watson, S
Wilbey, A
Wycombe District Council

*These individuals or organisations made formal representations during the Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation period related to the site in addition to representations to the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation Document.

1 response was received that was considered to be wholly abusive or racist in nature, and is not included above.