

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 15 JANUARY 2024 FROM THE REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2024

RD72: LOCAL PLAN GYPSY AND TRAVELLER POTENTIAL SITES CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

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The Assistant Director and Senior Planning Officer presented the report which sought authority to proceed with a consultation on potential sites. The consultation would run for 6 weeks, and would help to inform a final proposed Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Policy, which would be submitted to Cabinet for approval in April 2024 and submitted for formal examination likely in July 2024.

Councillor Moriarty, in his capacity as Chair of the Local Plan Task Group informed the Panel that the Task Group had considered this report and would be submitting an additional recommendation to Cabinet that the Panel may wish to consider. The additional recommendation was:

“Delegated authority be granted to the Portfolio Holder, Development and Regeneration to ensure new sites which come forward from the consultation exercise be communicated in a timely manner to Borough Councillors and where possible Parish Councils.”

The Panel received a presentation, a copy of which is attached.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director and Senior Planning Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Crofts, it was explained that six sites had come forward following the call for sites. Additionally three Borough Council and one Norfolk County Council site had also been brought forward for consideration. It was confirmed that the Saddlebow and Blunts Drove sites were operated as public sites for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation. The Saddlebow site was owned by Norfolk County Council and Blunts Drove was owned by Hastoe Housing Association. In relation to the Saddlebow site, it was explained that this site was currently at capacity and there was a waiting list for pitches. There was no scope to extend the site due to land ownership constraints.

In response to a further question from Councillor Crofts regarding the overwhelming of sites and joint working with neighbouring Local Authorities, it was explained that the Council was required to meet their own accommodation needs for Gypsies, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople, but had met with Officers from Fenland District Council to look at joint working opportunities. It was also explained that the consultation would provide the opportunity for comments to be received by stakeholders such as Fenland District Council.

The Chair agreed that it was important to look at working with neighbouring Local Authorities where possible.

Councillor Beal asked for a provision to be put in place for short term and temporary sites and made reference to issues in Hunstanton.

Councillor Bone called a point of order relating to the language used by Councillor Beal.

The Assistant Director commented that temporary stopping points and transit sites had been looked at through the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and there was no

need, at this time, to provide such a site. However it would continue to be monitored through the Local Plan process.

In response to a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that the consultation covered more pitches than was required. This had been undertaken to explore all options and build in flexibility for when final decisions on any preferred sites were made over the coming months.

Councillor Bone commented that there was only one site identified for the north of the Borough and the Senior Planning Officer confirmed that the list of potential sites reflected where the current and future accommodation need was coming from.

The Chair asked if another site needed to be identified near to Hunstanton to address the issues raised by Councillor Beal and the Assistant Director explained that this was not necessary as in reality the sites were unlikely to be occupied. The Assistant Director informed Members that a list of FAQ's would be included in the consultation document.

Councillor Blunt explained that one of his Parishes, who would like to respond to the consultation, would not be meeting during the consultation period and asked if there was scope to extend the consultation period if required. The Assistant Director explained that individual requests for an extension of time to respond to the consultation would need to be made to the Council, who would consider them along with the Local Planning Inspectorate. It was acknowledged that the Parish Council in question were important with regard to a consultation response and officers and the Chair of the Local Plan Task Group would work with them if required to ensure their response was included.

Councillor Moriarty, as Chair of the Local Plan Task Group, commented that he had received lots of correspondence on this matter and public interest and wanted to assure the public that their responses to the consultation would be considered.

The Chair referred the Panel to the additional recommendation which the Local Plan Task Group would be submitting to Cabinet and this was discussed by the Panel. The Panel agreed to the additional recommendation being submitted via this Panel also.

RESOLVED: That the Regeneration and Development Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below, with the addition of recommendation three in bold below.

1. Cabinet endorses the draft Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Potential Sites and Policy document, the Gypsy and Traveller Site Assessment Document, the associated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Sustainability Appraisal, for consultation, for a period of 6 weeks from 26th January until 8th March 2024.
2. That delegated authority be granted to the Portfolio Holder for Development and Regeneration, and the Assistant Director – Environment & Planning, to include minor amendments as required to the consultation document prior to consultation starting at the end of January.
3. **Delegated authority be granted to the Portfolio Holder, Development and Regeneration to ensure new sites which come forward from the consultation exercise be communicated in a timely manner to Borough Councillors and where possible Parish Councils.**