

**SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL  
EXAMINATION OF THE SITE ALLOCATIONS & MANAGEMENT OF  
DEVELOPMENT (SAMDev) PLAN**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY'S REPONSE  
Additional Questions - Gypsy & traveller accommodation**

I refer to my Interim Note 2 (dated 2 December 2014). Thank you for the Council's response (dated 15 January 2015).

I note that the updated Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2014 (GTAA) has been published on the website and comments have been invited from interested parties on this and the Council's response.

In the meantime, there are a couple of matters arising from the Council's response upon which I would like to seek the Council's views.

LPA Comments

The following comments provide some further context to the Council's position outlined in the previous response. These comments relate to the accommodation assessment (and pitch provision) in the amended Shropshire GTAA, published for consultation on the Council's website.

The Council commissioned their consultants, ARC4, to review the GTAA (2014) from information on the planning history of the sites at the Inspector's request. The findings of this assessment were forwarded to the Inspector with specific information on the management of the Warrant Road Caravan Park 2.

The Council would like to highlight the following matters in relation to the revisions in the amended Shropshire GTAA (2015):

- the number of authorised pitches in the amended GTAA has been constrained to the pitch provision evidenced by the planning history of each site;
- on some sites, actual pitch provision is higher, possibly reflecting available space and the flexible management and use of sites in which additional pitches are created over time in response to demand from households seeking accommodation;
- the identified pitch provision in the amended GTAA which uses only the formal capacity of each site produces a 'conservative' approach to assessing the pitch supply in the County;
- the contribution of pitch provision to supply is limited further by solely including authorised pitches on permanent sites. There is no dependence on tolerated sites or pitches as part of supply, other than a travelling showpersons' yard, which has now been relocated, and for which an alternative, permanent site is being sought;

- the GTAA also includes turnover on the local authority sites only and does not count any turnover provision on private sites. This conservative application of turnover to the overall accommodation assessment in the amended GTAA is further evidence of the 'cautious' approach to supply used by this Council;
- in contrast the need element of the assessment of accommodation seeks to reflect the actual number of households on each site at the time of survey, including additional households identified, even though this might exceed the formal pitch capacity of the site.

It is evident from the Arc4 survey work that there are relatively few issues with the identified sites in the GTAA, and there is good level of satisfaction with provision in the County.

The Council's Gypsy Liaison Service has also acquired a sound working knowledge of gypsy accommodation needs and generally strong mutual relationships with the Gypsy and Traveller communities and site owners. This is based on continuing contact and ongoing involvement and liaison with communities and site owners and enables accommodation needs and site issues to be identified and potentially resolved, with assistance from the Council, where appropriate. The proactive approach by the Council to the maintenance and improvement of existing sites and the provision of additional pitches is also set out in the amended Shropshire GTAA. It is not expected that sites in use by the Gypsy and Traveller population will be vulnerable to other competing accommodation demands, e.g. touring caravans, static holiday chalets or permanent accommodation, by non-travellers

#### Inspector's Narrative - Warrant Road Caravan Park 2

In relation to this site, I note that the Council confirms that the pitches that are available on the site will continue to be available to both traveller and non-traveller families. If this is the case, it is not clear how many pitches will continue to be secured for gypsies and travellers and can be included in the supply of sites.

Planning permission reference NS/88/00880/VAR, dated April 1989, for the variation of condition 4(iii), permits an increase from 12 to 15 pitches. Notwithstanding that the description of development refers to the variation of a condition on an existing permission, as you will be aware, in such cases, a new permission is created and the conditions from the original permission are not automatically carried forward into the new permission.

Notwithstanding the site is referred to as a 'gypsy caravan site' in the description of the development, this permission is not subject to a condition that restricts the occupancy of the pitches to gypsies and travellers. If this permission has been implemented, it would appear that the occupation of pitches by non-traveller families may not be in breach of any planning condition.

An extension to the Warrant Road Caravan Park 2 site to provide an additional 10 pitches, reference N/92/700/ST/337, was granted planning permission in September 1993. Again, no conditions were imposed to restrict the occupancy of the pitches to gypsies and travellers and it would appear that the occupation of pitches by non-traveller families may not be in breach of a planning condition.

### LPA Response

The Council recognises the Inspector's concerns regarding the inclusion of this site as part of the Gypsy and Traveller provision. It is suggested that this site should remain in the supply but further evidence is required to substantiate the significance of the site to meeting the accommodation needs of the gypsy and traveller population.

The Council acknowledged in the response of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 that the site is subject to demand for accommodation from members of the settled population. In addition, the Council identified that the site owner, who has gypsy and traveller family connections, has accommodated a number of gypsy and travellers families who have held their pitches for some time and are satisfied with the site. The site owner has also indicated he will accommodate other gypsy and traveller families with an established track record.

The Council recognises the need to survey the site to assess the number of gypsy and traveller households on this site, as the amended GTAA does not include any survey information on occupation at Warrant Road Caravan Park 2.

Further discussions between the Gypsy Liaison team and the site owner have sought to secure access to the site. The Council intend to conduct a survey of residents to determine the current number of Gypsy and Travellers on the site using the methodology employed by Arc4 in the Shropshire GTAA. A provisional agreement to enter the site has been reached for a date after 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and once the residents have received sufficient notification, the survey will be carried out.

The Council is dependent on the good will of the site owner and the willingness of the residents to participate in the survey. However, a survey of the households on the site will enable the Council to accurately confirm the number of gypsy and traveller households occupying pitches on Warrant Road Caravan Park 2. The Council will advise the Inspector of the findings of this survey in due course.

### Inspector's Narrative - Marton Grange Caravan Park, Myddle Wood

A similar situation appears to arise at Marton Grange Caravan Park, Myddle Wood. The original permission, reference N/88/708/MY/162,

(dated November 1988) is not restricted to occupation by gypsies and travellers. No such condition is imposed on a subsequent application to vary condition 2 of that permission, reference N/91/895/MY/162. Only planning permission reference 14/02542/FUL for one pitch appears to restrict occupancy to gypsies and travellers.

#### LPA Response

The Council consider this site to be a 'bona fide' gypsy and traveller site legitimately contributing to provision within Shropshire.

The Gypsy Liaison team is familiar with the site owner, Mr Peter Finney. Mr Finney, who is himself a traveller, has indicated to the Council that there are no plans to cater for any other demands than the gypsy and travellers already accommodated on the site. The Council considers that Mr Finney's long term involvement with the site provides sufficient assurance, in itself, that the site will remain available for exclusive occupation by Gypsy and Traveller families. Further to this, the identified issue with the conditions attached to the planning permission in 1988 does not therefore appear to have affected the occupation of the site in the period to 2014.

The information in the amended GTAA, Table 4.1a, page 24 about the survey of occupants on the site in May 2014, shows that 12 gypsy and traveller households were accommodated on the site at that time.

#### Inspector's Narrative - The Bungalow (Brookside Caravan Park), Kinnerley

An application to modify condition 4(ii) of planning permissions 89/6074 and 94/8756 was approved on 15 March 2004, creating a new permission. Again, no condition was imposed restricting occupation to gypsies and travellers. If it is the case that this permission was subsequently implemented (i.e. larger static caravans were stationed on the site than previously permitted), it would appear that the occupation of pitches by non-traveller families may not be in breach of a planning condition.

#### LPA Response

The Council considers this site to be a 'bona fide' gypsy and traveller site legitimately contributing to provision within Shropshire. The Council expects this site to continue to contribute to the supply of pitches to accommodate the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller population in Shropshire. This view is supported by the Gypsy Liaison team who have indicated that, to the best of their knowledge, this site has only been occupied by Gypsy and Traveller families.

The Council recognise that the new consent which varied the conditions on the preceding planning permissions did not enforce the previous condition restricting occupancy to Gypsy and Traveller families. Despite this omission by a previous Local Planning Authority, the Council considers that the type of occupation is not likely to change. The information in the amended GTAA, Table 4.1a, page 24 about the survey of occupants on the site in May 2014, shows that 12 gypsy and traveller households were accommodated on the site at that time.

### Inspector's Narrative

I am concerned that these sites can not be relied upon as contributing to the future supply of gypsy and traveller pitches in Shropshire. I would welcome the Council's comments on this in relation to the particular circumstances relating to each of the sites.

### LPA Response

ARC4 have confirmed from their survey work that with the exception of the Warrant Road Caravan Park 2, there was no indication of mixed tenure on any of the sites and all the households interviewed identified themselves as Gypsy/Traveller families.

ARC4 also confirmed that feedback from their survey identified:

- general satisfaction with these sites in terms of the condition, space standards and amenities;
- good levels of satisfaction with site location with a higher level of recognition for Marton Grange (i.e. very good).

As well as providing satisfactorily for Gypsy and travellers, the Council considers that the characteristics of Marton Grange and Brookside Caravan Parks are very much typical of gypsy and traveller sites in Shropshire. As a consequence, the sites are not likely to be attractive to non-traveller residents.

On this basis there is no reason to believe that the nature of occupation and usage of Marton Grange and Brookside Caravan Parks will be affected by a reduction in demand from the gypsy and traveller population or any change in their desire to secure continuing access to these sites.

It is understood that Warrant Road Caravan Park 2 has undergone works in recent years, including changes in layout and pitches with greater provision of static mobile homes and consequently has also attracted individuals from the settled population who are seeking this type of accommodation. It is considered that Warrant Road is unusual in also providing for these demands from the settled population and there are a large number of private caravan sites within Shropshire competing to attract demand from the settled population for accommodation for touring caravans and mobile homes/chalets.

The issues which have been raised about long term occupation by gypsy and travellers will be revisited in the review of the GTAA programmed within the next 5 years. The Local Authority has given a commitment to this review of the GTAA which will provide an opportunity, along with the annual Caravan Census and the day to day engagement of the Gypsy Liaison team, to monitor the continuing occupation of identified sites by the gypsy and traveller population.

#### Inspector's Narrative

Does the turnover rate of 7 pitches per year, specified in the GTAA, assume that these pitches are, and would continue to be, available to the gypsy and traveller community?

#### LPA Response

In respect of turnover, the projected level of turnover of 7 pitches per annum reflects the known rates of turnover (over the last 2 years) only on sites owned and operated by the Council.

The Gypsy Liaison team advise that there is undoubtedly additional turnover on private sites but the Council has not included this element of turnover in the projection of pitch supply in the amended GTAA. It is therefore considered that the Council's approach to the application of turnover to supply is modest in its assumptions. The use of turnover in the overall accommodation assessment is therefore a further constrained element of the 'conservative' approach used by this Council to prepare the assessment of accommodation needs in the amended GTAA.

#### Inspector's Narrative

Is the Council able to confirm how many pitches on these sites are currently occupied by gypsies or travellers and whether this will have an impact on the future household formation assessment?

#### LPA Response –

The site surveys undertaken by Arc4 are summarised in table 4.1a in the amended GTAA. This identified the number of Gypsy and Traveller households on the Marton Grange and Brookside Caravan Parks as 12 households on each of the two sites which exceeds the formal capacity for Marton Grange (8 pitches) and Brookside Caravan Park (10 pitches).

The specific data drawn from these household surveys is held by ARC4 to safeguard the confidentiality of this data. Any emerging households identified in the site surveys on the Marton Grange and Brookside Caravan Park sites (from the higher survey responses) would have been included in the future household assessment.

This information has been included in the calculation of future need figures as described in paragraph 6.18 of the amended GTAA. As there was no survey of residents on Warrant Road 2 this was assessed using a weighted analysis, based on results from the surveyed sites, as described in paragraph 6.13 of the amended GTAA. This weighted analysis assumes 13 occupied pitches at Warrant Road Caravan Park 2 and if occupancy were to be less this would result in there having been an overestimate of future household formation and therefore need.

As indicated for Warrant Road Caravan Park 2, the Council is seeking access to the site to determine the level of occupation by Gypsy and Traveller households. When this survey is concluded, the Council will be able to confirm the existing level of occupation by Gypsies and Travellers.

Vacancies on site were identified as at May 2014. The vacancies identified at Warrant Road 2 are based on the Gypsy Liaison team's knowledge of the site and at that time, there was around a 50% level of vacant pitches. In the amended GTAA, this vacancy rate was applied to the authorised pitch provision to maintain the consistency of methodology used for the other sites in the study which were surveyed at the May 2014 base date.

#### Inspector's Narrative - Lacon Street, Prees

Notwithstanding the description of development, the Lacon Street, Prees site benefits from planning permission (reference 10/02642/COU) that is conditional of the stationing of no more than 4 caravans and the layout plan indicates two pitches. I would suggest this site provides two authorised pitches.

#### LPA Response

The Council notes the Inspector's assessment of the site which is reflected in the occupation of the site by two gypsy households. The pitch provision in the GTAA can be amended accordingly.

#### Inspector's Narrative

A response by 27 February 2015 would be appreciated. The Council may also wish to incorporate any comments it wishes to make on any responses that are received from interested parties in relation to the updated GTAA.

#### LPA Response

The consultation on the amended Shropshire GTAA published early in 2015 expires today, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015. At the time that this response to the Inspector was finalised, the Council had received four submissions. The Council will consider these submissions and respond to these and any

further submissions received today and seek to respond to the Inspector by Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2015.