



gypsy and traveller sites consultation document

31 March - 12 May 2009
(to be incorporated into the
sustainable neighbourhoods DPD)

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1 The Local Development Framework

1.1 The City Council is producing a Sustainable Neighbourhoods Development Planning Document (SNDPD), which will set out site-specific proposals for different parts of Plymouth. The SNDPD is one of a number of documents that together are known as the Local Development Framework (LDF). This Sustainable Neighbourhoods plan will set out what should happen over the next 15 years in those parts of the city that are not covered by Area Action Plans (AAPs).

1.2 The SNDPD will be produced under revised legislation that came into force in June 2008. This requires local authorities to engage with stakeholders, the public, and other organisations as appropriate, in the formulation of LDF documents.

1.3 This consultation document identifies potential Gypsy and Traveller sites. It will feed into the city wide SNDPD, which will be the subject of further consultation in February 2010.

2 Why Plan for Gypsy and Traveller Sites?

2.1 The Government believes that everybody has the right to a decent home, and that Gypsy and Traveller communities should have the same rights and responsibility as every other citizen.

2.2 Previous Government measures to deliver an adequate number of sites failed, and that is why the Government introduced new legislation in 2004 ⁽¹⁾ by which every local authority has to identify sufficient land for Gypsy and Traveller sites. The main reasons for this approach are;

- To create and support sustainable, respectful and inclusive communities where Gypsies and Travellers have fair access to suitable accommodation, education, education, health and welfare provision.
- To reduce the number of unauthorised encampments to reduce conflict, and to make enforcement more effective.
- To address under provision by significantly increasing the number of sites by 2011.
- To respect the traditional travelling way of life, whilst respecting the interests of the settled community.
- To ensure that local authorities' plans include fair, realistic and inclusive policies to meet identified need fairly and effectively.
- To avoid Gypsies and Travellers becoming homeless through eviction from unauthorised sites without an alternative to move to.

How many pitches do we need?

2.3 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is the strategic plan for the South West. The RSS has been through a public examination, and the Secretary of State has determined the level provision to be made at the local level for Gypsies and Travellers. In Plymouth's case, the guidance is supported by the Devon wide Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment 2006. The numbers of pitches that Plymouth should find arising from the study, and as agreed by the Secretary of State, is an additional 40 residential pitches and 15 transit pitches.

Why provide pitches?

2.4 We have a statutory duty to make provision for sites to meet this demand. It is clearly an issue that must be addressed as a priority. Unless action is taken now the situation will only get worse, which will lead to more unauthorised sites, and the possibility of tension in the community.

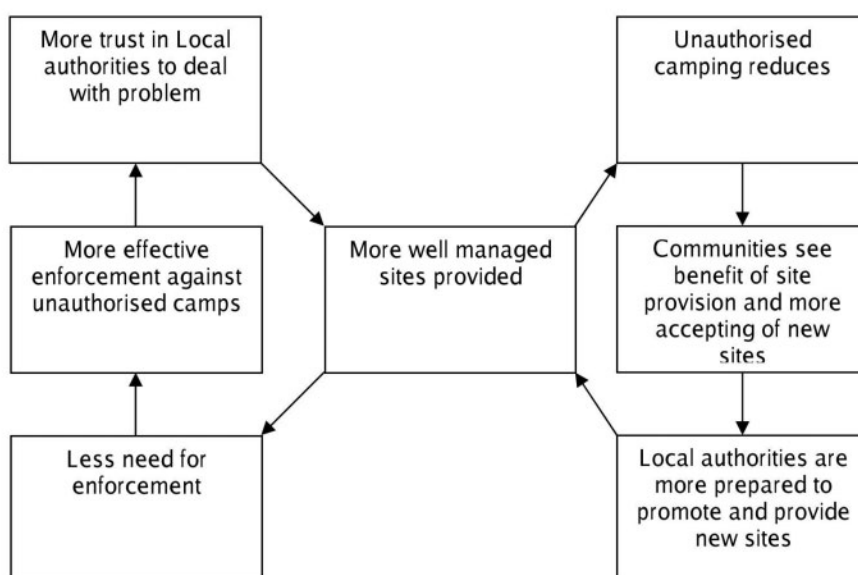
2.5 The City Council has one permanent residential Gypsy site at The Ride, adjacent to the River Plym. This site has 13 pitches and a waiting list of 8. Clearly, this is not sufficient to meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. There are currently no transit pitches in the city, and as a result Plymouth has about 20

1 The Housing Act 2004, and Circular 01/2006

unauthorised encampments every year, each which costs the Council an average of £6,500. These often cause social tensions, complaints, and serious problems for residents and Gypsies / Travellers alike. It is more difficult to require travelling people to move from an unauthorised encampment when there are not enough authorised sites in the area.

2.6 Also, whilst there is a shortage of authorised sites, there is a real risk that Government Planning Inspectors could allow unauthorised sites to remain in place, even if planning permission is refused by the Council. The Council wants to ensure that Traveller sites are located in the most appropriate locations, which is why we are carrying out this consultation to identify where they might be.

2.7 The chart below demonstrates the benefits of better site provision:



What types of sites do we need?

Residential pitches (40 pitches)

2.8 Residential, or permanent sites, have permanent structures which individuals, or families have a licence to live at. The sites generally have a brick built toilet and kitchen area, with residents living in mobile homes and keeping additional smaller caravans to travel in. There is also usually a storage area to keep materials and working vehicles etc. The site is then used as a base to travel from. Permanent sites are required as a base from which to send children to school, or because illness or old age prevents a more nomadic lifestyle. Permanent sites should not be located in areas where housing would not be permitted and should have a range of facilities on site, or within walking distance.

2.9 Residential sites can be publicly or privately owned. Where a pitch is leased, residents will need to pay rent. Council tax and utilities are paid on all sites in much the same way as for conventional housing.

Transit sites (15 pitches)

2.10 Transit sites are formal sites provided on a permanent basis. Priority should be given to the provision of this type of site, as it is in most urgent need. Transit sites are usually on land owned and managed by the Council, or by a Housing Association but can be privately owned. They have basic amenities such as hard standings, water supply, toilet and washing facilities, waste and electricity supply. Generally, Travellers can stay for a limited period (e.g. up to three months). The sites are open all year, but Travellers change regularly. Transit sites are closely managed, and again, residents are required to pay rent, council tax and utilities in much the same way as for conventional housing.

3 What have we done so far?

3.1 We have been looking for additional sites for a number of years. Clearly in a densely developed urban situation, it is not easy to find suitable additional provision. The Council is committed to increasing this provision, not only in response to National, and Regional Policy, but also in response to local need, and through its own adopted policies, and emerging proposals.

3.2 The Adopted LDF Core Strategy recognises the requirement to find additional sites. Strategic Objective 10 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that 'everyone has access to a safe and decent home'. Amongst other factors, Point 5 of this Objective states that this will be achieved through 'providing decent and appropriate sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.' Two sites have already been the subject of assessments and public consultation. A site at Southway has been dropped from consideration. However, a site at Military Road, Efford, which was previously used as a Gypsy site, is being progressed. This site alone, however, will not meet the identified need for pitches.

3.3 Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy sets out the number of pitches that we are required to find, along with the criteria against which site suitability will be considered.

Policy CS17

Gypsy and Traveller Sites

Sites will be identified to meet the demand for approximately 50 gypsy and traveller pitches in the plan period. The following considerations will be taken into account in the determination of locations for gypsy and traveller sites:

1. Safe and convenient vehicular and pedestrian access to the site should be provided.
2. The site must be large enough to provide for adequate onsite facilities for parking, storage, play, and residential amenity.
3. The site should be well located on the highway network.
4. Safe and convenient access to schools and local facilities.
5. Site should not be detrimental to amenities of adjacent occupiers.
6. Adequate levels of privacy and residential amenity for occupiers should be provided.

3.4 Since the adoption of the Core Strategy, we have prepared Sustainable Neighbourhood Assessments for each neighbourhood in Plymouth. In undertaking this work, we have sought to identify potential Gypsy and Traveller sites through our discussions with local communities and through an assessment of possible locations, including those where unauthorised encampments have taken place in the past.

3.5 A call for suitable sites was made by the Council's Social Inclusion Unit in December 2007. Consultation has taken place through the *Your Place Your Future* programme of LDF consultations during 2007 and 2008. Additionally, publicity was undertaken at the LDF Big Picture event in July 2008, and at the Respect Festival in October 2008. Discussions have also started with the local Gypsy and Traveller community.

3.6 Through these processes, a number of potential locations have been identified, and where appropriate have been the subject of further assessment. The criteria against which sites are assessed has been informed by the advice contained in government publications, including Circular 01/2006. Due to the constraints of an urban environment, it is unlikely that any site will be perfect, but this should not preclude sites from being brought forward for detailed consideration. Some difficult decisions will have to be made in balancing all relevant factors to arrive at a number of preferred locations.

3.7 A summary of alternative sites considered and rejected is included in the schedule.

3.8 The Gypsy and Travellers site assessments can be found under 'Background Reports' on the Council's web site at www.plymouth.gov.uk/ldf

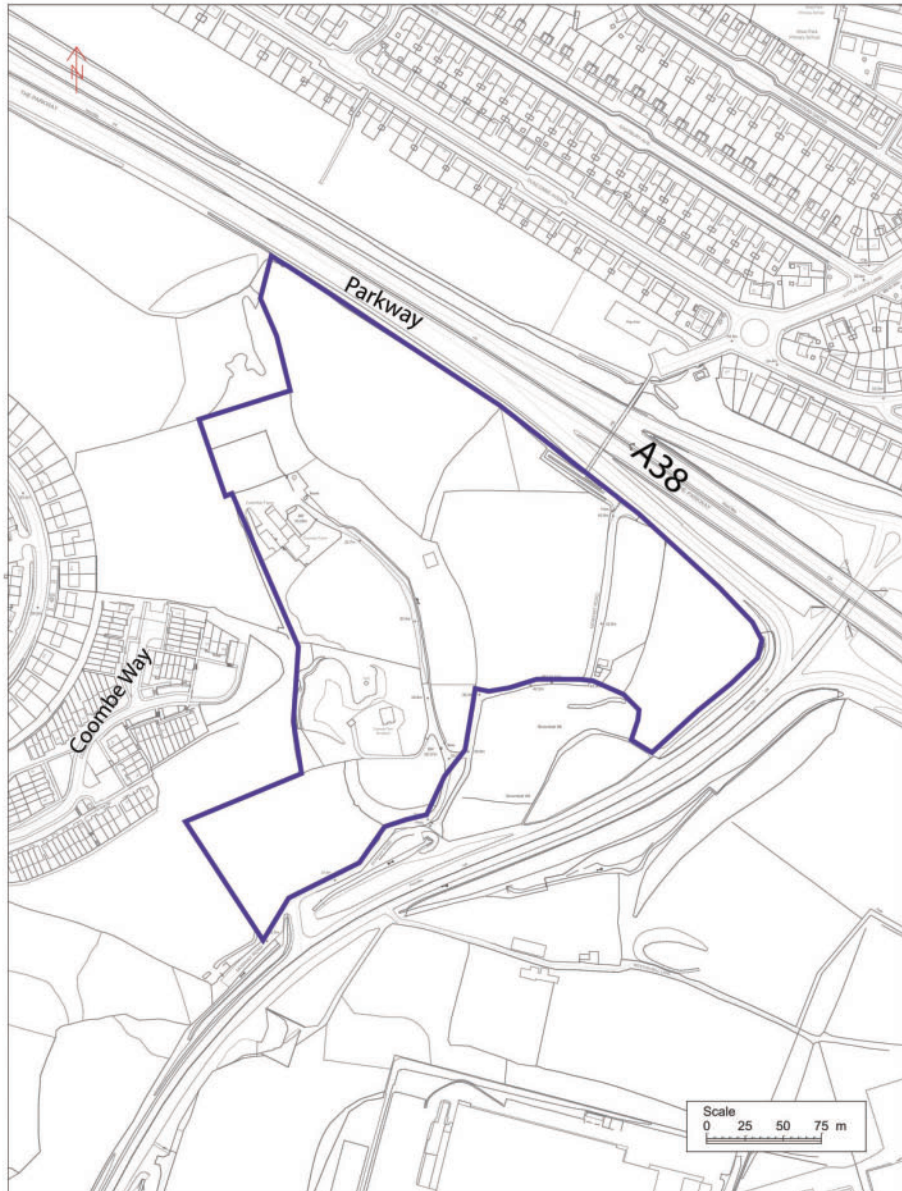
4 Potential sites

4.1 The following locations have been identified as being most worthy of further consideration for either permanent or transit sites, to meet the identified need. If these sites are confirmed as being acceptable in principle through this process, further detailed investigations will be undertaken to identify their specific potential, prior to their inclusion in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods DPD.

4.2 Additional details of the sites and a preliminary analysis of their potential are set out in the Gypsy and Traveller Sites evidence base reports.

Site 1 – Coombe Farm, Mowhay Road

4.3 This site was previously allocated for commercial development. Only a part of the larger site would be needed as part of any future development, and the location of pitches within the larger site will need to be determined as part of the overall development. It is close to the A38, and could be suitable for either a permanent or a transit site. The present access from the highway network would require improvement.



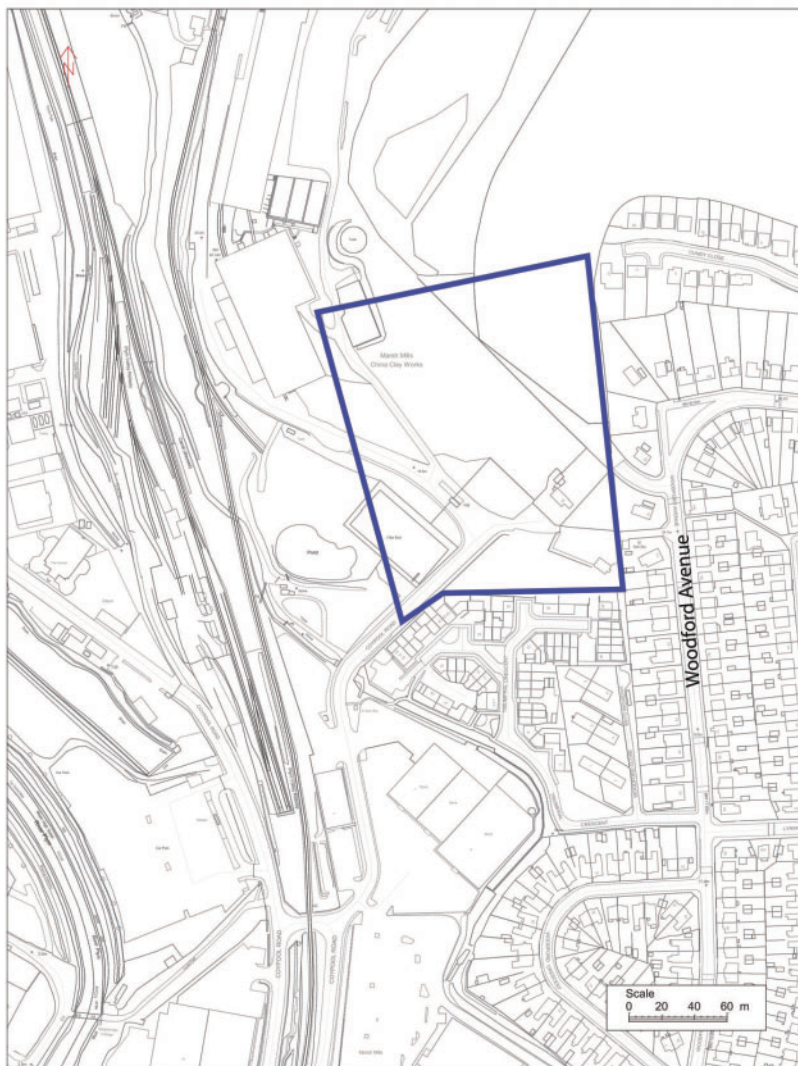
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Scale 1:3000



Site 2 - Imerys Works Coypool

4.4 This is a large china clay processing site to the north of the A38 at Coypool, which may become available for development during the Plan period. The site offers potential for a major mixed use regeneration, including a waste facility, employment, and residential, uses – including a Gypsy and Traveller site. The location as shown is part of this larger site, which was identified in the *Coypool Site, Key Constraints and Opportunities* report, 2006. It is at the southern end of the potentially developable area because of the need for an acceptable environment and accessibility to local services. The precise location of the Gypsy and Traveller site would need to be determined as part of a plan for wider development of the Works. It could be suitable for either a permanent or a transit site.



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5 Comments and Frequently Asked Questions

5.1 We are looking for your comments on the sites currently under consideration, and any suggestions for alternative site locations that you may be aware of. You can contact us by the following means:-

- Comment on this document online at: www.plymouth.gov.uk/ldf
- Write to us at Planning Services, Department of Development, Plymouth City Council, Plymouth PL1 2AA.
- E mail: ldf@plymouth.gov.uk.

All comments should be received by the Council by 12th May 2009

Please note: Your comments will be made public as part of this process. If comments are made using inappropriate or racist language your comment will be returned to you, and you will be given time to resubmit revised version.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Why do gypsies and travellers need permanent sites?

5.2 A - Although gypsies and travellers travel for some of the year, during the winter months most people need a place to stop. Travelling patterns are linked to the seasons and the work associated with the seasons. Gypsies and travellers do not travel on a daily basis all year round. Families require safe and secure places from which to do their travelling. The 'base site (if they have one) will usually be where they can access GP's, schools and a dentists etc. As gypsies and travellers grow older and become less able to travel on a regular basis, some require a safe and secure stopping place where they can maintain the cultural traditions of being a gypsy or traveller. Gypsies and travellers also sometimes stop travelling for periods of time to care for sick or elderly relatives or to continue a child's education within a supportive school environment. Families will then take up the travelling way of life again following these critical events.

Q Why should we have to make special provision for Gypsy and Traveller sites?

5.3 A - It is a legal requirement to allocate sufficient pitches to meet the identified need. If we do not do this through the LDF process, then our planning policy documents could be found unsound by a Planning Inspector, at significant cost and with adverse consequences for the future development of the city. If there is evidence of need that we do not address, the Secretary of State has power to make us find sites. If sites are not identified, it is likely that planning applications from individual gypsy or traveller will be submitted, and there is a greater likelihood that if refused planning permission, consent would be allowed on appeal.

Q Is the lack of sites a problem?

5.4 A - Gypsies and travellers have the poorest life chances of any other group in the UK, particularly in respect of health and education, and face widespread discrimination. Nationally, 21% of all gypsies and travellers living in caravans are homeless. The provision of sufficient authorised and well serviced sites for gypsies and travellers is crucial to supporting their long established way of life and in enabling them to have a recognised stake in society. It also lies at the heart of addressing the difficulties they face in accessing services, as well as reducing tensions with the local settled community and beginning to tackle ignorance and discrimination.

Q Who is going to pay?

A - There are two options;

1- Public provision

5.5 In recognition of the importance of the need to provide sites for gypsies and travellers, it is possible for the Council or a Housing Association to apply to Central Government for grants that cover 100% of the costs of new sites.

2- Private provision

5.6 The SNDPD could identify sites that could be purchased by individuals to meet their own family needs or to self manage.

6 Appendix - Schedule of other sites considered

Site	Description	Land ownership	Ward	Reasons for Rejection
Efford Laira Battery (Monument)	Land in and around Fortification	Private	Efford and Lipson	Scheduled Ancient Monument
Expansion of Efford Warren (Showmen's Guild site)	Land adjacent fortification	Private	Efford and Lipson	Impact on nature conservation site
Forder Valley Road	Grassed area opposite entrance to Wilbert Road	PCC	Eggbuckland	Located within Zone 2 flood plain and a local nature reserve. Developing site would require redesignation of local nature reserve
Forder Valley Road	Council Storage Depot Wilbert Road	PCC	Eggbuckland	Very narrow site. Entrance in flood zone. Maintaining access for emergency vehicles. Inadequate turning areas. Minimal capacity for pitches / poor value for money. Security. Shady and intimidating impact on adjacent nature conservation site.
Ernesettle Lane West	Former sports field	PCC	Honicknowle	Site within MOD safeguarding Zone
Ernesettle Lane East, and South of Northolt Ave	Former MoD site now with planning permission on part of the site for a motorcycle test Centre	Private	Honicknowle	Potential conflict with provisions of Adopted Waste Development Plan Document, and within outer MOD safeguarding zone
Toshiba, Ernesettle Lane	North of sewage works	Private	Honicknowle	Adjacent to sewage works and effect on a major employer.
Ernesettle Lane Allotments	East of Ernesettle Lane at top of hill, and west of graveyard	Private	Honicknowle	Land under consideration for alternative uses. Visually exposed location.
Honicknowle Tip	North side of A38, and Burrington Industrial Estate	PCC	Honicknowle	Site attractively close to A38, but likelihood of strong objection from Highways Agency - so access would need to be through residential estate. Land contaminated with methane and has a sewer running through it.

Site	Description	Land ownership	Ward	Reasons for Rejection
Bickleigh Down, Woolwell	Land adj to Bickleigh Down Road, Towerfield Drive and Tavistock Road	PCC	Moorview	Site to be developed as mixed development including a supermarket (Lidl) in next 2-5 years. Possibility that it could be used as a G&T site on a temporary basis beforehand has been investigated but rejected on grounds that grant funding could not be sought for sites with an expected life of less than 10 years. Also it is a very large site which has had management difficulties.
Blunts Lane, off ForderValley	West of Blunts Lane South of Poole Fars	Part PCC/ Private	Moorview	Very poor access, flood zone, steep gradient. Potential effect on implementation of Derriford and Seaton Area Action Plan
Land at Novorossisk Road	Land to the SW of roundabout at the junction of Plymbridge Road, and Novorossisk Road Estover	Part PCC part Private	Moorview	This is an area of open space acting as a buffer between the industrial estate and adjacent residential development to the south. There is a clean air covenant in place with regard to nearby Wrigley's Factory. Under flight path to PlymouthAirport.
Site adjacent to GeorgeJunctionPark and Ride	Land on the north side of Plymbridge Road, and east of Tavistock Road.	PCC	Moorview	Site too exposed and inappropriately close to road junction for caravans
Bell Close, Plympton	Off Newnham Road	Private	Plympton St Mary	Land allocated as factory expansion land and within an established industrial area. Poor access to services such as schools, health facilities etc. Adjacent factories are potentially unsuitable neighbouring uses (noise disturbance etc)
Black Quarry, Elburton Road	Former quarry site previously used for storage	Private	Plymstock Dunstone	Site now developed as motorbike shop.
Chelson Meadow (post closure)	No specific site identified.	PCC	Plymstock Radford	Government guidance is to avoid development on or near landfill. Problems with methane gas, rats etc.

Site	Description	Land ownership	Ward	Reasons for Rejection
Rock Gardens, Plymstock Quarry	North of Billacombe Road former entrance to cement works/quarry	Private	Plymstock Radford	Already set aside for broader use in Blue Circle development.
Extension of the Ride Gypsy site.	Existing site, and possible linear extension southwards.	PCC	Plymstock Radford	Government guidance is to avoid development on or near landfill. Existing site not well located.
GoodwinPark, Southway,	Part of public open space	PCC	Southway	Poor access for vehicles in the area around the site coupled with a lack of turning space
Land North of Belliver Way	Open field and slopes to north of adjacent industrial estate	Private	Southway	Poorly located in relation to services and amenities. Much of site steeply sloping, with deliverability issues. Visual impact on surrounding landscape.
Land at Hayesend Farm Coombe Lane Tamerton Foliot	Sloping fields open in countryside	Private	Southway	Land accessed by very narrow lane. Land is fairly steeply sloping. Visual impact on surrounding landscape and setting of conservation area.
Blagdons Meadow	Land off Embankment Road, next to Blagdons Boat Yard	PCC	Sutton and MountGould	Located within a high risk flood plain (Flood Zone 3) and within a nature reserve where rare orchids present.
Old Western National Bus Depot -	LairaBridge, Billacombe Road, Plymstock - by the ride entrance	Private	Sutton and MountGould	Land likely to be required for transport improvements as part of forthcoming 'Major Scheme Bid' for Eastern Corridor transport improvements

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