



Newark & Sherwood Local Development Framework

**'Planning to meet the needs of Gypsy and Traveller
communities'**

Gypsy & Traveller Development Plan Document

Evidence Base Document 2

Consultation Report on the Issues Paper

February 2015

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Newark & Sherwood has a long historical connection with the Travelling Community, in particular the many Gypsies and Travellers living throughout the district, mainly in Newark but also in Ollerton & Boughton. The last census showed Newark & Sherwood to contain the highest number of Gypsy and Traveller residents in the Nottinghamshire. Whilst Newark & Sherwood does not have the same level of historical connection with Travelling Showpeople as some other districts within the County, we still need to assess their needs as well. In planning for the future needs of the district as a whole it is therefore necessary to consider the needs of the Travelling Community alongside those of the settled community.
- 1.2 The Government reflect this view through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its companion document 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites'. This states that the Government's overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for Travellers, which includes Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, in a way that facilitates their traditional and nomadic way of life whilst respecting the interests of the settled community.
- 1.3 The District Council embarked on the production of a replacement for the Newark & Sherwood Local Plan in 2005. So far, this Local Development Framework (LDF) comprises a Core Strategy (Adopted in March 2011) and an Allocations and Development Management DPD (Adopted in July 2013) Collectively, these set out planning policy and allocations for the district up until 2026. However, for Gypsies and Travellers this only set the pitch requirements to the end of 2012. The Gypsy & Traveller DPD will set out the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers across the district in the short, medium and long term and, where necessary, will aim allocate sufficient land to meet the identified need using the criteria established by the Core Strategy.

2.0 Consultation process

- 2.2 Consultation on the Issues Paper ran between the 16th September and 28th October 2013. The document was made available on the Councils website, at Council Offices and public libraries around the District. A summary of the key issues within it was incorporated within a comment form that was made available in the same way. All those who had been involved in the development plan process so far were directly consulted. During the consultation period events were held at Newark, Southwell and Ollerton Libraries where the consultation information was made available and Officers were on hand to answer questions.
- 2.3 The process has also been informed by direct consultation with the Gypsy and Traveller community, carried out by the East Notts. Travellers Association and Nottinghamshire's Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer. In addition to this, a stakeholder event was held where representatives of neighbouring authorities and bodies with cross boundary interests were able to discuss the topics affecting the whole county.

2.4 All the consultation processes above included a call for sites and the Council has also re-visited its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, identified sites that potentially meet the Core Strategy criteria for allocation and contacted the owners.

3.0 PART A – Issues arising from the consultation process

3.1 The Issues Paper posed seven questions and the responses to these have been summarised in the same order below. A minority of respondents answered negatively to every question without qualification and were seemingly opposed to the whole process. These have not been included. Consultation responses not related to the questions and the main issues arising out of the Gypsy and Traveller consultation and the Stakeholder Event have been summarised after this.

4.0 Responses to questions in the Issues Paper

Question 1

Do you agree with the Methodologies set out in Appendix 1 and if not how would you change them?

4.1 The Methodologies presented for comment had been agreed through a prior technical consultation with key stakeholders.

4.2 The majority of respondents agreed with the methodologies. Of those that did not agree, the majority fell within the category of negative responders described above. The necessary complexity of the methodologies caused one respondent to object and may have caused others to not answer this question. Two respondents made specific comments on the methodologies. These can either be addressed through explanation and minor amendment or are objection in principle.

Question 2

Do you agree with the proposed approach to information gathering and if not what changes or other method would you suggest?

4.3 The majority of respondents agreed with the approach. Some respondents did not appreciate that this consultation exercise also involved consultation with the G&T community and other stakeholders and consequently suggested this took place. A small number of respondents called for even wider consultation than this. One respondent disagreed with the way in which annual count of G&T sites took place.

Question 3

Do you agree with the pitch and plot definitions and if not how would you change them?

4.4 There was a very high level of agreement with the definitions. Some respondents deferred to the G&T community and some called for more detailed definitions.

Question 4

Do you think that future pitch provision should be made in locations across the district, outside of the Green Belt, that satisfies the above criteria or continue to be made in and around Newark Urban Area and Ollerton & Boughton?

- 4.5 There was an almost equal split between those who favoured district wide provision and those who favoured concentration in Newark, Ollerton & Boughton. Within those that favoured district wide provision one respondent agreed that sites should be outside the Green Belt and one thought that consideration should be given to sites in the Green Belt if they did not affect openness.
- 4.6 Ollerton & Boughton Town Council in particular consider that their area has accepted more pitches than required and consequently suggest that in the future the travelling community should be proportionally spread throughout the whole of the N & S District.

Question 5

Do you agree that Tolney Lane is an unsuitable location for the future allocation of pitches?

- 4.7 Of those who expressed an opinion there was a slight majority in those that thought Tolney Lane was a suitable location for future pitch provision. Within this majority there was a split between those that did not qualify their answer and those that thought priority should be given to addressing flood and access issues over allocating sites elsewhere.
- 4.8 Some answers to this question revealed a misconception regarding Tolney Lane. Respondents mistakenly thought that the Council owned or managed the area and this question sought opinion on closing the area and re-locating the inhabitants.

Question 6

Do you know of any suitable and available sites that meet the above criteria? If so, please let us know by either writing in with a plan showing the location or contact us so that we can talk through the details of the site.

- 4.9 A number of sites were put forward by landowners and interested parties along with suggestions from the public about the location of potential sites. These sites will be fully considered alongside any additional sites which come forward as part of the preferred strategy consultation.

Question 7

Do you represent or know of a community or group who would be interested in engaging in the ongoing consultation process?

- 4.10 Boughton & Ollerton Tenants and Residents Association (BOTRA) and Nottinghamshire Police Designing out Crime Team were identified as new groups to be involved in future consultations.

5.0 Consultation responses not relating to questions in the Issues Paper

5.1 A number of responses were received that either supplemented the answers to the above questions or were made separately. As above, some comments were wholly negative towards the process and have not been included. The main issues raised were:

- Concern over Central Government requirements to maintain supply sites – this should be decided locally.
- Question need for new sites when many vacant on Tolney Lane. These should be filled before new sites allocated.
- Urban areas generally are better for site provision due to existing healthcare and education facilities.
- Concern over cost of process.
- Best sites are owned and run by travellers. Council should grant permission to travellers rather than try and control.
- The smaller the settlement the less impact/concerns residents will have.

In addition to these comments The Environment Agency and Natural England commented on the Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the Issues Paper and recommended minor changes. The Homes and Communities Agency supports the public consultation on the process and recognises the co-operation with neighbouring authorities. A number of other statutory consultees and public bodies responded to the consultation with no specific comments.

6.0 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Stakeholder Event

6.1 A workshop was held at NSDC on 5th November 2013 and attended by Planning, Housing, Healthcare and G&T Liaison Officers from the northern part of the County (Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood, Mansfield and Ashfield). Its aim was to identify and discuss issues that affect both the whole of the County and the administrative areas within it.

6.2 After sharing knowledge on sites discussion was guided around a series of general questions and questions to specific area representatives, the responses to which are summarised below:

6.3 General Questions

Question 1

Are there any issues that could affect G&T communities that go over the areas of Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood, Mansfield and Ashfield

Main issues:

- A need to be aware of potential double counting, if sites are close to or cross District boundaries.

Question 2**What travel patterns are you most aware of amongst the G&T communities in your area?**

Main issues:

- There is frequent travel between Gainsborough and Newark.
- There is a desire or an actual move away from Worksop as the disabled facilities were poor on sites in this area.
- There is a migration from Chesterfield to the Newark area.
- It was thought that some families living in Doncaster may wish to move to Newark if there was land available. (A point was raised asking for a contact name for the Doncaster area)
- It was considered that movement to and from Mansfield and Ashfield was seasonal and primarily it would be those that would just be travelling through.
- A number of G&T's have moved in to housing due to a lack of pitches
- During the summer months some G&T's travel countrywide in the same way as identified in the 2007 study.

Question 3**What is the ideal size for sites?**

Main issues:

- It was considered 10-12 pitches would accommodate 1 family. It was thought that this was generally acceptable, however provision should be made for the site to be extended as families grew.
- There did not appear to be a need for larger sites
- Some flexibility should be made for site size especially in smaller locations with less capacity for growth.
- Sites should be close to services and there did not appear to be any issues as far as the G&T community were concerned with sites being adjacent to settled communities.
- G&T communities considered there was a need to know who their neighbours were. This would create greater harmony and minimise issues for the authorities.

Question 4**Where are the preferred locations for such sites?**

Main issues:

- It was thought that some G&T's may wish to return to the Newark area.
- Other locations may be acceptable however the priority would be for families to stay together.
- Interest was shown in a need for a Local Authority managed site.
- It was thought an allocations system should be set up to vet potential residents to G&T sites.
- There was some desire for different sites to accommodate different groups of G&T's. Although there was a need for this to be managed in a way that wasn't prejudicial.

Question 5

What are the main barriers to delivering G&T accommodation sites? How can these barriers be overcome?

Main issues:

- Land availability
- Misconception by Local Councillors- greater understanding required. Possible need for training.
- 'Political Will' - Influencing local residents - need to address public perception

Question 6

Do you think there is scope to consider delivering a site specifically for older members of G&T communities?

Main issues:

- It was generally thought that there was not a requirement for separate sites for the older G&T community, however better disabled facilities were required, with the aim of providing 'Life time homes.'
- It may be a possibility that some older residents would want quieter sites. Healthcare providers could assist with the provision of adaptations and disabled facilities.

6.4 Area Specific Question for Newark & Sherwood

Question 1

What are the most prominent issues in meeting accommodation needs of the Gypsy & Traveller Population in Newark?

- G&T community have a lack of trust following the 2007 GTAA. It was anticipated that this would lead to a new site and as this has not happened many question the point in contributing further. This feeling of apathy was compounded by the lack of feedback as well.
- Desire for a publicly managed site.
- Misconception by the settled community that Tolney Lane is owned/managed by NSDC.
- Many G&T's find processes such as this too complex and consequently off-putting.
- A fair outcome and correct decisions can only be made if the G&T community become involved with the process. If people contribute to the process they should receive feedback.

Question 2

Is there much land available for G&T sites in this area?

- Some sites owned by G&T's may come forward through this process.

- Some of those that did own land would not be confident in developing into a site. They would rather a public body did this.

Question 3

Are you aware of any specific reasons why vacant pitches on existing sites are not being taken up?

- Some sites on Tolney Lane were vacant at the choice of owner and some were simply not suitable for habitation.
- Some pitches were not available to G&T's due to occupation by non-travellers.
- Cultural differences within communities also meant that some pitches were vacant, although not necessarily permanently.

Question 5

Do you know of any G&T's who currently live in housing but would like to live on a site?

- Four G&T families are recorded as living in houses, however it is thought that there are likely to be more than 50 'concealed' households in the Newark area.(G&T survey to establish this)
- Some families want to move back to Tolney Lane however suitable pitches are not available. (G&T survey to establish this)
- Some G&T families now have grown up children and there is a desire for these extended families to return to G&T communities.

Question 6

Do you know of any G&T's currently on authorised sites who would like to go into bricks and mortar accommodation?

- It was considered families go into housing through necessity rather than choice.

General Issues

- The current G&T assessment should 'make it more real' if/when a site is delivered.
- Councillors should talk directly to the G&T community.

7.0 PART B – Feedback from Gypsy & Traveller Consultation

7.1 Gypsies and Travellers on authorised and unauthorised sites and those living in housing have been given the opportunity to participate in a survey aimed at establishing their future needs. The survey work was carried out by the East Notts. Travellers Association (ENTA) and Nottinghamshire's Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer. Residents of all sites known to the Council and any others known to the interviewers were invited to contribute.

7.2 ENTA unfortunately reported that it was difficult to generate any real interest in the surveys process. Those that ENTA spoke to did not think that the District Council would be interested in bringing forward sites in the District and consequently no

data was returned. In the west of the district, the County's Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Officer carried out one to one interviews with owners and occupiers of sites and achieved a high level of response.

- 7.3 In light of this, and with ENTA's agreement, data from the west of the district has been extrapolated and other sources used to provide the necessary information to progress the GTAA.