

14. Proposed Construction of Enhanced Plots, and Visitor Plots at Tintinhull Gypsy Site (First Resolution)

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Purpose of the Report

To seek permission under Regulation 3 of the town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 to apply for Planning Permission for the construction of 2 visitors/transit plots, together with the rebuilding of 4 pairs of Amenity Blocks, and a CCTV mast; and also a change of use of the adjoining field for the formation of work spaces, play space and vehicular parking.

Recommendation

That a First Resolution be passed seeking planning permission under Regulation no. 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulation 1992 to construct 2 visitors/transit plots, together with the rebuilding of 4 pairs of Amenity Blocks, a CCTV mast; and a change of use of the adjoining field for the formation of work spaces, play space and vehicular parking at Tintinhull gypsy site.

Background

In December 2002, the Council entered into a long-term lease with Somerset County Council to effectively take direct control of Ilton and Tintinhull gypsy sites. Control of these sites has enabled the Council to apply and obtain substantial Gypsy Site Refurbishment Grant (GSRG) funding from government, allowing substantial refurbishment work over a two-year period.

In the first year this enabled the significant repair and upgrading of amenity blocks and pitches, whilst in the second year it was targeted at the access roadways and associated drainage. A further application for (GSRG) in excess of £750,000 was made to the Regional Housing Board in September 2006, in order to provide 4 additional pitches on the Ilton site, and other associated refurbishment works.

There is a well-evidenced and documented need for additional pitches in South Somerset. The Council has led the way in Somerset in assessing the needs of the gypsy and traveller community. The Somerset Strategic Housing Officers Group, agreed to commission jointly an accommodation needs assessment for Gypsies and Travellers within Somerset, as required by government guidance. This work was commissioned in 2005, and was completed in February 2006.

As part of this needs assessment, a count was taken on 19th January 2006 which showed that there were **7** unauthorised sites in South Somerset with a total of **29** caravans. The information gathered indicates there is a need for Residential accommodation for Gypsy families within South Somerset. The number of families residing on unauthorised development sites indicates a need for accommodating 24 caravans for Gypsies.

More recently, the (2007) South West Regional Assembly's Draft Regional Spatial Strategy Revision (Gypsies and Travellers) – 'Review of Additional Pitch Requirements for Gypsies and Travellers in the South West', identifies that in South Somerset there is an additional requirement for 27 residential/transit pitches.

This application is another step towards establishing ways for SSDC to meet the identified accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and thus reduce the number of unauthorised encampments that occur throughout the district.

Corporate Objectives

Providing additional pitches is entirely consistent with the Council's Gypsy & Traveller Strategy, the Housing and Accommodation Strategy, and objective 13 of the Corporate Plan 2005 – 2012 (Develop a strategy for transit sites and temporary stopping place for travellers and gypsies during 2005/06 and deliver phase 1 of the strategy by the end of 2005/06).

Planning

The proposals have been discussed briefly with the Area North Planning Team Leader, who advises that the existing Gypsy Site land is considered to be defined as 'previously developed land'. The adjoining field is currently agricultural land.

In addition, an historic Planning Permission exists for the additional site development of the whole site, to allow for 15 caravans, on a site where there are currently eight pitches

The full range of planning consultations would be carried out under the normal planning process.

Financial Implications

These proposals are dependent upon a successful outcome for the grant application for the Tintinhull site which SSDC has recently made to the Government Office of the South West. The grant application for new build work is grant aided at 100%.

Background Papers: *Draft Regional Spatial Strategy Revision (Gypsies and Travellers) – 'Review of Additional Pitch Requirements for Gypsies and Travellers in the South West' - South West Regional Assembly.*
