

RUGBY BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN, ISSUES AND OPTIONS, OCTOBER 2023

CONSULTATION RESPONSE - SHILTON & BARNACLE PARISH COUNCIL

Shilton & Barnacle Parish Council wishes to make the following responses to the Issues and Options consultation document, particularly in respect of chapter 5 'Pitches for Gypsies and Travellers'.

12. The council proposes to plan for Gypsy and Traveller pitches based on the ethnic need target of 79 pitches 2022-2037 identified in the GTA 2022. Do you agree?

The calculation of the assessed need should be undertaken in a robust manner to ensure that perceived need is not overestimated. This should include independently testing the figures prior to their adoption, and seeking a consistent methodology with other local authorities in Coventry and Warwickshire.

13. How can we find sites to accommodate the need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches?

Evidence suggests that the borough's Gypsy and Traveller future pitch requirements will need to be met from privately owned sites, rather than through borough or county council-owned sites. It is necessary therefore for development criteria that is able to meet this need in a planned and proactive manner, rather than retrospectively responding to unauthorised development sites identified by the Gypsy and Traveller community itself with no consideration of agreed Local Plan suitability criteria.

In developing such a criteria, RBC should seek to ensure that it aligns and implements all national planning guidance in respect of Gypsy and Traveller sites including the Government's 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites'. Attention should also be given to ensure that national Green Belt policy is applied, including Policy E contained within 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites'.

14. When allocating sites for pitches, what size of site should we be seeking to allocate?

The experience of SBPC is that sites operate more successfully, and are better integrated within settled communities, if they are smaller. Therefore, it should be the objective of RBC to achieve a greater number of small sites rather than a small number of large sites. This reduces the visual impact of sites, places less pressure on public services, and results in sites comprising immediate family members, rather than multiple different family units, and this contributes to a more settled situation within sites. A greater number of small sites also helps with the identification of suitable land across the borough, mitigating against a 'honeypot' effect of the borough's entire provision of sites being located within a very small geographic area.

Connected to this, it is also important to establish policies to limit the acceptability of the aggregation of multiple small sites within the immediate proximity of each other that will have the effect of creating the appearance of one single larger site.

15. Should we adopt a negotiated stopping policy which allows caravans to be sited at a suitable location for an agreed and limited period?

This approach would be supported to provide widely recognised locations where caravans can stop for short periods of time, rather than having to stop on the side of a road or on other landowners land due to the lack of availability of stopping sites.

General Comments

Shilton & Barnacle parish has considerable experience with the challenges of accommodating the housing needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community, including the impacts this can have on the settled community and open rural nature typical of Green Belt land. There are examples of sites that work well and those that do not, and this practical experience can help RBC identify how and where within the borough it can meet these specific housing needs.

The policies it adopts in the Local Plan need to be fair but also robust enough to stand up to speculative and opportunistic development that has little to do with genuinely seeking to provide sites, and instead is pursued for short term financial gain. The policies must also be seen to protect that which deserves protecting, particularly villages under threat from urbanisation and ribbon development that links together otherwise distanced communities. But equally, it should properly meet the genuine need of Gypsy and Traveller communities, ensuring that they have certainty that their accommodation needs are met in a planned and proactive way