

Welwyn Hatfield Core Strategy

Consultation with the borough's Gypsy and Traveller community on the provision of additional pitches

Report of consultation

Introduction

As part of the consultation on the Core Strategy, Issues and Options Paper 2009, views were sought on options for Gypsy and Traveller site provision and the criteria for selecting Gypsy and Traveller sites.

In our Statement of Community Involvement (2007), we identified (paragraph 5.1) that young people, ethnic minorities, those living in rural areas and in more deprived areas were under-represented or "hard to reach". We said that we would make efforts to include these groups and explore opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations.

Our local Gypsy and Traveller community is located in mainly rural (or edge of rural) locations. Literacy rates can be low and previous survey work has revealed a high proportion of young people living on sites. The Gypsy and Traveller community has been identified by various studies/ research, as suffering from significant social, economic or environmental inequalities, e.g. *Parry et al (2004)* reports that the health status of Gypsies and Travellers is much poorer than the general population.

Our efforts to ensure that our Gypsy and Traveller community had an opportunity to take part in consultation, involved officers visiting sites in the borough, working in partnership with the County Council's Gypsy and Traveller section.

Consultation

In 2009, there were three sites in the borough, one (the largest, at Holwell) is a public site managed by Hertfordshire County Council. There were two smaller private sites in the borough. Consultation was carried at the following locations, on the following dates. (Potential sample size shown):

- **Holwell Caravan site, Holwell Lane, Essendon, Hatfield. AL9**

Dates of consultation: 15/05/09 & 19/06/09

Potential sample: 39 households.

- **Four Oaks, 1-4 Great North Road, Welwyn. AL6 0PL**

Date of consultation: 29/05/09

Potential sample: 2 households.

- **Barbaraville, Mill Green** (no consultation carried out at the request of residents)

Response Rate

A questionnaire was used to provide a structure for consultation. Assistance was provided; questions were explained verbally and notes were made on the respondents' behalf.

15 people took part in the consultation, representing 37% of households on the two sites visited.

The Responses

Q1: Do you agree there is a need for more pitches in the area?

12 respondents agreed (80%) , 3 disagreed (20%)

Q2: We believe that the present Gypsy and Traveller sites are unsuitable for expansion. Do you agree with this?

11 respondents agreed (73%), 4 disagreed (27%)

Q3: We believe that sites should:

	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Be capable of living alongside the settled community	100	-
Be near to public transport	93	-
Have safe / convenient access to public roads	100	-
Be suitably level to accommodate caravans / vehicles	87	13
Have access to utilities (gas, water etc.)	100	-
Not be affected by contaminated land / pollution	80	20
Be at low risk of flooding	87	13
Avoid harming landscapes containing wildlife / historic sites	67	33
Avoid harming / intruding into open countryside	53	47
Be large enough to accommodate landscaping to blend in with surroundings	80	20

Q4: Is there anything else we should add to the list?

The following facilities and features were mentioned as requested as additional site features. The number of respondents requesting these facilities and features is shown below.

	Number of Responses
Children’s play area	11
Employment opportunities	8
Road safety measures within site	3
More regular public transport	2
Lower boundary fences	2
Shop	1
Full-time warden	1
Shed for extra facilities	1

Q5: Where should new sites be located?

Respondents were asked to select which they thought were the best and worst choice of the following three alternatives.

	Best choice (%)	Worst choice (%)
On the edge of existing settlements	60	0
Alongside new housing	33	7
In the countryside	0	87

Q6: Do we need to provide transit / temporary pitches?

7 respondents said yes (47%), and 8 said no (53%).

Q7: If we do provide transit sites where should they be?

	No. Respondents agreeing
On existing permanent sites	1
On separate sites	5
On both	4

Note: There were strong feelings about transit sites.

Three respondents made comments citing “different people / different cultures”, “trouble” and “guests yes, but strangers no”.

Two of the respondents who agreed with transit sites commented that they would prefer to have these sites rather than see travellers constantly being moved on, and some remarked that Gypsy and Traveller reputation had been tarnished by the behaviour of those occupying transit sites.