

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 23 JULY 2015

ACQUISITION OF LAND AT LODGE ROAD, DONNINGTON WOOD

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT,
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: FAMILY, COHESION & COMMISSIONING AND ASSISTANT
DIRECTOR: LAW, DEMOCRACY & PEOPLE SERVICES

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: CLLR RICHARD OVERTON

PART A – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Report seeks authority to acquire land at Lodge Road, Donnington Wood adjoining the existing well established Gypsy and Traveller site to create a transit site of 11 plots. This site will replace the existing provision at Snedshill which has a temporary planning permission expiring in December 2015.
- 1.2 While all efforts will be made to deliver the new site as soon as possible it is anticipated that there will be around a three months gap between the new site becoming available for use in c. March 2016 and the expiry of the temporary planning permission at Snedshill in December. Since the extension to the permanent Gypsy and Traveller site opened at Lodge Road there has been no occupation of the Snedshill site.
- 1.3 It is proposed to submit a planning application for the transit provision at Lodge Road in July in parallel with an application for an extension to the temporary permission at Snedshill to be considered at Plans Board in October. Snedshill would continue to operate as a transit site until the new site is available for occupation in 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet grant delegated authority to the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Employment to acquire the parcel of land at Lodge Road, Donnington Wood as shown in Appendix 1
- 2.2 That Cabinet grant delegated authority to the Assistant Director: Family, Cohesion & Commissioning to extend the Lodge Road land as a Transit site for Gypsies and Travellers
- 2.3 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services to seal or sign any documents to give effect to the above recommendations
- 2.4 That Cabinet approve the capital allocation and expenditure as detailed in Section 3 of this report in respect of the acquisition of land at Lodge Road, Donnington Wood

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regenerating those neighbourhoods in need and working to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing• Protecting and supporting our vulnerable children and adults• Protect and create jobs as a Business Supporting, Business Winning Council
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	

	Yes	The proposals will ensure that the council meets its statutory duty to manage and accommodate gypsies and travellers.
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Lodge Road :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Application July: Plans Board October 2015. • Acquisition complete: November 2015. • Construction: January/February 2016 • Available for occupation: March/April 2016
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	The costs of the acquisition and development of the site at Lodge Road as a transit site are estimated at a total of £170,000. The scheme will be funded from the re-phasing of the existing capital programme for Development, Business and Employment.
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	The Council has the power to acquire land for any of its statutory functions which includes the purposes described in this report. The Council has a duty to provide sites for gypsies and travellers under the Housing Act 2004
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	Unlawful gypsy and traveller sites within the Borough are monitored and dealt with by the Environmental Enforcement Team. These have had a significant impact on the business community, for example, within Stafford Park. The number of sites has reduced through the provision of the Snedshill transit site. The Lodge Road extension will replace the existing temporary site at Snedshill.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	Muxton. However unlawful encampments are a concern across the Borough.

PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. INFORMATION

- 4.1 Telford and Wrekin Council currently own and manage two Gypsy and Traveller Sites. these are:
- Lodge Road Caravan Site, Donnington Wood, Telford TF2 7QD (Comprising of 25 plots, all of which are fully occupied)
 - Ketley Brook Caravan Site, Lawley, Telford TF1 2JX (Comprising of 20 plots, all of which are fully occupied)
- 4.2 Lodge Road Caravan Site was formerly a transit site but due to a lack of permanent site provision, became a residential site in 1978. The site has been subject to a number of refurbishment programmes over the past 20 years. In September 2014 the site was completely rebuilt and extended (increasing from 13 to 25 plots) and was re-opened in April 2015. Ketley Brook Caravan Site was a purpose built site opened in 1997. This site was the subject of a refurbishment programme during 2011/2012. Both locations are very popular amongst Gypsies and Travellers and are constantly the subject of enquiries from prospective tenants.
- 4.3 Telford & Wrekin Council has experienced substantial numbers of unlawful Gypsy and Traveller encampments which have had significant negative impact on the residential and business community. A considerable amount of time and effort from council officers and key partners has been expended to resolve the issues arising out of these unlawful encampments.
- 4.4 The costs of unlawful encampments upon the authority are significant, whilst the financial implications upon local businesses and the community in the vicinity of the encampment,

while difficult to quantify, include loss of business and the threat of firms relocating as well as impacting on community cohesion.

- 4.5 As a result of the level of illegal encampments a transit site was opened in April 2014 on land off Holyhead Road, Snedshill (known as Symmonds Yard) under a temporary planning permission which expires in December 2015. This facility has enabled the council, in partnership with the police and other agencies, to address the issue of unlawful encampments and use the powers under Section 61 or Section 62 A-E of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. The Act enables the Police to inform the unlawful encampment that the Local Authority has transit provision and they will be expected to move there at the earliest opportunity. No Gypsies and Travellers moved from illegal encampments have chosen to use the transit provision, the availability of the site has enabled such illegal encampments to be more effectively enforced and removed.
- 4.6 The benefits are clearly evident in the statistics shown below relating to illegal encampments on Council owned land alone pre and post the opening of the Snedshill site: -
- 2012 – 48 encampments involving 358 caravans
 - 2013 – 101 encampments involving 652 caravans
 - 2014 – 27 encampments involving 116 caravans
 - 2015 – 13 encampments involving 27 caravans
- 4.7 The Council needs to identify a long term solution for transit provision given the temporary permission at Snedshill. The site at Lodge Road will provide eleven transit pitches meeting the locally assessed need for transit. The site will be suitably screened and will have a separate access enabling transit provision to be effectively managed alongside the permanent site.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 5.1 The gap in transit provision between the end of the temporary permission at Snedshill and the availability of the new extension at Lodge Road poses some risks in relation to an increase in illegal encampments. To address this, an extension to the temporary planning permission at Snedshill will be sought in parallel with the application for the new site.
- 5.2 In 2006, following a new approach by Government for Local Authorities to address the housing needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, a report was published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2009. This report does not highlight individual authority needs but gives more of an overall view of specific areas of the country (primarily because not all Local Authorities responded to the questionnaires circulated by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission).
- 5.3 Their findings resulted in recommendations being made to Central Government, Local Authorities, Police Forces and the voluntary Sector. Recommendations, specific to Local Authorities included:
1. Develop a holistic corporate vision for all work on Gypsies and Travellers
 2. Review all policies on accommodation for Gypsies and Irish Travellers
 3. Designate a councillor at cabinet (or equivalent) level, and an officer at no less than assistant director level, to co-ordinate the authority's work on all sites
 4. Emphasise that the code of conduct for councillors applies to their work in relation to all racial groups, including Gypsies and Travellers
 5. Give specific advice to Gypsies and Travellers on the most suitable land for residential use, how to prepare applications, and help them find the information they need to support their application

6. Identify and report on actions by local groups or individuals in response to plans for Gypsy sites that may constitute unlawful pressure on the authority to discriminate against Gypsies and Travellers
7. Monitor all planning applications and instances of enforcement action at every stage, by typical racial group, including Gypsies and Irish Travellers, in order to assess the effects of policies and practices on different racial groups

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Report - 23 July 2013 – Acquisition of land at Donnington Wood and Snedshill

Report jointly prepared by Chris Goulson, Service Delivery Manager, Development Business & Employment, 01952 384302 and Jas Bedesha, Service Delivery Manager, Cohesion Services, 01952 382101.

Appendix 1 – Lodge Road, Donnington Wood

