

Confidential

Briefing note, proposed transit site Hawkwell Park, Hawkchurch

The Council has a new legal duty to assess the housing needs for Gypsies and Travellers and to make adequate provision for sites in its area.

The Devonwide Gypsy/Traveller needs assessment and the Regional Spatial Strategy identified an immediate need for 9 additional permanent pitches and 5 transit pitches. The need for the transit site is particularly pressing to enable the Council to deal effectively with unauthorised encampments.

There is an existing Gypsy site at Hawkerland Hawkchurch with planning permission for 2 permanent and 5 transit pitches. Planning applications have recently been submitted to convert the existing transit pitches into permanent pitches and to provide a further 5 transit pitches on the site. It is anticipated that these will be considered in May.

The Environment Gypsy/Traveller Think Tank has been considering potential sites and is of the view that the Council should, subject to planning approval, pursue with the owners the option of taking out a lease on the prospective transit site and entering into a management arrangement with them. This would give the Council the opportunity to set its own lettings policy and therefore give greater control over who goes onto the site and for how long. Initial discussions with the owners indicate that they would be happy to agree to this.

This proposal would be dependent upon a successful bid for government grant for the purchase of the lease and provision of the pitches and facilities. However the date for submission of the grant bid has been brought forward from July of this year to the end of April. The timescale is therefore very short and authorisation is required to enter into negotiations with the owners and submit an application for grant aid.

Recommended

That authorisation be given to start negotiations with the owners of Hawkerland Gypsy/Traveller site Hawkchurch for the purchase of a lease for the provision of a transit site and to submit an application for gypsy/traveller site grant to the Homes and Communities Agency.