

Shortlisted sites and sites for further investigation

Question 19 Do you have any evidence or information about any of these sites which will help the Dorset councils to determine whether they are available, suitable and achievable for Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showpeople provision? (if yes, please specify)

YES

We wish to advise you of the following constraints and recommendations to Sites 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8.

We OBJECT to proposals for Site 3 - Uddens (Cannon Hill) Plantation

Site 1. Candy's Lane, Corfe Mullen - 10 residential pitches

- The proposed site is part of a County farm with an active lease: the impact on the viability of the farm and the contribution it makes to the local environment and employment opportunities should be assessed
- Access problems would arise if the entrance were to be via Candy's Lane
- The archaeological interest on the wider site would need to be protected
- Land immediately to the north of the A31 is an Area of Great Landscape Value. The site would be highly visible and would require substantial screening
- There is a potential risk to the spring on the site and pollution of the watercourse.
- There is a potential risk to the SSSI and privately owned long established nature reserve on the opposite side of the A31, including additional diffuse pollution. Otters are present.

Site 2. Land off Pompey's Lane, Ferndown - 1 residential pitch

- ETAG has been advised that there is a large badger sett along the boundary of the site. It would be essential to ensure that there was no risk of disturbance.

Site 6. Land at Oakley Farm, 3LX - 4 residential/transit pitches

- We would wish to ensure that there will continue to be no direct access to heath.
- Although the land is not in the flood plain, there is potential for land contamination/diffuse pollution. Measures should be incorporated in the development plan to prevent this.

Site 7. Keith Acres, Verwood - 15 transit pitches

- Although this site is very close to Lower Common (ie within 400 metres of N2K heathland) it has been used by travellers for many years between April and September. Lower Common is frequently used for flytipping at all times of year. To ensure that the travellers are not blamed unjustly for this, we recommend that the access tracks across the Common are gated with keys available only to those who have legitimate vehicular access. Some additional fencing along the newly resurfaced railway may also be required.

Site 8. Chipping Depot, Woodlands - 3 residential/transit pitches

- The site is in a prominent position in the AGLV and the risk of light pollution to the Cranborne and West Wilts AONB is high.

Site 3. Uddens (Cannon Hill) Plantation – 25 transit pitches

We OBJECT to the development of this site as a transit camp

Relationship to surrounding land uses

Impact on the local community

Para 2.34 of the CLG Guidance cited in the Site Options Summary report states that sites should respect the scale of and not dominate the nearest settled community. Stapehill is a small village community that no longer has village shop, school or post office: 534 properties lie to the east of Canford Bottom roundabout. Of these 13 form what is, in effect, a discrete hamlet at Stapehill Farm and Chestnut Grove: this would be dominated by the 25 pitches proposed.

Noise and disturbance to transit camp users

Para 2.35 highlights a requirement to locate the sites away from industrial areas and highways because of noise and disturbance. The Uddens Industrial estate is at the entrance to the southern section of Uddens Drive. The remaining 30 ha of what is currently coniferous plantation and immediately to the east of Uddens Drive has been identified in the emerging Core Strategy as New Employment Land which will involve use classes B1, B2 and B8. It will be a construction site for many years.

The proximity of the A31 is of concern. The congestion here leads to increased air pollution and the noise levels even within the existing coniferous plantation are high. For people used to the peace and quiet of more rural sites this could be intolerable both when outdoors and when inside their caravans. No noise data have been provided for any of the sites.

The hamburger junction at Canford Bottom is a short term measure designed to deal with traffic to the Olympics venue at Weymouth and to ensure that spectators can get there within a proscribed time from London. It is not designed to eliminate traffic congestion or to help with local traffic problems. The longer term plans to construct a flyover could bring traffic even closer to the site and the construction work would be untenable.

Groundwater and potential for pollution

The Environment Agency (2011) document GP3, *Groundwater Protection, Policy and Practice* explains the need for the precautionary approach and the very real problems that pollution can cause, sometimes taking decades to resolve. Please note in particular Part 2, the Technical Framework and the section on pollutants. (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/publications/40741.aspx>)

Observation indicates that the water table of the site is high and will of course be raised by tree felling. This will have implications for the construction of hard standing and vehicular access across the site. The impact on the drainage of the remaining afforested area should also be assessed. Conifers are shallow rooted and in wet soil suffer wind throw particularly when they are top heavy as they are within plantations. The impact on neighbouring properties of changes in hydrology should be assessed.

Surface drainage is to Uddens Water and thence the Moors River SSSI. Any additional traffic here will result in further low level pollution to the Moors River catchment and, in the event of accidental discharges, high level pollution.

It is essential that both all foul drainage and surface water are taken to a mains sewer. It should be noted that in 1986 and 1988 there were accidental releases of pollutants from the Ferndown Industrial Estate into the Uddens Water causing severe decline in water quality and prolonged loss of biodiversity.

Access to services

As noted above there are no schools, shops, post office or medical services in the village. Safe access across the main road would be required to use the local bus service.

Current use of the land

The land is owned and managed by the Forestry Commission (FC) as coniferous plantation. Despite the agreed Forest Design Plans (2009) for natural regeneration of mixed woodland (with some heathland restoration on the east of Uddens Drive, the FC have now identified it as being surplus to their requirements. The area was originally heathland and has been identified as being suitable for heathland restoration in the RSPB's heathland extent and potential mapping. The existing remnants of heathland vegetation could provide valuable ecological linkages to other heathland in the area so contributing to the policy of landscape scale approach to conservation (Strategic Nature Areas or SNAs). There are reliable reports of adder, smooth snake and lizards (species not specified) in the heathland and along the rides. Dormice have also been seen in the woodland. (Dave to reconfirm please). No protected or BAP species surveys have been undertaken.

There has been some thinning of the conifers: this has opened up the site so increasing visibility through it and reducing potential for screening for different users.

There is a clear conflict of interest between the existing and potential new (transit site) users of the area. The consultation documentation advises that the different ethnic groups who would use a transit camp are incompatible and will require separate areas so increasing the land take. The transit camps would, in effect, reduce the nominally accessible area by at least 50%.

Although voluntarily declared an Open Access Area by the FC, the land and its footpaths/rights of way have been in use by local residents for decades. There are four access points. The Ferndown, Stour and Forest Trail starts here and the Castleman Trailway runs through or adjacent to it. The waymarking and mapping are contradictory. One of the routes has been hard surfaced and is used frequently by disabled local residents, parents with children's buggies and cyclists. The Castleman Trailway is a priority project in the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Green Infrastructure Strategy (Grade 1 investment site) with £250,000 investment committed to developing its quality and use. Improvements are to be made to signage, surfacing, promotion, community use and habitat enhancement as a key greenway for the area and sections are already used as a commuting to work cycleway.

The proximity of the permissive paths and rights of way to the proposed transit camps could create conflict between the new site users and local residents, each considering the other as intrusive and entrenched fears and perceptions of the others' behaviour. The planned increase in use of the Castleman Trailway is likely to be considered as intrusive by the travelling

communities: conversely other railway users could be deterred. Dogs kept by the travelling communities are more likely to be used as guard animals than the domestic dogs currently taken for walks through the area. There is a potential risk to both and also to horses and their riders. There is a potential additional risk to farm livestock from untrained guard dogs.

The Natural Environment White Paper (2011) highlights the evidence that human wellbeing is intimately connected with our natural environment. Para 1.29 says, *Access to nearby attractive green space and footpaths is likely to increase levels of walking, one of the simplest forms of physical activity that most can enjoy.* It is widely recognised that many walkers (particularly daily walkers) prefer a circuitous route rather than a linear one where you need to retrace your footsteps. Large areas of accessible greenspace (as proscribed in ANGSt standards) provide this and allow for choice of routes so that regular exercise does not become monotonous.

This section of the Uddens Plantation is the only accessible large area of open green space for residents of Stapehill and is used by them, by residents of Colehill and by dog walkers arriving by car from Ferndown and elsewhere to avoid undue pressure on local heathlands. The area of greenspace currently available here to local residents is restricted by the FC's practice of leaving felled timber and brashings *in situ* on the forest floor. The Council's commissioned (Inspace) report on Open Spaces in East Dorset is somewhat misleading as it has included privately owned woodland to the south of Stapehill and the footpaths that run through them and are adjacent to fields with livestock. These are not open access land and clearly, with livestock, dogs cannot be exercised off lead. The footpaths are frequently wet and muddy so are unsuitable for childrens' buggies or for disabled access. It is essential that a clear distinction is made between accessible greenspace and Green Infrastructure which may or may not be accessible. If we restrict local residents' access then we are discriminating against them and in particular those who do not have a car to go elsewhere.

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Measures would be required to prevent larger transit camp vehicles blocking the access points. This would also deter those current users (particularly dog walkers arriving by car and have free and easy parking) and displace them to the Natura 2000 heathlands of Ferndown Common and Holt Heath. The Habitats Regulations require a precautionary approach to be taken in assessing the impact of development on N2K heathland. If it cannot be proved that there will be no harm as a result of the proposals, planning consent for that development should be refused. It is our view that such displacement cannot be mitigated and that proposals for development of this site should be withdrawn at this stage of the consultation process.

The popularity of the area at all times of day by people of all ages and abilities for walking (with or without a dog), jogging, cycling and horse riding is impressive to even a casual observer. It also provides a "green lung" for workers on the adjacent industrial estate. There will be additional need for such open green space with the redevelopment of Blunts Farm as an employment site.

The footpaths/rights of way lead across the A31 (via a footbridge suitable for horses) to Cannon Hill so providing a choice of a short circuitous route around the woodland itself or around or through the larger area of Forest to the north.

Grazing would not be available on the site. Nearby fields already demonstrate overgrazing. With the losses of other pasture in East Dorset resulting from Core Strategy, good grazing land will be at a premium.