

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**  
**COUNCIL HELD ON 09 December 2024**

# Agenda Item 2

**STATEMENT from Ms Diane MacArthur, Rowsley Local Resident**

“I have read through the report for every proposed site but as a Rowsley resident I am more concerned about the Old Station carpark being used as a temporary or permanent site for the traveller families.

I have a few concerns about the report regarding Rowsley.

- 1) page 8 point 2.3 there are apparently 31 residents FOR the site to be here. Really? how can that possibly be true! I would want proof of that. Out of the 1751 respondents how many were from Rowsley?
- 2) page 8 point 2.5 the supply of water was sneakily installed/upgraded by the council before the consultation. That cost should be added to the overall cost of preparing the site at Rowsley to reflect the true cost. It seems to me that figures have been manipulated
- 3) it is stated page 5 point 1.3 that Derby University analysed the Councils ONLINE survey. So what happened to the responses that were NOT online. I know there were paper copies available to be filled in by people without computers or computer skills.
- 4) page 6 point 1.8 did Derbyshire Wildlife Trust consider the impact on the nature reserve at Rowsley when assessing their own findings.

It will be truly shocking if councillors choose Rowsley when there are so many issues raised and issues that are not just "perceived"!"

**STATEMENT from Ms Alexia Wyer, Headteacher Rowsley C of E Primary School**

“1) Equalities impact statement:

I don't think that this equalities impact assessment has given enough gravitas to the safeguarding issues of site 1 (Rowsley) for the following reasons:

- 1a) There is no mention of the noise from the traveller site that can be heard from the school playground. At previous times when this site has been used there have been times when the site can be heard from the school playground. I raise this as a safeguarding concern due to the language heard (swearing) and also shouting and screaming was heard by pupils aged 4-11. This simply cannot be allowed to happen. Our children cannot be allowed to hear screaming, shouting and swearing from a domestic setting.

According to government legislation Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 of which schools, councils and other public places should adhere it states:

Indicators of abuse and neglect

**24. Abuse:** *a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of **witnessing ill treatment of others**. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others.*

This legislation along with other safeguarding legislation means that if our pupils can hear domestic abuse then they themselves are victims of abuse. Therefore if they hear shouting and screaming from the travellers domestic setting at Rowsley then they will be victims of abuse and I will be bound by my duty to report this to social care.

1b) There is no mention of the safeguarding risks to pupils walking to school via the public cycle way nor of the risks of having the site so close to a school (within 5 minutes walk). There was also human excrement left on the cycleway. This is not acceptable to happen anywhere but especially in close proximity to a school and on a school route.

I fear that our families on the way to school will experience or witness sexualised behaviours or abuse. This fear is based upon incidents that occurred when this family were last on the site.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 states that:

*560. Consideration should be given to supporting children (and adult students) who have witnessed sexual violence (omitted other forms of sexualised behaviour). Witnessing such an event is likely to be traumatic and support may be required.*

Can it be known that if site 1 is chosen as a site for the travellers and there are any incidents involving the travellers and pupils from my school I will be directing parents to the council. Council members will also be asked to come down to school and explain to parents why their children can hear screaming, swearing and shouting during break times.

This can be shared at the meeting on Monday.

If appropriate please can we share a possible impact of the site on Rowsley C of E Primary School. Several parents have already stated, directly to myself, that they will take their children out of Rowsley Primary should there be a traveller site located

close to the school. These are mostly parents who had older children at Rowsley primary the last time the travellers were here who have said they don't want their children hearing the site and who have raised other safeguarding concerns with us regarding the proximity of the site to our school. A small village school depends on having high pupil numbers. If pupils begin to leave due to the proximity of this site there is a possibility that the school will eventually close due to not having enough pupils.”

**STATEMENT from Ms Catherine Al-Mashoor, Matlock-Bath Local Resident**

“I did read somewhere but can't find it now a list of recommendations for the selling off of land by the council- could any of this have been suitable for Traveller sites? Finally I am not sure if you are aware but I understand that one of the travellers based at the Matlock car park site has passed away. We are therefore expecting a number of Travellers to arrive for the funeral, which is fair enough. What will be interesting though is how long they remain...”

**STATEMENT from Mr Ian Baker, Clerk to Nether Haddon Parish Meeting**

“I am unavailable to attend on 9 December 2024, as I will be away on holiday.

On 15th September 2024, I met with the head of the family at the Matlock Bath site.

Their main concern was her grandchildren. She told me when previously at Rowsley, it was like living in a wood and the trees created a damp atmosphere not suitable for caravan lifestyle. The caravans had mildew on the outside and the insides were damp. The family had constantly worn Wellington boots as the ground was constantly wet.

She said Matlock Bath was far from suitable because the children went to school in Ashbourne and the travelling was putting a strain on her daughter who had to drive her children to school and back. She felt travelling in the winter would be difficult especially from Rowsley.

She told me her adult son has disabilities which, last time the family struggled to manage at the Rowsley. site.

I wasn't at all surprised to hear the family had moved to Ashbourne.

I believe the wishes and feelings and needs of the adult child and grandchildren must be considered.

Feel free to read out this email, in my absence.”

**STATEMENT from Ms Annemarie Jenkins, Local Resident**

“Good Afternoon,

I am writing regarding the meeting to discuss the choosing of a temporary site for the Traveller families in the Derbyshire Dales.

As far as the published costings are concerned, I see that the estimated cost for Rowsley is approaching £50,000. I cannot believe that this figure includes the cost to members of the community and thus also to the council of the devastating effect of the loss of the one small, very busy car park.

The following would be financially adversely affected:

The businesses. Bill Watkins explained the reluctance of his clients to park even on the road near the carpark when travellers were there causing him to lose business.

The award winning Level centre which caters for some very disadvantaged members of the community, many of whom cannot walk far.

The school, which as the Head teacher pointed out at the public meeting, has parents who are committed to moving their child if the travellers move in because of the appalling noise, language and fumes from burning rubbish.

The Village Hall which relies on users being able to park for larger events.

Users of the trail who feel unable to continue into the carpark because of intimidation. Many of these people bring business into Rowsley during their excursions.

All of these have huge cost implications which the Council should be considering alongside the cost of making the site suitable.

Those are just the financial implications, the social and health and well-being issues have already been passed to the council on more than one occasion.

Children unable to use the trail to go to school.

Young people (girls especially) unhappy to use the bus stop because of some of the actions of one of the family members.

The degradation of the river and its surroundings because of a lack of respect and the dumping of waste.

Lack of parking for visitors and residents who often park there – particularly when there are events in Chatsworth, as access and egress at their property becomes extremely difficult at those times

All these negative implications and the site seems to be only suitable during spring and summer months! While the Council states that these sites are temporary the search for a permanent site has gone on for so long that 'temporary' has become a joke!

It is not just Rowsley residents who feel this site is unsuitable; the families themselves have said that the site is not suitable. I urge the councillors to take on board the concerns of both the Traveller families and the residents of Rowsley when making their decision.

The public meeting in Rowsley was told, by one of the attending officials, that there had been no reports of any trouble at either the car park in Matlock Bath or in

Matlock which is very different to what has happened on previous occasions when the Travellers have been in residence in Rowsley.

It seems that the Traveller family are happy in the Matlock Station car park and the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group have recommended that this become a permanent site. This is a large car park with ample room for both Travellers and members of the public needing to park as can be seen by the fact that they have been there for some considerable time without problems. This must surely be the simplest and most cost effective solution, saving the council and therefore the council tax payer a lot of money.

I also understand that the family from Matlock Bath have found another site which they have cleared themselves ready for occupancy.

Regards,

Annemarie Fell”

### **STATEMENT from Mr Richard Hall, Local Resident**

“Dear Committee

I was surprised on reviewing the papers for the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2025 Committee in the lack of planning policy consideration or Planning Officer advice around the different temporary traveller development proposals.

The process is recommending that if a site or sites are taken forward, they should be subject to technical work and a pre app process. Derbyshire Dales Councillors have access to Planning Officers to provide initial advice as part of this round of decision making. Such advice, if supportive, does not mean permission can be automatically granted without appropriate work and submissions, but it would clearly rule out several of these sites, especially Rowsley, due to conflicts with adopted local plan policy. This should be reflected in the reports and agenda documentation to support Councillors in decision making. Indeed, in terms of the permanent site, Rowsley has been currently excluded due to “constraints”. These constraints still apply to a temporary permission as they would to a permanent proposal. Temporary permission in planning has a specific usage/purpose that in case of Rowsley would not be the correct approach.

Surely this information should be presented to the planning team to consider before this committee makes a decision to take which site forward. A scheme and the associated costs need to be deliverable in principle, or this process will go around in circles and waste time, money and create increased stress and mental health issues to those people and organisations potentially impacted.

I live locally in Rowsley Parish, one of children attends the fantastic Level Arts Centre. In addition, we regularly use several of the local businesses that are a credit to the area.

The suggested costs associated with Rowsley also seem far too low and feel lacking in additional costs to the overall process.

The summary (by the University of Derby) is quantitative report, which makes no recommendations, just states the consultation response in numbers. I assume this is because the University of Derby does not have qualified Town Planners or built environment specialists who are credible able to evaluate impact.

As regards the plan from the report and also the layout they have provided. It was made very clear that when the temp permission was in place, the travellers went outside the fence with vehicles and equipment blocked car parking and the cycle way access. They blocked more of the car park. The plan within the site area only shows 4 vehicle spaces. As you can see at the Matlock site vehicles are continually outside the fencing area, with far more than 1 vehicle per caravan, controls have been suggested but this will not be followed.

A scheme at Rowsley will be against local plan policies that are aimed at protecting, among other things, businesses, visitors, they cycleway, the Level Centre and local amenity. If a business or person made a planning application for such development with its defined impact it would not get planning permission.

The plan is not a topographical survey, so the plan does not take account of, for example, the trees crown spread, root systems and slopes accurately. The proposed development would remove at least 80% of the parking capacity for Rowsley, the local businesses, Level, the village hall and the cycle track, that is just development impact illiteracy and time wasting.

I have used my work e-mail, but the comments are mine and not of my business.

Kind regards

Richard”

### **STATEMENT from Cllr Alasdair Sutton, County Councillor for Bakewell Division**

“I would like to express my opposition to a temporary traveller’s site at the station car park Rowsley.

1. Why is it being considered as a temporary site when it has already been removed from a list of potential permanent sites ? Surely a site deemed unsuitable should in all cases remain as unsuitable .
2. Effects on local resident’s and local businesses .
3. Effects on visitors and tourists to the area . The car park is busy and well used throughout the week .
4. The car park features as a key part of Derbyshire County Council’s White Peak Loop .

There has also been rumours that a District Councillor has stated that Rowsley has already been chosen prior to Monday's meeting."

### **STATEMENT from Matlock Bath Parish Council**

We are mindful of the disruption the situation of having travellers on Station Car Park Matlock Bath has caused to residents, businesses and visitors. You will have read and heard our community speak passionately about how it has affected them and the village but what follows is a snapshot of facts and figures of how it has affected income into the village.

As a result of the coach and car parking area of Matlock Bath Station car park being used as a temporary tolerated traveller site for over 2 years, the Parish Council has made the following calculations:

Based on DDDCs own figures from 2019 when 809 coaches paid to use the coach park, the village has lost more than 1618 coaches bringing visitors to the village! Nowhere to park.

These coaches - based on coach company advice could have brought into the village around 61,600 visitors to the village.

Then there are the 22 car parking spaces. These would only have been used at busy times of the year - school holidays, illuminations, summer weekends etc. but we estimate if each car carried 3 passengers then they would have brought another 51,720 visitors to the village. This loss of 113,320 visitors (5.15% of the estimated 1.1 million who visit the village each year) has resulted in a massive loss of income to the businesses in the village as these visitors have not been able to spend their £5, £10, £30 etc. I will let you do the sums but we are talking in millions of pounds.

Based on these figures, we estimate the loss of coach and car park income to DDDC to be £52,605 and the loss of income from the toilets assuming that just a third of those visitors used the Memorial Gardens toilets another £15,109 making a grand total of £67,714

Were any of these effects of making the area a TTTS considered when the action was taken by the Council. Not to our knowledge.

It is difficult to calculate the long-term effect on the village but the Parish Council has received many negative messages, many saying they will never return to the village. The village has been taken off many of the coach company's itineraries.

Derbyshire Dales District Council needs to take account of the results of its actions and make every effort to remedy the problems their actions have caused.

### **STATEMENT from Local Resident**

I think an important point that DDDC have conveniently left out of their most recent report on the proposed Rowsley traveller site is the fact that the site is far, far smaller

than it says it is on their matrix. The Councillors casually informed the public at the meeting in Rowsley Village Hall that the travellers will 'only take up about half' of the site. This is simply rubbish. Even if the whole car park was given to the travellers it'd be too small according to the Council's own 'minimum requirements', so the idea that it can be shared with the public is unrealistic and, quite frankly, a stupid suggestion. The Council are moving the goal posts and wilfully bending their own 'rules' to suit themselves. If the travellers are given the car park, no one else will be able to use it because there isn't enough space (and, whether we like it or not, the majority of people won't want to park on a traveller site anyway).

Another point: if the Council go and look at the site now that the leaves have fallen from the trees surrounding it, they'll see that it is no longer screened. In fact, the travellers caravans will be an elevated, prominent eyesore. It'll be the most noticeable thing in the village.

Also, when considering the proximity of the site to residential properties, the adjacent hotels (The Peacock and The Grouse & Claret), and the massive Caravan Club site should also be considered. They all accommodate people overnight. I think this fact has been ignored in the Council's matrix/surveys. The hotels overlook the proposed site and are situated just a few metres away. The travellers site would have a negative impact on people staying in all of these places, and therefore a negative impact on local business.

### **STATEMENT from Mr Kerry Andrews, Level Centre**

In advance of the extraordinary meeting being held on Monday 9 December 2024, I would like this representation from LEVEL Centre shared in advance.

The paperwork issued for the Community and Environment Committee meeting on 21 November 2024 stated the following:

The Gypsy and Traveller Working Group have recommended that at the present time, Council does not take any further action in relation to the Woodyard at Homesford due to cost considerations, Rowsley Car Park due to site constraints, and Watery Lane, Ashbourne due to landowner resistance. However, it is proposed to undertake further assessment of the 3 sites in private ownership and consider any further opportunities that may emerge from Phase 1 and 2 as owners consider their options. Resources will need to be secured to cover the costs of further investigations.

At LEVEL Centre we are dismayed to see that the Old Station Close car park remains under consideration for a temporary site. How can constraints identified for a permanent site not account for a temporary site.

Previously it has been asked what the council deem to be temporary. It was defined as not permanent. This is not measurable. Please define temporary in days, weeks and months.

The public report pack has omitted vital information shared in the consultation about the Old Station Close car park being our Fire evacuation and emergency meeting point. It also fails to acknowledge that there is any other safe public parking this side of the A8 for our vulnerable users.



LEVEL has been misrepresented in the Equalities Impact Assessment and public reports pack. We are not just a visual arts centre. We are a contemporary award winning multi art form venue and charity working across visual, digital and performing arts. We work with learning disabled people, disabled creatives, autistic and neurodivergent young people and the wider community.

I started work for Level in 2021, I am aware that the car park had previously been designated as dual use and from what I have learnt this did not work. 13 years on from the last time the travellers were here, LEVEL is a much loved and well used resource. Our participant and visitor numbers are growing year on year. A dual use car park will not provide sufficient parking for Level or the other nearby businesses.

At the G&TWG meeting in July I raised the question about an Equality Impact Assessment. I am disappointed with the findings and lack of consultation and question if there is a bias as this has been undertaken internally by DDDC and not independently. In item i) it outlines LEVEL Centre as information required but nobody has been in touch. Why is this?

At planning permission Highways and parking outlined that Old station close car park could be used as an overflow car park by Level. Permission to build Level would not have been granted based on LEVEL having just 3 car parking spaces, two of which are disabled bays and a building capacity of over 50 people at any one time.

Our charity, funders and our community are really concerned by the potential loss or reduced parking at Level.

In the July meeting we attended and spoke out, Councillor Nickhead spoke of the fact that public trust in the council over this debate has been eroded after years of mis-management. The current working group have done absolutely nothing to improve this, and have in fact deepened mis-trust in the council's working practices after very valid emails and questions have gone unanswered, and decisions have seemingly been made without consultation of key stakeholders that it will affect.

An artist and parent we worked with told you earlier this year that they have a disabled child who has a propensity to go into 'fight or flight' and abscond - They have to be mindful that they require ease of access when undertaking outings. Parking further away from a venue puts their child at acute risk, should they be triggered or have an adverse reaction. They need - as I imagine other participants and audiences accessing LEVEL - safe and close ease of access.

A freelance facilitator and artist leading sessions at LEVEL Centre relies on this site to park in when delivering sessions and forms part of their income. One of our facilitators has permanent paralysis in their left leg and mobility related disability, so not having access to this car park or difficulty finding a space at reduced capacity is of major concern.

One of our participants who has Down's Syndrome attends Level weekly, and we have played a big part in their recuperation from a severe mental health condition. This has impaired their walking ability, so a reduction or no parking represents a big concern for them and their parents.

These are a very small sample of concerns from our community.

As mentioned at the time, the online public consultation was not accessible for many users of our centre. This is why we wanted an equality impact assessment to be undertaken *independently* (to avoid any potential bias), understanding the type of visitors and participants that use Old Station Close car park regularly. We are very disappointed in the generic mitigations outlined, which read similarly throughout for each point. There is a lack of understanding of users of the car park in terms of protected characteristics, which we will go into more detail about at the meeting.

The diagram in the public pack for Rowsley indicates potential for dual use of the space. The car park area includes land that is currently covered by trees and other foliage, meaning that the actual area is much smaller than the plan suggests. Are you intending to cut down natural habitats if this site was to proceed? The Council recently put out a public call out for land to be used for biodiversity development on 28th November. Are the council seriously considering cutting back land for use for the development of a dual use travellers site while also asking landowners to submit more land? The car park is in heavy use daily, as well as Old Station Close itself - has a survey been undertaken to assess the amount of parking that is required on a daily basis to confirm whether the dual use remaining car park space is viable? Our findings would suggest it is not, considering that on a very regular basis cars are parked well into the area that the Council is suggesting for the traveller site. This is very pertinent, when there is no other public parking available in Rowsley, or this side of the busy A6. Many of our participants are unable to travel by public transport, and those that do have seen a reduction in services over recent years - a nationwide problem, particularly in rural areas. As part of our environmental responsibility, LEVEL asks visitors how they have travelled to the centre, and overwhelmingly, the majority travel by car using Old Station Close car park to park in.

In the public report pack Table 1.10 sets out the costs for upgrade of the site to the standards required. We are concerned that Rowsley being listed as the cheapest site to upgrade may skew opinion. We would like to point out that this is purely down to the much smaller size of Old Station Close car park in comparison to the other five sites. We do not feel that this represents a proper benchmark or reflection of site suitability. We would like to see a breakdown of all the costs for all the sites rather than one global figure. We know, although the council dispute this, that a new tap and water pipe was installed on Old Station Close car park earlier this year. Are these figures included? This is doubtful, as the Council seem to have no record of this work happening. This has already been a cost incurred for the Rowsley site.

As you can see, there are many issues and concerns that are unresolved surrounding the Old Station Close car park. This is just a brief outline. LEVEL is supported by some major national initiatives and funders, such as BBC Children in Need (with a recent visit from Pudsey Bear and recognition from Vernon Kay on his social media feeds), the National Lottery, Arts Council England and many more. This should be enough to demonstrate the importance of the work being done at LEVEL with learning disabled and disabled participants. We are supporting people in areas that the council cannot fund. With more Day Centres closing, more home schooled children, isolation and loneliness on the increase, our centre is going from strength to strength and the car park is a vital part of this. Not being able to fulfill our deliverables could mean a cut in our own funding which would have a detrimental effect on the people and communities we serve. It could even lead to closure.

## **STATEMENT from Stuart Allen, Chair of LEVEL Centre**

My name is Stuart Allen and I am the Chair of the Board of LEVEL Centre, an award winning charity. In advance of the extraordinary meeting being held on Monday 9 December 2024, I would like this representation from myself as Chair of the Board shared in advance to everyone listed above.

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the council's proposal to still list Old Station Close car park as a possible temporary traveller site, despite having ruled it out as a possible permanent site due to various constraints. It is a parking facility that is vital for LEVEL to deliver essential services to some of the most vulnerable people in our community and region. I believe there are significant issues with the robustness of the equality impact assessment conducted.

I question whether the equality impact assessment adequately considers the range of individuals and groups who rely on the car park and the services facilitated by LEVEL. The centre plays a crucial role in supporting learning disabled and disabled people, home schooled young people, young people who are autistic and or neurodivergent, disabled creatives and the wider community. Many of our participants and visitors rely on the proximity and accessibility of the car park to access our programmes, all of which meet wider council agendas in supporting loneliness, isolation and wellbeing. The possible changes to Old Station Close would disproportionately affect these individuals, potentially leaving them without their only weekly social interaction if their parents, carers or support workers are unable to park safely.

It is not evident that meaningful engagement with those directly impacted has been carried out. The community groups and individuals most affected by this proposal should have been central to the equality impact assessment process for site 1, yet it appears that their views and concerns have been insufficiently sought or reflected in the proposal. The equality impact assessment has used paperwork that did not include a specific question on equality impact, or

have a specific agenda item on this at the public meetings. How can an equality impact assessment be created when a tailored question has not been asked?

At the time of the consultation we explained that the majority of our users would struggle to complete the online form yet the equality impact assessment has used this resource to inform the assessment. The entire process has not been conducted in an accessible way, which could be deemed ableist, including scheduling an extraordinary council meeting with the agenda and paperwork issued only one week in advance. If you are a parent or carer of someone with additional needs, finding time in a week to write a representation, respond and/or attend in person as well as find caring support is simply impossible.

We request that you confirm the steps taken to involve LEVEL and these stakeholders, and share how their feedback was incorporated into your decision making - particularly with regards to the equality impact assessment. I am fully aware that LEVEL, whilst listed in point i) other stakeholders likely to be impacted as "information required", have not been contacted or liaised with on the equality impact assessment.

I am troubled by the inconsistency in the council's stance regarding the car park's potential change of use. It has been stated that the site is not suitable for permanent change of use, yet it is still being considered for a temporary change. This raises significant questions about the rationale and consistency of the council's approach. If the site is unsuitable for permanent use for a traveller site, what has changed to make it acceptable for temporary use? A detailed explanation of this decision-making process would be appreciated.

The potential loss of this car park or even a reduction in use will have far-reaching consequences for LEVEL and the vulnerable members of our community. I urge the council to revisit the equality impact assessment with greater rigor, ensuring it genuinely reflects the impact on those most at risk. The assessment presented has been based on the findings of the consultation, public meetings, traveller inbox and other submissions. How is this equitable when no specific equality questions were asked enabling the public and businesses to respond. I request that a more transparent and inclusive consultation process be conducted before any final decision is made.

Previous dual use did not work and there is no confidence that such a proposal could work again. LEVEL has 3 bays of which 2 are disabled parking bays. For a building that was built and the Highways team acknowledging Old Station Close as an overspill car park as we simply do not have enough spaces, I ask what has changed as our venue can host 50 people at any one time.

The public pack report completely omits a huge health and safety concern. This is a vital fire and emergency evacuation meeting point.

Lastly, presenting the cost table and showing Old Station Close as the cheapest site skews opinion. It is the smallest site and this should not impact decisions on suitability.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these points. I look forward to your response and hope the council acknowledges the significant impact and implications for our community.

Stuart Allen

Chair of the Board

LEVEL Centre

## **STATEMENT from Tim Simcox, T C Harrison Group**

I am writing on behalf of T. C. Harrison Group Limited, to submit representations for your consideration in relation to the above referenced matter, to be considered at the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting to be held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024. These representations will also be presented verbally by a representative of T. C. Harrison Group during that meeting, as follows:

The recommendations before the Council, as made by Robert Coggins, Director of Housing, relate to the outcome of a public consultation exercise to determine which, if any, of six potential sites previously identified are to be progressed as temporary site(s) for use by Travellers.

T. C. Harrison Group have engaged in previous consultation exercises relating to temporary and permanent traveller sites. We have been consistent in our view that DDDC should focus its resource on the identification and delivery of a permanent traveller site, and that prevarication over temporary sites will only be to the further detriment of the families involved.

As noted within Mr. Coggins' report, T. C. Harrison Group were respondents to the latest consultation, and commissioned a technical response produced by a planning consultancy. The response demonstrated that, for several reasons, the site at Old Station Close, is completely unsuitable for habitation and should be disregarded from consideration.

We are not alone this evening in requesting that Members note the responses received to the public consultation exercise in accordance with point 1), and in doing so, **Reject** all six potential sites previously identified as suitable for use by Travellers. We also implore members to **Reject** the recommendation in point 2), and instead focus valuable time and resource on identifying a permanent solution.

Turning specifically to the Old Station Close site, our concerns can be summarised as follows:

- **Technical Detail/ Due Diligence** – DDDC do not appear to have undertaken the appropriate level of due diligence on any of the proposed sites and technical information provided to date is of poor quality. There are discrepancies in site areas, red line boundaries drawn incorrectly, and arbitrary caravan sizes used to inform critical dimensions on proposed site plans. There is a complete lack of transparency in relation to the site design, and 'site preparation' costs, and this information should be placed in the public domain.
- **Planning Consent** – It has been suggested by Dr Siobhan Spencer of Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group that any temporary site should be subject to an 18-Month planning consent, and a sites licence. It is noted within Mr Coggins' report that "*Provision of any selected sites would also be without prejudice to receiving any necessary planning permissions*". The temporary site proposals appear contrary to DDDC's own planning policies, and it is suggested that both time and resource are focused on a permanent solution that is policy compliant.
- **Environmental Impact** – It has been previously noted that there is a potential impact on the adjacent river. There are concerns on the adequacy of drainage attenuation in this area. No formal survey work has been commissioned to our knowledge, but it is clear that any works within the site would result in ecological disturbance, contrary to ecological policy objectives. Dr Siobhan Spencer has previously suggested that a number of trees would need to be felled in order to make the site suitable for habitation, resulting in an unacceptable loss of biodiversity.

**Drainage** – Replacement of the existing surfacing with concrete caravan pitches would result in additional non-permeable hardstanding. It is not clear whether additional surface water drainage, or attenuation has been included within the 'Site Preparation' costings.

- **Highways Impact** – It is not clear from the proposed site layouts whether suitable turning facilities could be provided to facilitate safe access to the site for the family, whilst retaining use of the wider car park for vital public parking provision. The loss of car parking in this area will undoubtedly result in increased instances of on-street parking along Old Station Close, to the detriment of highway safety and disruption to the local businesses in respect of large vehicle deliveries and visitor parking. It is also unclear whether any thought has been given to access to the site by emergency vehicles (such as ambulances or fire appliances) when the car park is full.
- **White Peak Loop** - Derbyshire County Council have formally objected to the proposed site at Old Station close, as the Car Park forms a critical element in the extension of the White Peak Loop, which has been allocated funding for the 2025/2026 financial year.

Derbyshire County Council have suggested that, as a minimum, a five-metre corridor should be maintained to allow the construction of the White Peak Loop during the 2025/2026 financial year. Locating a temporary site within the would result in either:

- o Prevention of the continued delivery of the White Peak Loop (and therefore the safe and easily accessible route for waling, wheeling, cycling and horse riding), to the detriment of local tourism, and economy, or
- o Result in noisy construction work being undertaken directly next to a family who have, quite frankly, faced enough disruption and upheaval in recent years.

**Flood Risk** – Within the consultation response compiled by TCH, it was noted that part of the site falls within Flood Risk Zone 2. This has not been mentioned within Mr. Coggins' summary report. DDDC will need to include flood mitigation measures, and carefully consider how vulnerable family members will be kept safe from harm in the event of flash flooding. We have all witnessed the speed and unpredictability of floodwater, and this was sadly evidenced by the loss of former Derbyshire High Sherriff Annie Hall in the floods of 2019. It is not clear whether any flood mitigation works have been included within the 'Site Preparation' costs.

**Fire Risk** - DDDC claim to have given due regard to advice on fire safety, provided by Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service. The proposed plans detail caravan pitches based on arbitrary dimensions, and it is not clear whether the separation distances could still be achieved with the actual caravans that will be populating the site. It is also unclear whether any detailed tracked vehicle analysis has been undertaken to determine whether caravans can manoeuvre safely, and whether emergency vehicles, such as fire appliances, can access the site.

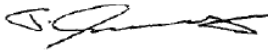
**Accessibility** - Whilst the site is close to existing businesses, it is remote from high frequency public transport routes with very limited shops and services in Rowsley. The site is therefore considered to be fundamentally unsustainable and unlikely to meet the specific needs of the families concerned, as listed in the Committee report.

- **Traveller Consultation** – It has been stated anecdotally that the family in question do not wish to reside in Rowsley. Do DDDC really want to use valuable time and resource in placing a vulnerable family in a location that is dark, dingy, with high flood risk and floods,

In summary, we implore Members of the Council to listen to those who have responded, re visit the decision of November 2022, and permanently dismiss the six previously identified sites from consideration. The progression of temporary solutions will only further delay and divert valuable resources away from finding a permanent solution.

T. C. Harrison Group fully support the move towards a permanent site and agree that DDDC should continue working with ARK Consultancy to identify and deliver a permanent site.

Yours Faithfully,



Tim Simcox  
Group Finance Director



Derbyshire Dales District Council  
Traveller Sites Consultation 2024

Old Station Close, Rowsley

On Behalf of T.C. Harrison Group Limited

September 2024

nineteen47  
CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS  
& URBAN DESIGNERS

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**Client:**

T.C. Harrison Group Limited

**Project:**

Old Station Close, Rowsley

**Report Title / Version:**

Derbyshire Dales District Council – Traveller Sites Consultation 2024 Representation

**nineteen47 Reference:**

n2497

**Date:**

September 2024

Written by:



*Matthew Mortonson  
Associate Director*

Approved by:



*Clare Plant  
Director*

## Section 1 | Introduction

- 1.1 This representation has been prepared by nineteen47 on behalf of T.C. Harrison Group Limited ["our Client"] in response to the Derbyshire Dales District Council Traveller Sites Consultation 2024 ["the Consultation"].
- 1.2 The representation relates to the parcel of land at Old Station Close, Rowsley ["the Site"], which is currently a Derbyshire Dales District Council Car Park located to the south of the A6 and north of the River Derwent as shown in Figure 1 below. We understand that the extent of the Site is under the ownership Derbyshire Dales District Council.

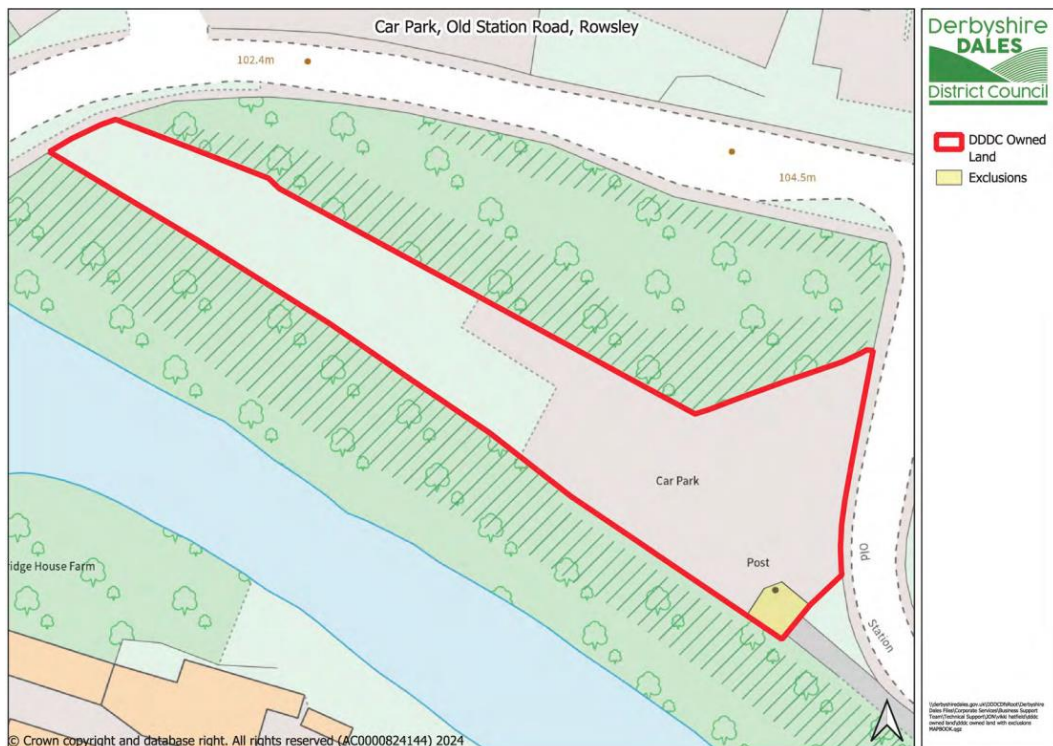


Figure 1: Site Location (source: DDDC)

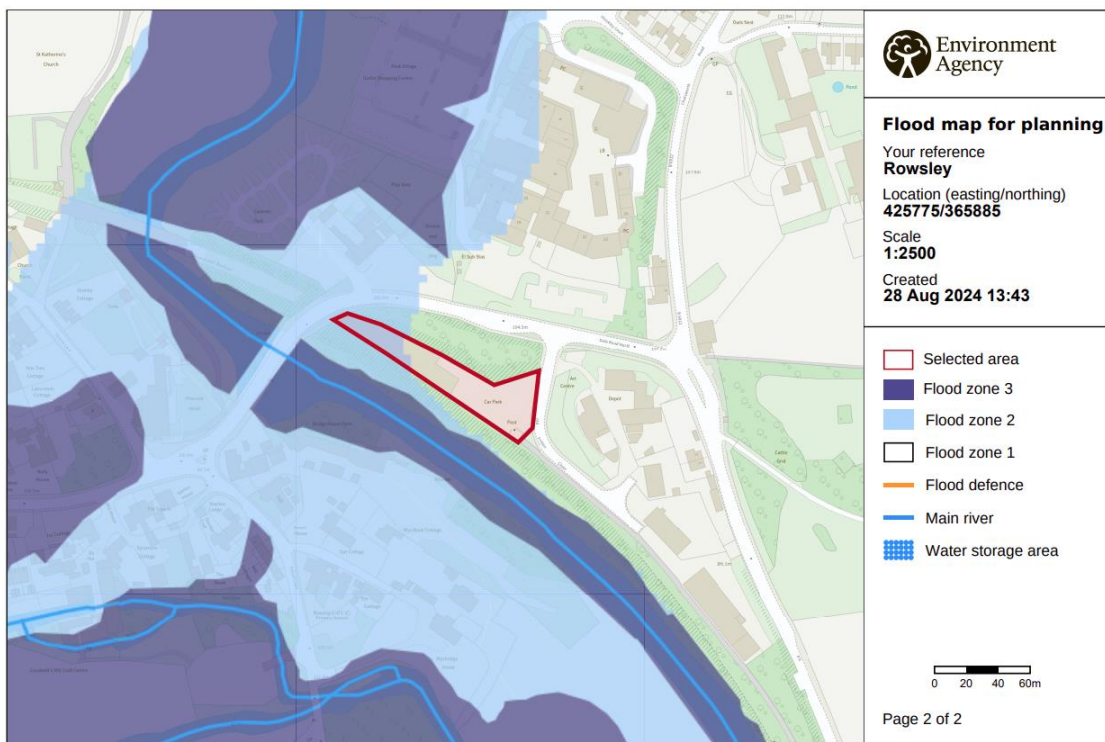
- 1.3 As the Housing Authority, Derbyshire Dales District Council ["the Council"] has a duty in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 ["the Act"], to provide accommodation to those specific Gypsy and Traveller families with an accepted local connection with the Derbyshire Dales.
- 1.4 The Council has failed to identify any appropriate sites immediately available in the Derbyshire Dales for these families and, as such, the Council are not in a position to discharge their statutory duties under the Act by directing Gypsy and Traveller families to a designated site (temporary or otherwise).
- 1.5 The Council has therefore established a Traveller Working Group ["the Working Group"] comprising elected members from all political parties to provide political leadership in identifying potential solutions on this matter.
- 1.6 The Travellers Sites Consultation 2024 sets out the proposals of that working group to identify temporary sites to discharge the statutory duty, whilst a permanent solution is explored further.

- 1.7 Members of the Working Group have identified the following sites which could be appropriate for temporary use:
1. Car Park, Old Station Close, Rowsley (the Site)
  2. Land to south-east of Hopton Works, Middleton Road, Wirksworth
  3. Arc Leisure Car Parks, Morledge, Matlock
  4. Station Yard Car Park, Dale Road, Matlock Bath
  5. Car Park, Derwent Way, Matlock
  6. Land to north-west of Cemetery, New Road, Middleton
- 1.8 For the reasons set out within this representation, our Client **strongly objects** to the establishment of these temporary sites, and in particular the site at Old Station Close, Rowsley for traveller accommodation.
- 1.9 T.C. Harrison Group have engaged in consultation over a period in excess of 12 years regarding the search for both temporary and permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites in the District, during which time no suitable permanent solution has been secured. This representation sets out further, the reasons why the proposed approach to identifying temporary sites is inappropriate, why the Old Station Close site is not suitable for temporary use and why a permanent solution should be secured as a priority with existing sites at Matlock and Matlock Bath retained in the interim period as necessary.
- 1.10 A Public Meeting hosted by Derbyshire Dales District Council was held on Friday 13th September at Rowsley Village Hall to discuss the proposals at Old Station Close, Rowsley [“the Public Meeting”]. Our Client was in attendance at the meeting.
- 1.11 During discussions held at the Public Meeting, it was advised by Council representatives that only the family located at Matlock Bath require relocation, as the Matlock Station site will be retained for temporary use. Our Client requests clarification on the brief of the Consultation as the needs of the traveller family which are to be relocated will impact on which site is potentially the most suitable. For example, our Client understands that the Matlock Bath family have a strong preference to be located in the south of the District.
- 1.12 Finally, in that meeting it was also mentioned that the Matlock Bath site is required by the Council for the Illuminations, which take place annually. We however believe that the length of time it will take for this Consultation process to take place and a deliver at site, that the need for this years illuminations would have passed.

## Section 2 | Response to Consultation

- 2.1 This section of the representation considers and responds specifically to the questions posed by the Council in their online survey on the Traveller Sites Consultation 2024.
- 2.2 Where relevant, the questions are considered in the context of the planning policies in the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan (2017) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023), to ensure soundness of approach.
1. What is your postcode?
- 2.3 T.C. Harrison Group Limited are the owners of a commercial unit situated at Old Station Close in Rowsley. The Postcode is DE4 2EL.
2. Do you agree that we need to find sites for Travellers in the Derbyshire Dales.
- 2.4 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 sets out a clear duty to provide accommodation to those specific Gypsy and Traveller families with an accepted local connection with the Derbyshire Dales. Within this context, the need to find sites for travellers in Derbyshire Dales is accepted. However, the Council has failed to identify a permanent location for pitches for a period in excess of 12 years, during which time unauthorised and unauthorised encampments have arisen.
- 2.5 It is clear that a permanent solution must be identified as a matter of urgency for these families and the pursuance of further temporary solutions stands to divert important time and resource from identifying such a solution. On this basis, we strongly object to the temporary solution being progressed and implore the Council to move towards a permanent solution to this long-term requirement.
3. Which site do you wish to comment on?
- 2.6 Car Park, Old Station Close, Rowsley
4. How we could make this site work in practice for residents, businesses, local communities and the families themselves?
- 2.7 As set out in previous responses to consultation on this issue, there are a number of reasons why the Site at Old Station Close is not suitable for Gypsy and Travellers accommodation. These reasons are set out in response to Question 5 below.
- 2.8 We do not consider given the circumstances of the site, that these reasons could be suitably addressed to enable the families to occupy this site.
5. How is this site unsuitable in practice for residents, businesses, local communities and the families themselves?
- 2.9 The Council have assessed the six temporary sites as set out in the report at Appendix 1 of the Community & Environment Committee Meeting report from 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024.
- 2.10 In respect of the Old Station Close site, there are two errors with the Site Assessment Document.

- 2.11 The first error relates to the size of the Site. The Site Assessment Document identifies that the area of the Site is 0.37ha. However, our own measurements of the Site, as shown in Figure 1, is that is actually circa 0.24ha. This is 0.13ha smaller than the Council’s measurement and below the minimum pitch size of 0.25ha identified in the Site Assessment Document. Furthermore, this site area includes areas of steep banking and heavy tree cover, which should not be included in the calculation on the ground that they are not suitable for pitch provision.
- 2.12 The Site would not therefore meet the minimum size criteria set out in the Site Assessment Document and should be discounted on this ground. This would be consistent with the Council’s appraisals of other sites in the District which did not make the shortlist for reasons relating to their size. For example, the site at Parsons Croft Car Park, Hartington, which measured 0.23ha.
- 2.13 The second error in the Site Assessment Document relates to the assertion that the Site is not within an area of high flood risk. However, as shown in Figure 2 below sourced from the Environment Agency, this is incorrect as the western section of the Site is located in Flood Zone 2. It is understood from the Public Meeting that the rear part of the Site is where the caravan pitches are proposed to be located, placing them directly in Flood Zone 2.



**Figure 2:** Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning

- 2.14 Provision of a traveller site within an area of high risk of flooding would be contrary to criteria F. of Policy HC6 of the Local Plan, which does not support traveller and gypsy accommodation in such areas. As a result, any planning application submitted for the Site as outlined in Figure 1 would be contrary to the Development Plan.
- 2.15 Furthermore, in accordance with sequential test requirements set out at paragraph 168 of the NPPF, development should be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding. Therefore, other sites identified for traveller and gypsy accommodation and located entirely in Flood Zone 1 should be pursued in advance of the site at Old Station Close. Any other approach would be contrary to Paragraph 95 of the NPPF, which states that *“Where an application fails to satisfy*

*the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations in paragraph 94, it should be refused.”*

- 2.16 If the site area were to be reduced to avoid this area of increased flood risk, the total site area would be further reduced to circa 0.18ha, falling further below the Council’s minimum pitch size of 0.25ha.
- 2.17 It is clear in respect of matters of site size and flood risk, that the site is fundamentally unsuitable for temporary pitch provision. We therefore consider that the Site should be immediately discounted from further assessment and consideration.
- 2.18 Notwithstanding this, there are a number of additional reasons why the Site is unsuitable for traveller pitches. These are summarised as follow:

- **Site Sustainability** - the Site Assessment Document identifies that the Site is located greater than a 20min walk to shops, medical facilities and employment opportunities. The Site is not supported by high frequency public transport links and there are only limited local shops and amenities in the local area. The NHS website confirms that the nearest GP Surgery is Credas Medical, Darley Dale, which is 2.2 miles from the Site. The Site is therefore considered to be in a fundamentally unsustainable location in relation to the specific needs of Gypsy and Traveller families and is considered contrary to criteria f) of Policy HC6 of the Local Plan and the sustainable development objectives of the NPPF.
- **Highways impact** – In respect of providing safe access to and from the site for the temporary pitch provision, the Site is of a limited size, and it is unclear whether suitable turning facilities could be provided to facilitate safe access to the Site.

Furthermore, the provision of a pitch would result in the partial or complete loss of the existing public car parking provision, which is currently well used by visitors to local businesses and tourists. There is no alternative public parking provision within the locality and loss of this car parking area would likely result in increased instances of on-street parking along Old Station Close to the detriment of highway safety and access to the local businesses for large vehicle deliveries and visitors parking.

The demand for the existing car parking provision is anticipated to further increase following the upgrading of the White Peak Loop, along the current Derwent Valley Way, which will be accessed directly from this car park, which will contribute to the important tourism economy in the locality.

- **Site Layout** – It is unclear from the Consultation documents whether the Site is capable of physically accommodating the temporary use, particularly when omitting the part of the Site which is located in the Flood Zone. It is unclear whether the Site can achieve the necessary standards for this form of accommodation. For example, can sufficient separation distances between each caravan be achieved in relation to fire safety; is there sufficient room for both car parking and the caravans; does the Site provide sufficient ability to manoeuvre the caravans.
- **Environmental impact** – In response to an earlier application for temporary use of the Site for temporary gypsy and traveller facility, T.C. Harrison commissioned their own specialist ground stability reports to confirm the feasibility of works to provide pitches. The resulting report confirmed concerns relating to potential impact on the adjacent river and the adequacy of drainage attenuation within this area. At that time, the cost

of undertaking required works to provide a safe facility were estimated to be in the region of £70,000, excluding toilet facilities, which is excessive expenditure for a temporary site and would be better directed to identifying a permanent solution. It is also worth noting that these costs were obtained in 2014, therefore it is highly likely that significant tender price inflation has occurred since then, meaning the actual cost will be higher.

- **Biodiversity Impact** – There is significant potential for ecological impact as a result of any work. Part of the site has established tree and foliage cover and there is dense undergrowth towards the River Derwent. No formal survey work has as yet been commissioned to our knowledge, however it is likely that tree removal would be required to accommodate the use which, amongst other things, will have significant Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) implications.
- The NPPF (paragraph 185) is clear that ecological networks should be conserved, restored and enhanced with measure net gain for biodiversity secured. Biodiversity Net Gain is now mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Avoidance of ecological impact will further restrict the available site area for the provision of pitches and the requirement for mandatory BNG will add additional potentially prohibitive costs to the provision of pitches
- **Residential Amenity** – The Council’s Assessment confirms that there are two residential properties within 100m of the Site. It is unclear where this measure is taken from ie. from the Site boundaries, or centrally within the Site, however we understand that there are more dwellings than two within 100m and that this is in the region of five dwellings. Whilst the woodland and/or the A6 are positioned between the Site and these dwellings, there still remains the potential for noise and disturbance on nearby residents should this Site progress as a temporary Travellers site. This would be particularly relevant during nighttime hours when the road and traffic noise would be at its quietest.
- **Accessibility** – It is widely understood that members of the traveller family have severely limited mobility. It is unclear whether the existing surfacing or any of the Site’s other features would be suitable for use by disabled persons.

2.19 For the reasons set out above, a temporary site on the Old Station Lane, Rowsley, is not appropriate, acceptable or deliverable and the site should be discounted from consideration.

6. In the case of sites, we are already using, how we could make any of these sites work better in practice for residents, businesses, local communities and the families themselves?

2.20 The Council is current utilising temporary pitch provision at Matlock and Matlock Bath Station car parks. Whilst there are acknowledged local concerns with these locations, as set out in our previous representations to the Community and Environment Committee (dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 2024), subject to the adoption of recommendations made to the Committee in relation to terms of reference, a code of conduct and practical arrangements, the short-term requirement for the provision of pitches is considered to be discharged.

7. Do you have any suggestions as to how sites could be managed if they were developed for use by Travellers on a temporary basis?

- 2.21 Paragraph 123 of the NPPF states that “Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, **while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.**” (bold for emphasis)
- 2.22 As noted by Paragraph 123, it is important that planning decisions safeguard and improve the environment, whilst ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Effective management of the sites is key to achieving this, and we would expect the sites to be managed by the Council to ensure that safe and healthy living conditions are provided.
- 2.23 Following discussions with Dr Siobhan Spencer of the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group, our Client understands that the sites will be subject to the requirement of a Site Licence to ensure the correct regulation is in place for the sites.
- 2.24 We do not consider that such conditions would be achievable at the Old Station Close site, for the reasons set out above.

8. Can you suggest any reason why such a site could not be occupied for 12 months of the year? What are the seasonal implications associated with the use of the site?

- 2.25 Notwithstanding the representations above regarding the unsuitability of the Old Station Close site for temporary (or permanent pitch provision), the Site is not of a sufficient size to meet minimum pitch requirements) and has a number of physical constraints which make it unsuitable for occupation at any time of the year.

9. Do you have any further comments?

- 2.26 It is important to note in relation to previous consideration of the Old Station Close site, that the Council has concluded in a meeting on 24th November 2022, that a number of sites including the Old Station Close site, should not be considered as suitable for temporary pitches. We are not aware of any evidence subsequently presented to alter this conclusion.
- 2.27 Notwithstanding this, the Council’s overarching assessment of each of the six temporary sites, concludes that alternative Site at Darley Dale and at Matlock result in a higher overall score in terms of the suitability matrix, compared to the Old Station Close site. The site at Matlock Bath scores similarly though the scoring for the Old Station Close site is identified above as flawed, and the Matlock Bath site has a lower number of ‘red’ scores. Therefore, the Sites at Matlock, Matlock Bath and Darley Dale should be considered as preferable to the Site in any case.
- 2.28 Finally ,regarding the pursuance of temporary pitches as a whole, it is strongly recommended that in light of the existing temporary pitches located at Matlock and Matlock Bath, a permanent solution is instead sought as a priority.
- 2.29 Despite previous assertions by the Council, we do not consider that it is necessary to await the progression of the Local Plan process, in order to identify and designate a permanent site solution. The delivery of a satisfactory, permanent site (or sites) can be secured through the submission of a planning application (following the identification of a site), to formalise the agreed location.



- 2.30 The permitted site could then be formally recognised and designated as a long-term site for Gypsy and Traveller occupation, at such time as a future Local Plan is progressed, without preventing the delivery of the permitted site in the interim period.
- 2.31 We note the pending Ark Report on this issue and request that this report is published and distributed to interested parties in advance of the current consultation period ending. This will allow full consideration of any additional evidence available on this matter.
- 2.32 Procedurally, our Client has concerns surrounding the timings of the Consultation during the summer holidays when many local residents are not necessarily at home, and also during a period when many parish and town councils are in recess.
- 2.33 Our Client also has concerns that the Consultation lacks sufficient details about how the sites will be delivered. For example, in the case of the Site, how it will be delivered alongside the existing car park. There is a lack of detail to demonstrate what has been undertaken at the feasibility stage to ensure each of the sites can accommodate the use whilst meeting all the necessary requirements.
- 2.34 Finally, our Client has concerns that the criteria within the Council's Site Assessment document have not been applied consistently between each of the potential sites. For example, it is unclear what the reference points are and where certain measurements are taken from in the assessment. Our Client requests more transparency on the criteria and how it has been applied.

#### 10. Can you suggest any other sites that may be available and suitable for temporary use?

- 2.35 Our Client understands that the Woodyard Site at Homseford has recently become available, which benefits from a planning permission for the site. It would make sense from a financial and resource perspective to focus on a site which already has a planning permission rather than focus on a site which does not.
- 2.36 Our Client also understands that the site at Watery Lane, Ashbourne, which is owned by Derbyshire County Council, is available for lease and that this could be another option for the temporary use.

## Section 3 | Conclusions

- 3.1 This representation has been prepared by nineteen47 on behalf of T.C. Harrison Group Limited in response to Derbyshire Dales District Council Traveller Sites Consultation 2024 in relation to the Site at Old Station Close, Rowsley.
- 3.2 The representation demonstrates that the Old Station Close Site should not be considered for temporary use as traveller and gypsy accommodation. The site does not meet the minimum size requirement, nor is it sequentially preferable or suitable in flood risk terms. Notwithstanding this, there are additional fundamental concerns, which in our view cannot be overcome and together these matters warrant the immediate removal of the Site from further assessment and consideration.
- 3.3 The additional constraints to the sites delivery for temporary gypsy and traveller accommodation including:
- Unsustainable access to local services and facilities;
  - Unsuitable ground conditions;
  - Unsafe highways impact;
  - Loss of tourism;
  - Environmental impacts, including biodiversity loss; and
  - Residential amenity.
- 3.4 Overall, the representation **strongly objects** to the Council's approach to alternative temporary pitch sites being identified and recommends that the Council instead seeks to focus available time and resource on the identification of a permanent solution to this long-term requirement.
- 3.5 We reserve the right to respond to make further comments on other matters as the Council's approach to addressing this matter progresses.



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## Derbyshire Dales District Council

### Meeting of Council on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024

#### Statement on Behalf of Derbyshire County Council

Derbyshire County Council has submitted this statement to express its strong concerns to Derbyshire Dales District Council, regarding the County Council's response to the recent Derbyshire Dales Temporary Traveller Sites Consultation and how this has been reflected in the District Council's report being considered on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December.

Derbyshire County Council submitted a comprehensive response to the consultation on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024, as set out in the appendix to this statement. An acknowledgement was subsequently received from the special email address that the District Council had set up to deal with the consultation, so there is no doubt that the response was received by the District Council and officers in the District Council's Planning Policy Team were also copied into the response.

The County Council's consultation response set out detailed concerns on each of the 6 District Council owned sites that were being considered as potential temporary sites to accommodate two Traveller families. The response also provided an overall conclusion as set out below:

*Derbyshire County Council **strongly objects** to the use of any of the proposed sites as temporary sites for Travellers, as they are each considered to be unsuitable for such a proposed use.*

*In particular, Derbyshire County Council **strongly objects** to the proposed use of the car park at Old Station Close, Rowsley as a temporary site for Travellers, as such a use would be likely to seriously undermine the County Council's delivery of the White Peak Loop; and the Station Yard Car Park, Dale Road, Matlock Bath, as this site could affect the County Council's longer-term aspiration for an off-road section of the White Peak Loop and Derwent Valley Cycleway, both part of the Derbyshire Key Cycle Network.*

*From a highway safety point of view, the use of any of the proposed car parks could cause highway safety issues, particularly any displacement of current car parking capacity at the Arc leisure centre, Matlock and the Station Yard car park at Matlock Bath.*

*Derbyshire Dales District Council is currently undertaking a Review of its Derbyshire Dales Local Plan. Derbyshire County Council considers, therefore, that the Local Plan*

*Review should be the most appropriate means by which a permanent site or sites is identified for Travellers in the District.*

Derbyshire County Council has now had the opportunity to review the papers that are being presented to the Council Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December and wishes to express the following concerns.

It is noted that the District Council commissioned the University of Derby to carry out a detailed assessment of all the responses to the consultation, which has then produced an overall report of consultation. The consultation report does not identify any individual responders to the consultation only a summary of the number of responses and topics and concerns raised.

It is noted that the report being presented to the Council Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December, provides a summary of the main findings of University of Derby report, together with details of issues and concerns raised at a number of Parish Council meetings organised by the District Council to discuss the consultation. Details are also provided of other representations submitted to the consultation directly by other organisations.

Derbyshire County Council wishes to express its strong concerns to the District Council that its detailed response to the consultation does not appear to have been reflected in either the University of Derby report, or more importantly, the report that is being presented to the Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December.

Whilst it is accepted that the University of Derby report does not provide details of specific responders to the consultation or their specific concerns and only summaries the broad nature of the topics raised, the County Council's objections particularly related to the potential adverse impact of two of the sites (Old Station Close, Rowsley and the Station Yard Car Park, Dale Road, Matlock Bath) on the delivery of the White Peak Loop and Derwent Valley Cycleway, both part of the Derbyshire Key Cycle Network. The County Council considers that this specific issue should have been highlighted in the University of Derby Report as it was a key topic identified through the consultation.

Notwithstanding the above, and of more concern to the County Council, is that report that is being presented to the Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December, does not mention the County Council's specific objections to the two sites at Old Station Close, Rowsley and Station Yard, Matlock Bath on grounds of their likely impacts on the delivery of the White Peak Loop and Derwent Valley Cycleway; or to the fact that the County Council objected to all the sites as none of them were considered suitable to accommodate a temporary traveller site for a variety of reasons, particularly their impacts on highway safety and displacement of public car parking.

Interestingly, however, it is noted that specific mention is made in the report to the concerns of a number of other organisations, particularly the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group, the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the above, Derbyshire County Council wishes to express its strong concerns that its response to the consultation does not appear to have been reflected in, or taken account of, in the District Council's report for the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December. That being the case, it is of particular concern that the District Council's Members, who will be considering the report, are unlikely to be aware of the County Council's strong objections to all the sites being considered as potential temporary Traveller sites in the District. This statement seeks to address that concern.

Given the importance of the County Council's priority and ambitions to deliver the White Peal Loop and Derwent Valley Cycleway schemes, Derbyshire County Council wishes to be given assurance from the District Council that this priority and ambition will be given important consideration in the District Council's decisions over which sites, if any, are likely to be taken forward as potential temporary sites to accommodate Travellers.

**Chris Henning**  
**Executive Director, Place**  
**Derbyshire County Council.**

## APPENDIX 1: Original Response to Consultation by Derbyshire County Council



Chris Henning  
Executive Director - Place  
County Hall  
Matlock  
Derbyshire  
DE4 3AG

Paul Wilson  
Chief Executive  
Derbyshire Dales District Council

Telephone: (01629) 539808  
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Our Ref: DDDC/Strategic Consultations  
Your Ref:  
Date: 26 September 2024

### By email

Dear Mr Wilson,

### Derbyshire Dales Temporary Traveller Sites Consultation

Thank you for consulting Derbyshire County Council on the Derbyshire Dales Temporary Traveller Sites Consultation. Derbyshire County Council understands that the context for the consultation is that Derbyshire Dales District Council is seeking to identify a number of potential sites within the District Council's ownership, which may be suitable for temporary use as Traveller sites to accommodate two Traveller families in the District.

Through its joint working with the District Council on the Adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan and emerging Local Plan Review; and the Derby, Derbyshire, Peak District National Park and East Staffordshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments, Derbyshire County Council is aware that the District Council has been seeking to identify a permanent site or number of permanent sites for Gypsies and Travellers for many years and a number of sites have previously been proposed by the District Council but have not been taken forward through the planning application process. In this context, it is understood, that the District Council is seeking to agree the use of temporary sites until a permanent Traveller site is identified in the Derbyshire Dales.

The proposed temporary sites that have been identified are:

- Car Park, Old Station Close, Rowsley
- Land to south-east of Hopton Works, Middleton Road, Wirksworth
- Arc Leisure Car Parks, Morledge, Matlock
- Station Yard Car Park, Dale Road, Matlock Bath
- Car Park, Derwent Way, Matlock
- Land to north-west of Cemetery, New Road, Middleton

Derbyshire County Council's Elected Member and Officer technical comments on the proposed sites are set out below. On the basis of these comments, Derbyshire County



Council **strongly objects** to the use of any of the proposed sites as temporary sites for Travellers, as they are each considered to be unsuitable for such a proposed use for reasons set out in the comments below.

In particular, Derbyshire County Council **strongly objects** to the proposed use of the car park at Old Station Close, Rowsley as a temporary site for Travellers, as such a use would be likely to seriously undermine the County Council's delivery of the White Peak Loop for the detailed reasons set out below; and the Station Yard Car Park, Dale Road, Matlock Bath, as this site could affect the County Council's longer-term aspiration for an off-road section of the White Peak Loop and Derwent Valley Cycleway, both part of the Derbyshire Key Cycle Network.

From a highway safety point of view, the use of any of the proposed car parks could cause highway safety issues, particularly any displacement of current car parking capacity at the Arc leisure centre, Matlock and the Station Yard car park at Matlock Bath, for the reasons set out in detail below.

Derbyshire Dales District Council is currently undertaking a Review of its Derbyshire Dales Local Plan. Derbyshire County Council considers, therefore, that the Local Plan Review should be the most appropriate means by which a permanent site or sites is identified for Travellers in the District.

### **Member Comments**

Derbyshire County Council's Members with electoral divisions in Derbyshire Dales have been consulted on the consultation. Member comments have been received as set out below.

#### **Councillor Susan Hobson: Member for Derwent Valley Electoral Division**

These sites were all properly considered and duly dismissed as unsuitable sites by a meeting of the Full Council of Derbyshire Dales District Council (DDDC) in November 2022. I am a current member of the Gypsy & Traveller Working Group at DDDC and will also be a member of the decision-making committee. Many residents and businesses have contacted me in respect of their material issues relating to these sites as well as serious concerns about them being reconsidered. I will continue to share those observations with Officers and Members while, as ever, representing the best interests of local residents.

As well as numerous objections from local residents and businesses the White Peak Loop has funding for further development by Derbyshire County Council (DCC) through the Old Station Close car park at Rowsley.

PLACE have the figures for the usage of the WPL and the extension through to Bakewell will increase the use tremendously.

The WPL is a flagship cycling and walking trail that gives immense physical and mental health benefits.

DDDC cannot state what temporary means or what would happen if the Travellers refuse to move after a period of time.

It is vital that DCC make a robust written representation to DDDC as soon as possible.

### **Councillor Burfoot: Member for Matlock Electoral Division**

As a member of Derbyshire Dales District Council, I will probably be required to make a decision on the temporary sites before permanent sites can be found.

As you will appreciate, the decisions will be difficult and controversial. As such, I feel I should not give a view on any of these sites at this time.

### **Councillor Steve Bull: Member for Ashbourne Electoral Division**

Regarding the Travellers they require a permanent site. I think anyone in the local area understands the problem however, I'm not in favour of any of the car parks in Derbyshire Dales being put forward for Travellers to be sited on at all and moving forward I would be strongly against any DCC land being put forward for this issue in the future. The site at the wood yard at Homesford, which already has planning permission should be used first.

### **Officer Technical Comments**

#### **Sustainable Travel and Key Cycle Network Comments**

The following concerns are expressed in relation to Derbyshire's Key Cycle Network.

##### ***a. Car Park, Old Station Close, Rowsley***

As a key stakeholder and landowner, discussions with Derbyshire Dales District Council have been ongoing, since around 2014 during which time the County Council has regularly communicated our plans to use this site as a crucial part of the White Peak Loop (WPL) project.

The development of the WPL also supports DDDC's Local Plan Policy commitment EC11: Protecting and Extending our Cycle Network: The Council will encourage proposals that develop and extend our cycle network. Policy EC11 specifically references protecting the WPL stating - Development will not be permitted where it significantly harms an existing cycle route or prejudices the future implementation of new routes including a) White Peak Cycle Loop.

The overall aim of the WPL is to provide a safe and easily accessible route for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding wherever possible. The section between Matlock and Rowsley has been open since 2018 and currently terminates in the Derbyshire Dales District Council car park off Old Station Close in Rowsley site a). The use of this site will impact directly on the future development of the WPL. Through the discussions which have been taking place, DDDC will be aware of the possibility of taking the route through the car park off Old Station Close to a point where a bridge would cross the A6.

The WPL is a top priority for Derbyshire's Key Cycle Network which has a high level of public support, with the potential to significantly boost local tourism and the economy, promote greener travel, and enhance the health and wellbeing of residents. The Old Station Close car park is integral to this vision, serving as a key access point for the WPL.

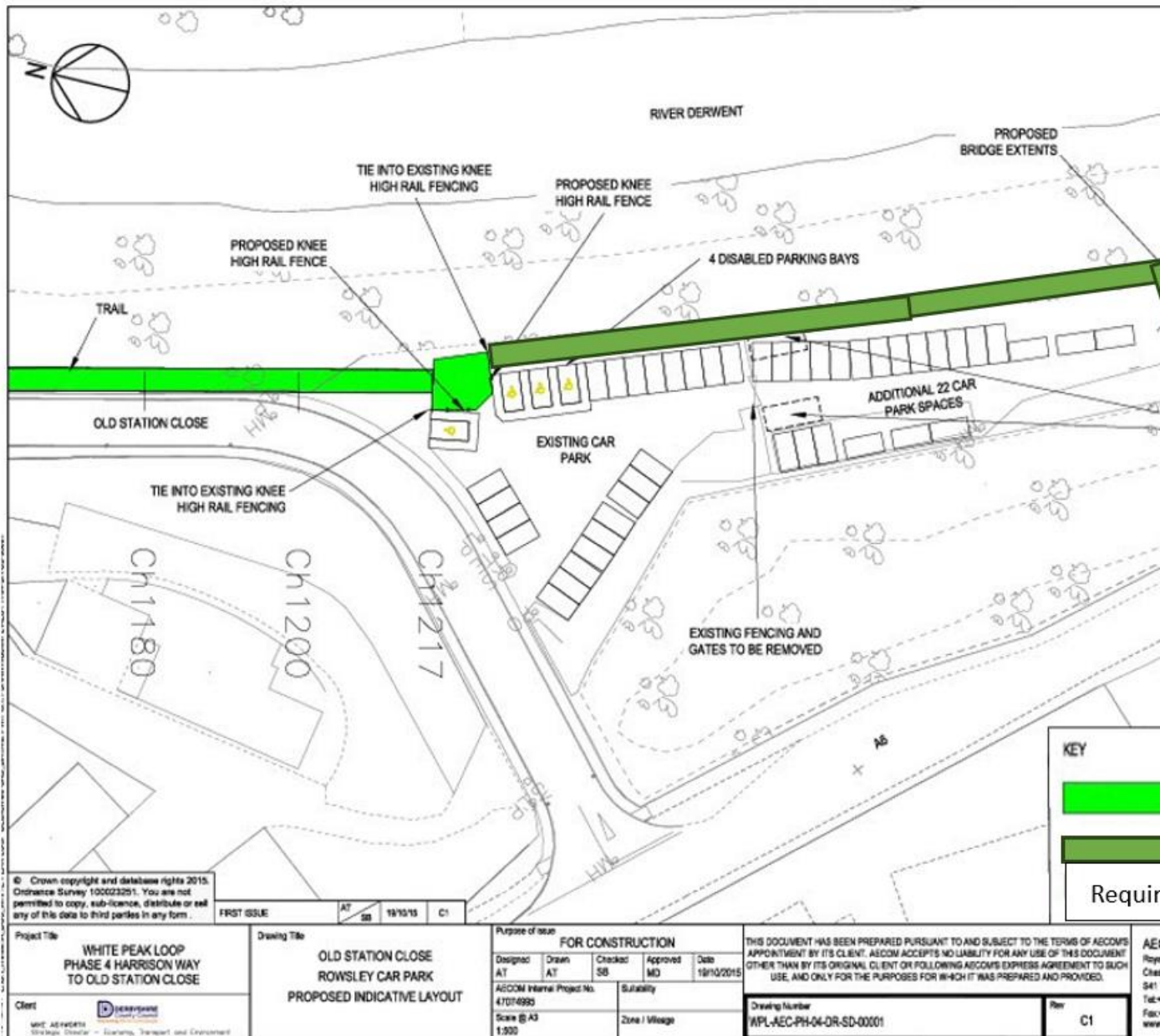
The project also has high level support from Councillor Barry Lewis and there is a Manifesto commitment to deliver a connected route by March 2025 for which further funding and ongoing commitment is needed to improve it to a high standard. Elected Members and a wide range of stakeholder groups, including the County's two Local Access Forums continue to maintain a considerable level of interest and support for the on-going development of the WPL.

The onward section of the WPL to the north of Rowsley is one of the three remaining missing sections of the route which will help complete a 50-mile circuit around the White Peak area of the Derbyshire Peak District. When complete the WPL will be a major asset to residents and businesses, linking the market towns of Bakewell, Buxton, Cromford and Matlock, with the potential to attract visitors from all over the UK, converting some day visits to overnight stays, as well as promoting greener travel and boosting the local visitor economy.

It should be noted the existing route of the WPL from the Old Station Close car park provides for many different types of journeys, from local residents going for a walk, cycling for leisure or travelling sustainably for work. The car park is popular and is often at full capacity. Utilisation of this would have implications for the development of the WPL.

In terms of the future aspirations for the WPL, the County Council is actively working to prepare and develop the missing 'gold' sections of the route which keeps users away from busy main roads as much as possible and will be more attractive for family groups and less confident users, encouraging more people to travel more actively and sustainably between the different communities along the way, including include Rowsley, Northwood, Darley Dale and Matlock, for leisure and everyday journeys.

Whilst there are many challenges still to be overcome for the Rowsley to Bakewell 'gold' standard route section, it is essential to ensure that any development does not impact on the ability to deliver this vital onward section of the route in the future (see below one of the options under consideration). The County Council would therefore request that a minimum 5m wide corridor is safeguarded and available through the site as indicated below.



To ensure comfort and ease of movement for trail users moving through the car park site, physical segregation would be needed to provide safety and security for both trail users and the development site itself.

***b. Land to South East of Hopton Works, Middleton Road, Wirksworth***

No comments

***c. Arc Leisure Car Parks, Morledge, Matlock***

No comments

***d. Station Yard Car Park, Dale Road, Matlock Bath***

This site could affect the County Council's longer-term aspiration for an off-road section of the White Peak Loop and Derwent Valley Cycleway (both part of the Derbyshire Key Cycle Network) east of the River Derwent between Cromford and Matlock where the proposed route would cross the car park entrance. The proposed new route will require restoration of the footpath with a high-quality surface and light segregation.

**e. Car Park, Derwent Way, Matlock**

No comments

**f. Land to North West of Cemetery, New Road, Middleton**

No comments

**Highways and Parking Comments**

From a traffic and safety perspective, the key concern for the County Council is the need to consider the displacement effect of reducing the capacity of any of the car parks proposed. The Station car park at Matlock Bath can fill up regularly, particularly during the tourist season and during events, and the reduced capacity can lead to drivers circulating round the area looking for alternative parking. This can lead to people parking inappropriately due to the lack of spaces which can lead to issues on the highway network.

Similarly, when there is an event at the Arc leisure centre in Matlock (e.g. swimming gala), parking has spilled out onto adjacent streets in the past and this could become more frequent if the car park is reduced in capacity. This has led to a number of concerns raised by nearby residents regarding access difficulties.

The ARC leisure centre car park is also the overspill car park for the Premier Inn Matlock. It is understood that there is an agreement in place between both enterprises. The Premier Inn has limited general parking, particularly since part of the car park was allocated for dedicated electric vehicle charging. It is unclear how all the parking demand could be accommodated at ARC leisure centre if part of the area is utilised for Traveller accommodation. There is also a height restriction bar at entry into the leisure centre car park to prevent the proposed use at present, although it is assumed that this would be removed.

In terms of any of the proposed car parks it is presumably, as the asset owners for the car parks listed, that DDDC would have some usage figures for the car parks that could assist in assessing this risk.

**Planning Policy Comments**

The adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan is currently being reviewed by the District Council that will, in due course, set out new and updated pitch requirements for the District for Gypsies and Travellers for the new Local Plan period. Derbyshire County Council is currently working jointly with Derbyshire Dales District Council, Derby City

Council, the other seven District and Borough Councils in Derbyshire, the Peak District National Park Authority and East Staffordshire District Council to update the Derby, Derbyshire, Peak District National Park and East Staffordshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) that was last published in 2015. The updated GTAA has been finalised and will be published shortly and will set out new and updated pitch requirements for Gypsies and Travellers to inform the preparation of the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan and identification of potential sites to meet the identified need.

It is considered, therefore, that the Local Plan Review should be the most appropriate means by which the District Council identifies any new proposed sites for Travellers in the District to meet current and future identified needs.

I hope these comments are of assistance. Please contact my Officer, Steve Buffery, if you wish to discuss the County Council's response further.

Yours sincerely

Chris Henning  
Executive Director Place