



Derbyshire Dales District Council

Meeting of Council on Monday 9th 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 9th December.

Derbyshire County Council submitted a comprehensive response to the consultation on 27th 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 9th 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 9th 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 9th 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 9th 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 9th 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



Paul Wilson
Chief Executive
Derbyshire Dales District Council

By email

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

Telephone: (01629) 539808
Email: planningpolicy@derbyshire.gov.uk
Our Ref: DDDC/Strategic Consultations
Your Ref:
Date: 26 September 2024

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.

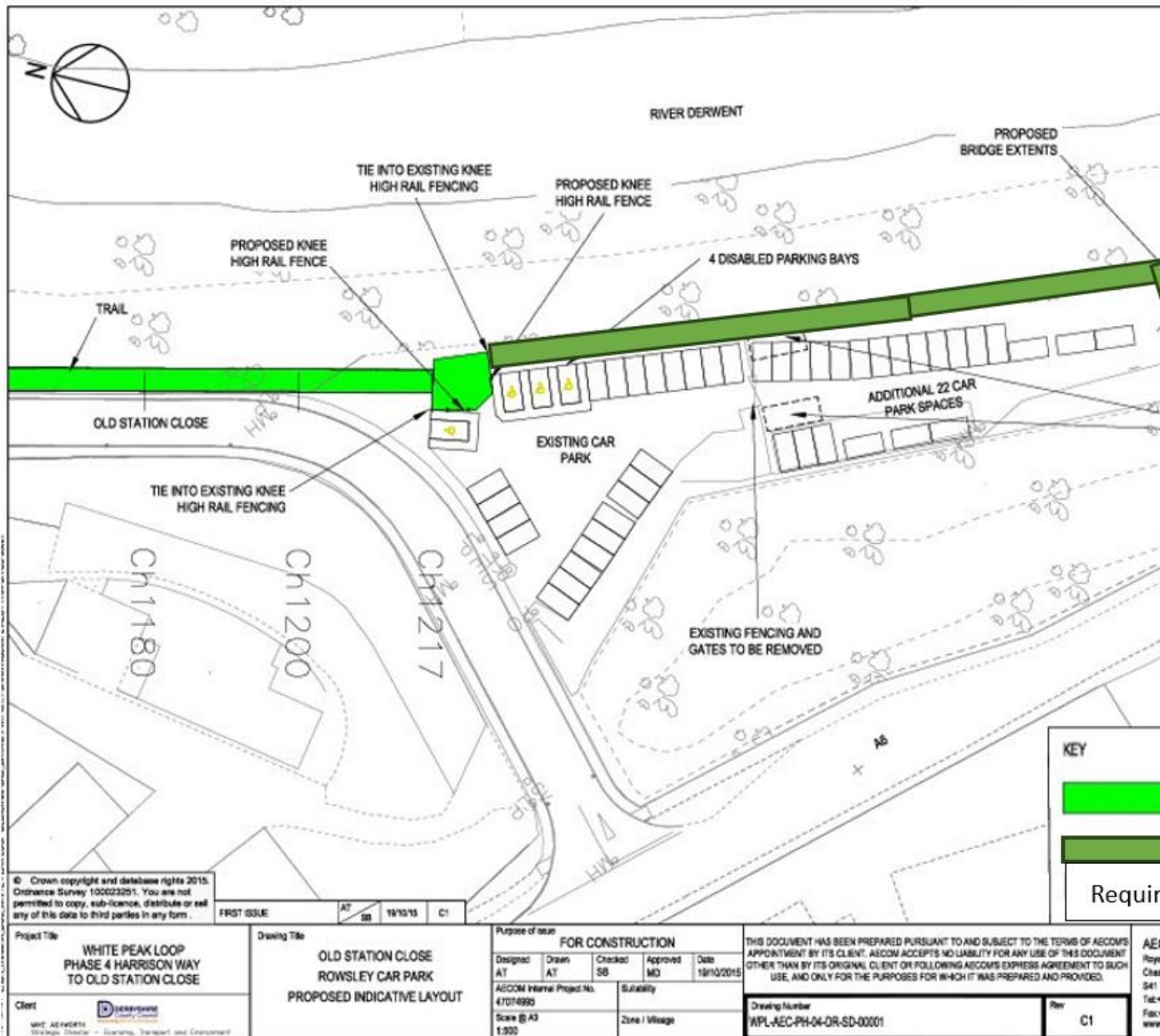
The project also has high level support from Councillor Barry Lewis and there is a Manifesto commitment to deliver a connected route by March 2025 for which further funding and ongoing commitment is needed to improve it to a high standard. Elected Members and a wide range of stakeholder groups, including 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