

Stevenage Borough Local Plan

Public Examination

Matter 17 Statement

February 2017



Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 - Public Examination

Statement by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC)

Matter 17 – Gypsies and Travellers

NB: SBC responses set out in blue font

1. Does the Council's approach in relation to traveller sites generally conform with the expectations of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (August 2015)? If not, why not?

1.1. The Council's approach in relation to Gypsies and Travellers generally conforms with the expectations of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, August 2015. The Stevenage Borough Local Plan takes a positive, plan led approach to the provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. Policy HO12 identifies a new Gypsy and Traveller site which is sufficient to meet the entire need generated in the Borough during the plan period. The supporting text provides additional guidance, including site considerations. Policy HO13, provides an element of flexibility, setting out a criteria based policy for proposals which may arise during the plan period.

1.2. The approach taken, by making provision, will help achieve the Government's overarching aim:

"to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life while respecting the interests of the settled community" (para 3).

1.3. It will help achieve the Government's aims in respect of Gypsy and Traveller sites, particularly:

- g. for local planning authorities to ensure that their Local Plan includes fair, realistic and inclusive policies*
- h. to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply*
- i. to reduce tensions between settled and traveller communities in plan-making and planning decisions*
- j. to enable provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure; and*
- k. for local authorities to have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment*

2. Are the number of pitches being promoted through Policy HO12 in accordance with the recommendations of the Council's gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment?

2.1. Yes, Policy HO12 allocates a site for 11-16 pitches. This meets the need identified for the plan period.

2.2. The figures are derived from the data in para's 5.6 and 5.7 of the DCA Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, 2013 (HP6). The approach taken is outlined in para 5.2 of the Housing Technical Paper (TP2). This states that "*The accommodation study identifies a requirement for three additional pitches over the period to 2018, with a further 3-5 pitches required in each five-year period thereafter.*"

2.3. The calculation is:

Plan period	Number of pitches	Total number of pitches
Net need for new permanent pitches to 2018	3	3
Following five year period 2019-2023	3-5	6-8
Following five year period 2024-2029	3-5	9-13
Remaining two year plan period 2030-2031	2-3	11-16

3. It is widely accepted that caravan dwellers are more vulnerable at times of flood than those people living in bricks and mortar housing. The Council have acknowledged, in response to my initial questions, that there is a risk of surface water flooding in the southern and western sections of the site. How much of the site is affected and would this potentially reduce the number of pitches that could be provided here? If that is the case does a suitable alternative site need to be found?

- 3.1. Map 1, Appendix A, clearly shows the extent of surface water flood risk on the site allocated for Gypsy and Traveller provision. The mapping is derived from a national dataset provided by the Environment Agency to Hertfordshire County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority) and is indicative, not modelled.
- 3.2. There is no fluvial flood risk identified on the site allocated for Gypsy and Traveller provision.
- 3.3. The Gypsy and Traveller allocated site area is 1.44ha. The low risk surface water flood extent area is approx. 0.36ha (25%), of that 0.36 ha, approx. 0.12ha (8%) is deemed as high risk. From assessment of the site levels, it is believed that any surface water is the result of standing water and not of a consequence of overland flow as water moves from higher ground to lower levels.
- 3.4. A large proportion of the site (some 1.08ha (75%)) is not affected by any surface water flood risk. Nevertheless, the in combination use of both infiltration and attenuation SuDS could mitigate the risk that is identified on site. However, this would be the subject of a site specific Flood Risk Assessment that would need to be carried out as part of a planning application for the site.
- 3.5. As such, there is no reason to find an alternative suitable site.

4. *Is the proposed site in a sustainable location?*

- 4.1. Yes the site is in a sustainable location with good access to a choice of mobility options. It is within walking distance of a primary school, supermarket and a secondary school. The site is a short distance onto the cycleway system, providing convenient access to Stevenage town centre, where a wide range facilities and services are available, employment sites and railway station and bus station.
- 4.2. The site is in close proximity to a number of bus routes which serve both the urban area of Stevenage and nearby towns including Baldock, Hatfield, Hitchin, Letchworth, Luton and Watford. The routes can be seen at Appendix B, Map of Stevenage & Knebworth. The nearest bus stop is on North Road, a 450 metre walk from the site, where the 55 service is available, serving Lister Hospital, Stevenage Railway Station and Stevenage Bus Station and the town of Letchworth. The bus stop at Sainsburys is a 700 metre walk from the site, where the 80 and 101 services are available. The 80 service covers the urban area of Stevenage including, Stevenage Railway Station and Stevenage Bus Station, and the town of Hitchin. The 100/101 serves the urban area of Stevenage and the towns of Hitchin and Luton. The bus stop at Lister Hospital is a 1320 metre walk from the site, with services including the 55, 80, 100/101, 635 and 386. The 635 service covers Hatfield and Watford. The 386 service serves Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Bishop's Stortford.
- 4.3. The site provides access to a range of facilities and maintains separation from the settled community as the Gypsy and Traveller community prefer.

5. Would the Plan realistically provide for a five year supply of gypsy and traveller pitches on adoption and will the supply be maintained for the Plan period?

5.1. On adoption, there will be a requirement for 3 pitches and a further 3 to 5 pitches to provide a five year supply.

5.2. The figures are derived from the data in para's 5.6 and 5.7 of the DCA Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, 2013 (HP6). The approach taken is outlined in para 5.2 of the Housing Technical Paper (TP2). This states that *"The accommodation study identifies a requirement for three additional pitches over the period to 2018, with a further 3-5 pitches required in each five-year period thereafter."*

5.3. The calculation is:

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5.4. The Local Plan allocates a specific deliverable site, which is sufficient to provide for the first 5 years need and also to provide for years 6 to 10 and 11-15 as the need arises.

5.5. The site is of sufficient size to allow a phased development throughout the plan period as the need arises.

5.6. The Plan therefore meets the requirements of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, August 2015.

5.7. Policy HO13 provides an element of flexibility, setting out a criteria based policy for proposals which may arise during the plan period.

6. Would the site dominate the nearest settled community?

- 6.1. The nearest existing settled communities are in Stevenage and, in the wider area, at Graveley, to the north, and Little Wymondley, to the west. SBC have proposed a residential allocation at HO3 that will also establish a nearby settled community - see Map 2, Appendix A.
- 6.2. The current settled community in Stevenage is 0.15km away¹. The population of Stevenage is 86,469².
- 6.3. The SBLP allocates bricks and mortar housing at HO3, 0.3km away³ from HO12. At 34ha in size, it is more than 24 times larger than the Gypsy and Traveller site HO12.
- 6.4. Graveley⁴ is further away at a distance of 0.3km⁵. It is 16ha in size, more than 11 times larger than the Gypsy and Traveller site HO12. The population of the wider Parish is 487⁶.
- 6.5. Little Wymondley⁷ is 1km away⁸. It sits to the west of the proposed site, beyond the A1(M) and is 50ha in size, more than 34 times larger than the Gypsy and Traveller site HO12. The population of Little Wymondley is 995⁹.
- 6.6. The provision of the Gypsy and Traveller site in this location would not dominate any of the nearest settled communities.

¹ measured from the south-easternmost point of the Gypsy and Traveller site to the westernmost point of the residential plot on North Road, Stevenage

² ONS population estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Mid 2015, released 23 June 2016

³ measured from the easternmost point of the Gypsy and Traveller site to the westernmost point of HO3, Stevenage.

⁴ As defined by NHDC Proposed Submission Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Proposals Map

⁵ measured from the northernmost point of the Gypsy and Traveller site to the southernmost point of Graveley village.

⁶ ONS Key Figures for 2011 Census - Graveley

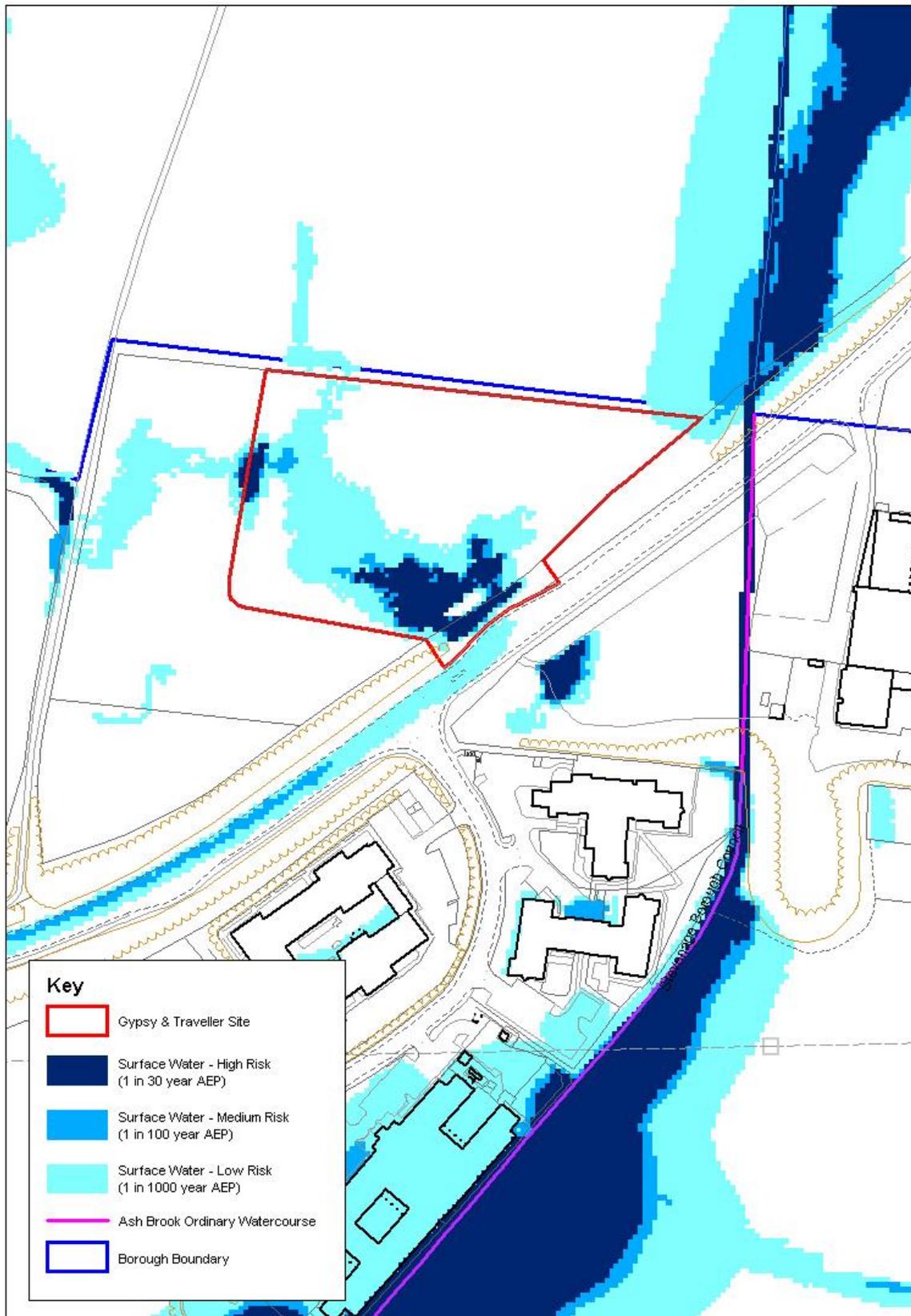
⁷ As defined by NHDC Proposed Submission Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Proposals Map

⁸ measured from the westernmost point of the Gypsy and Traveller site to the easternmost point of Little Wymondley village.

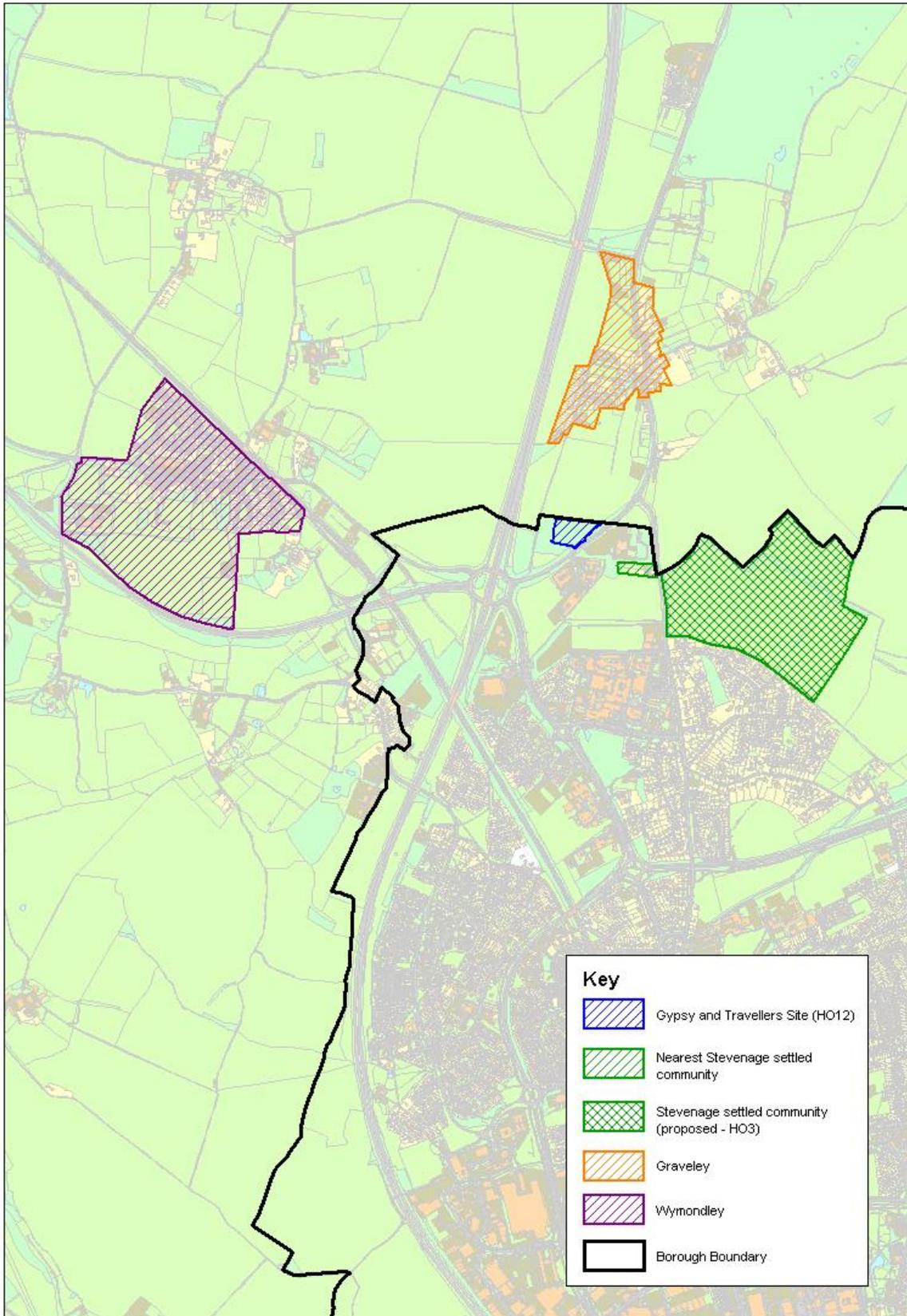
⁹ UK National Statistics, 2011 Census – Little Wymondley

Appendix A

Map 1 – Surface Water Flood Risk



Map 2 – Gypsy and Travellers Site in relation to settled communities at Stevenage, Graveley and Little Wymondley



Appendix B

Appendix B: Bus Routes in Stevenage & Knebworth

