

Proposed Temporary 5 year Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site Consultation

The consultation is designed to gather views relating to the proposal and to inform next steps for implementation

The Council wishes to consult with the public and stakeholders in order to fully understand the needs and views of as many members of the community as possible to help plan the best way to support the provision for gypsy and traveller families now and in the future.

Background

Over the last five years Shropshire Council has seen a number of unauthorised encampments in and around Shrewsbury and a significant number pitching on high profile locations such as the Park and Ride sites, Battlefield Enterprise Park and the retail business carparks, impacting both on the public and private sectors. This can cause disruption and conflict locally and can also be expensive and time-consuming to evict if the need arises.

The delivery of transit provision could, within a reasonably short timescale, deal with the ongoing and costly issues associated with such encampments and help ease the impact on local communities and businesses whilst longer term site provision is considered.

The site would enable the council to give the travelling families a safe and secure place of stay whilst they are staying within the county for a short period of time and allow the council to support where there are any health/welfare issues.

It is worth noting that not all groups are problematic and pitch up in the County annually without any issues.

The proposed site is temporary for a period of up to 5 years.

Summary of what the proposal site

Location

The proposed site is in freehold ownership of Shropshire Council. The area is approximately 3.60ha and lies abutting Ellesmere Road roundabout between the A5124 Battlefield Link Road and the A528 Shrewsbury Road on the North-West edge of Shrewsbury.

The site itself would be discreetly located close to a belt of trees providing screening both visually from the road but also to provide a safe place for the Travelling community to stay whilst passing through the county. An illustrative plan giving a suggestion of what the site may look like is shown on page 6 of this fact sheet.

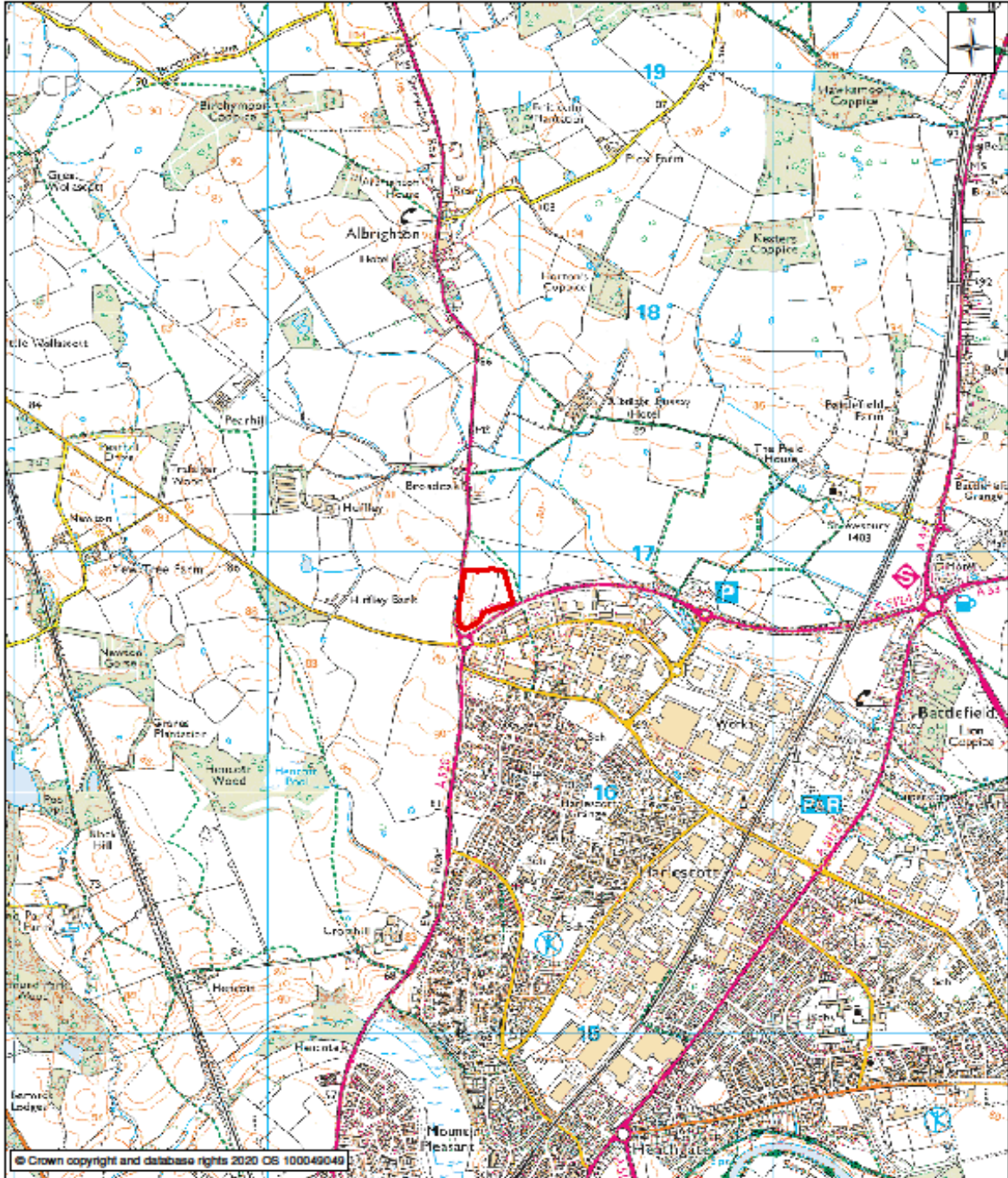


The area highlighted in red on the plan shown on the next page is the area of land proposed for the Transit site. It is worth noting that only a small part of this land is proposed to be used for transit provision, approximately 1/7th of the site.



Proposed Transit site location

(approximately 1/7th of the area in red to be allocated to this provision)



Business Enterprise and Commercial Services

Shirehall, Abbey Foregate
SHREWSBURY
SY2 6ND

Title:

Land Off Battlefield Link Road, Battlefield, Shrewsbury, Shropshire
Location Plan

Drawing No:	302-001-085-PL
Scale:	1:20,000 @ A4
Date:	April 2020
Drawn by:	Property Strategy and Review



Why is a Transit Site Needed?

The delivery of a transit site within Shropshire is needed for several reasons.

- There is a need for a safe place for Gypsy and Traveller families to stay whilst passing through the county. The site will also resolve a short - term problem for Gypsy and Traveller families who are due to move onto the Council's owned and managed sites, or those fleeing domestic abuse or in need of health and medical care.
- National planning policy for Gypsy and Traveller sites also requires local authorities to identify and to seek to meet the permanent and transit accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers via the planning process. Evidence to support the review of the Local Plan (the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Update 2019) considers transit requirements and provides recommendations; identifying a role for Council transit provision to support capacity and the ability to manage unauthorised encampments. The full report is available in the following location:
<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/14446/shropshire-gtaa-update.pdf>
- Over the last five years there have been 153 reported unauthorised encampments on Shropshire Council land and over 200 on private land. There are a number of powers the Council have available to evict troublesome campers but the process at times can be lengthy and the council are duty bound to consider any welfare issues/concerns before taking action.

The management of the site would be undertaken by the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Service and robust procedures would be put in place to ensure the facility is not abused. Joint working with the Police will be paramount to ensure that stability of the local community continues.

The site will not be a free facility. Like Shropshire Councils residential Traveller sites, families will be required to pay a fee. The proposed site size will enable the council to accommodate up to a maximum of 8 families at any one time.

Gypsies and Travellers are a recognised ethnic group and are protected from discrimination by the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a duty on public authorities, including Shropshire Council to promote race equality for all racial groups. Many still lead a nomadic or semi nomadic lifestyle; some have no fixed base and are constantly travelling between one temporary stopping place and another. Community tensions can arise between the traveller and the settled communities because of the difference in lifestyle and a lack of understanding of culture and customs.

Like any other section of society, Gypsies and Travellers have their own ethnic identity, differences and traditions and what is true of one group of travellers is not necessarily true for all others. All Gypsy and Traveller groups do however share common cultural values of independence and a strong emphasis on the family group.

The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (formerly the Commission for Race Equality) recognises that Gypsies and Travellers whether travelling or otherwise can be subject to discrimination and hate crime.



What will the site look like?

The proposed site would be of basic construction, with a stone or grasscrete base, a single toilet/shower block unit, CCTV, perimeter fencing and height restriction barriers on the entrance to the site. In this respect, it will remain relatively 'temporary' in its form and provision and will respect the setting of the land adjacent to the Registered Battlefield. Construction details will reflect guidance contained within the Battlefield Design Guidance draft document.

Below is an illustrative plan of what the site may look like. Please note that this is an indicative plan only and the location of pitches may be subject to change after further consideration of constraints.





Why is this only a temporary site?

The proposed temporary provision will allow the Council time to assess the effectiveness of transit provision in managing unauthorised activity and further time to identify the most suitable site for longer term permanent provision in a strategic location within the county.

The proposed location is close to a Heritage Site, what impact is this going to have?

Heritage considerations have been identified, and advice is being taken on potential impacts and how best to reduce and mitigate them, drawing on information provided by the Council's Historic Environment and Planning Policy teams which will consider assessments of landholdings in this area of the town and the potential impact on the setting of the Registered Battlefield. Formal pre-application consultation with Historic England is planned to review any potential heritage constraints to development.

What effect will this have on the North West Relief road?

It is understood that the development can be constructed without impact on or interference with the delivery of the North West Relief Road at this principal road junction along the northern part of the route and construction of the two schemes will be sequenced to avoid any concurrent working.

How safe will the site be given that it is adjacent to a busy A road?

It is important that transit sites are easily accessible from the main road network and although they are not intended for long term occupation we will be liaising closely with our Highways Team to ensure that the access to the site is safe, both for vehicular access but also for pedestrians. Any recommendations will be implemented to ensure that the site is safe for those that use it for the short periods they will be on site.

What Next?

A formal consultation is now underway and will be held over the next 6 weeks. It is an opportunity to have your say and raise any queries you may have. We welcome your views and thoughts on the proposals and would welcome any questions.



How do I get in touch to give my views?

We have several ways for you to get in touch:

E-mail us at: propertystrategy@shropshire.gov.uk

Visit our website and click on the link to the 'Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site Consultation' www.shropshire.gov.uk/Gypsy-and-traveller-transit-site-consultation.

Write to us at: Property Strategy & Review Team, Assets & Estate Management, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information legislation (primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004)