

London Borough of Merton Sites and Policies Plan – assessment of site allocations for the potential to provide gypsy and traveller accommodation

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The research sets out the approach and results of an assessment undertaken of the sites allocated in Merton's *Sites and Policies Plan* for their suitability to provide gypsy and traveller (G&T) pitches. The provision of plots for Travelling Showpeople was not considered as there is no additional identified need in Merton.
- 1.2 In Merton there is one permanent publicly owned G&T site. It is approximately 0.43 ha and contains 15 pitches.
- 1.3 The criteria for site assessment were informed by considerations set out in the following:
- Research to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in Merton;
 - LBM Core Planning Strategy (2011) policy CS10 – accommodation for gypsies and travellers;
 - LBM emerging document *Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Map*;
 - Department for Communities and Local Government publication "*Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2012)*";
 - Department for Communities and Local Government publication "*Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites - Good Practice Guide (2008)*";
 - Department for Communities and Local Government publication "*Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment – Guidance (2007)*";
 - The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF);
 - Department for Communities and Local Government publication "*External Review of Government Planning Practice Guidance (2012)*"; and
 - Council officer knowledge of the sites e.g . through site visits and liaison with site owners.

2.0 Site assessment considerations

- 2.1 All the sites contained in Merton's Sites and Policies Plan were assessed against relevant considerations set out in the above documents. These included the following considerations:
- The site must include an allocation for residential use whether it be solely for residential use or part of a mixed use development;
 - A site was considered inappropriate and thus excluded if it exhibited any of the following characteristics:
 - Within flood zone 3 (the functional flood plain)
 - Within open space
 - In educational /library use
 - One not containing an allocation for residential use

- Whether onsite landscaping was available on the site or had the ability to be provided. This was considered to be either yes (it was available), had the potential to be provided, or limited/no ability to be provided;
- The sites' proximity to a main road which was defined as being within 500 m of a main road. A main road comprised both A and B roads as they both carry substantial volumes of traffic into and through the borough;
- The sites' proximity to services and infrastructure which was defined as being no greater than a 1000 m round trip from the site which is considered appropriate for a person with a pushchair/toddler. Services and infrastructure refer to those matters identified in CS policy CS10;
- The provision of on-site facilities such as children's play facilities, or whether the potential existed to provide such facilities on-site. This was considered as a sufficient vacant space on-site that was free of buildings and structures;
- On-site constraints e.g. flood risk and contamination.
- Small or irregular shaped sites were excluded due to their inability to meet the specifications set out in the guidance to provide a sustainable G&T site;
- A minimum size threshold was applied based on the density advice suggested in national guidance, of approximately 500 m² per pitch; and
- The site should not be within 20m of a watercourse in accordance with guidance produced by the Environment Agency.

3.0 Methodology for assessment

3.1 The approaches adopted for assessing site suitability for provision of G&T pitches is outlined below. The detailed site information and results of the assessment are contained in Table 1 (attached). The approach involved:

- An assessment of the sites and their characteristics against the criteria set out above;
- Assessment of remaining sites against the deliverability criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (i.e. available, suitable, and viable)
 - Availability represents a key constraint as a large number of the sites are in private ownership where they were not desired to be disposed of for such use
 - Viability – council would have to work with registered providers to attract funding (e.g. from the GLA). However it should be noted that sites for pitches provide far fewer homes than sites for bricks and mortar. Pitches are therefore much more heavily subsidised, making development less viable and meeting less identified need for the level of investment required.
 - Suitability – the criteria used was in accordance with the Core Strategy planning policy for traveller sites.
 - In accordance with the NPPF, the deliverability of a site was considered as being available now and able to be completed within a five year timeframe as required by the *Planning Policy for Traveller Sites* (March 2012). Beyond this timeframe the sites are considered developable.

Table 1: Assessment of allocated sites against relevant Core Planning Strategy and national policy framework

Site	Area (ha) (minimum 0.05 ha)	Allocated use (compatible)	Onsite landscaping and amenity (yes, no or potential)	Good access to main road (yes or no)	Proximity to infrastructure (yes or no)	Onsite facilities (yes, no or potential)	Onsite constraints	Availability	Deliverable (within 10 years)	Summary
01 - Car park site of No. 66-84 Hartfield Road, Wimbledon	0.59	Yes – mixed use includes residential	N – none existing and development is likely to result in substantial site coverage.	Yes - direct access to the A219	Yes	N – limited due to scale of development proposed.	N	N – the site is currently a car park with legal agreements on its use until 2019.	N - site is not likely to be viable given size and Wimbledon town centre location	NO
02 - 43-45 Palestine Grove, Colliers Wood	0.02 (too small)	Yes - residential	P	Yes - in close proximity to A24	No - relatively isolated location	P	FZ2	N - site is in private ownership and has a live planning application being considered.	N - Site is not suitable as it is too small and is not available as it is in private ownership.	NO
05 - Colliers Wood Community Centre	0.13	Yes - mixed use community and residential with possible commercial	N - there is only a small area available excluding built development	Yes - site is situated on A24	Yes	N	FZ2	N – site has existing lease agreements and is not available before 2019.	N - Site is not suitable as it is too small and contains existing development	NO
08 - Leyton Road Centre	0.34	Potential - community or residential	Y	Yes - in close proximity to A24	Yes	P	N	N – site has existing lease agreements and is not available before 2019.	N – Site is not available and would need to be redeveloped to accommodate private pitches.	NO
09 - Mitcham library	0.18	Potential - Library, office or residential.	N	Yes - on A217 with good links to other A roads out of	Yes	N	N	N - site will continue to be used as a library for the	N - site is not suitable due to size taking into account existing	NO

				borough				foreseeable future.	development and provision for D1 on site.	
14 - Taylor Road day centre	0.08 (too small)	Yes - residential	P	Y – site is approximately 500m from A217	N - relatively isolated location	P	N	N - site has existing lease agreements and is not available before 2019.	N - site is not suitable due to size.	NO
15 - West Barnes library	0.1	Maybe - library and residential	N	N – site is more than 500m from a main road.	N - relatively isolated location	N	FZ2	Y – site is in council ownership and intended to be delivered prior to 2019.	N - site is not considered suitable as it will be redeveloped with library at ground floor and resi above and is also relatively small.	NO
17 - Worsfold House / Chapel Orchard	1.35	Yes - school and/or residential	Y	Y - links to A217	Yes	P	N	N – site is in council ownership with existing lease agreements. Site is not likely to be available prior to 2018.	N - Site is considered too large and likely to be cost prohibitive. Notwithstanding this, if education is not provided there is sufficient size for private pitches.	NO
18 - 60 Pitcairn Road	0.07 (too small)	Yes - residential	Y	Y - street links within 500m to A217	N - relatively isolated location	N	N	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not suitable due to size	NO
20 - Wilson Hospital	1.79	Potential - community, healthcare, education, possible residential	Minor onsite existing. Could be provided as part of redevelopment.	Y - links to A217 and A237	N - deficiency in GP surgeries	P	N	N – site is owned by the NHS and not available prior to 2019.	N - Site is not available	NO
21 - Birches Close	0.96	Potential - community, healthcare,	Minor onsite existing. Could be provided as	Y - links to A217 and A237	N - deficiency in GP surgeries	P	N	N - site is owned by the NHS and not available	N - Site is not available	NO

		education, possible residential	part of redevelopment.					prior to 2019.		
22 - Patrick Doody	0.12	Potential - Healthcare led mixed use with some residential or solely residential	None	Y - proximity to A219 and A24	Yes	N	N	site is owned by the NHS and not available prior to 2019	N - Site is not available and is not suitable due to size.	NO
23 - Amity Grove	0.09 (too small)	Potential - community or residential	None existing. Limited scope for provision as part of redevelopment due to size.	Y - close to A238 which links A3	Yes	N	N	site is owned by the NHS and not available prior to 2019.	N - Site is not available and is not suitable due to size.	NO
24 - Morden Road clinic	0.26	Potential - healthcare led mixed use with some residential	None	Y - site situated on A24	Yes, although an increase in GP capacity is needed in the short term as stated by the NHS. This site is earmarked to provide such services.	N	N	N - site is owned by the NHS and not available prior to 2019.	N - site is not available. There is unlikely to be sufficient provision for residential use due to the provision for D1 uses.	NO
28 - P4 land adjoining Wimbledon Theatre	0.21	Potential - range of town centre uses and residential	None	Y - site situated on A219	Yes	P	N	Y – the site is currently in council ownership.	N - site is not considered viable based on Wimbledon town centre location probably being cost prohibitive and policy restrictions on development.	NO
31 - Wimbledon Community Centre	0.06 (too small)	Potential - range of town centre uses and residential	None	Y - in close proximity to A219	Yes	N	N	Y – the site is currently in council ownership.	N - site is not suitable due to size	NO

32 - Wyvern Youth Centre	0.12	Yes - residential	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - in close proximity to A24	Yes	P	N	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not suitable due to size	NO
33 - Elm Nursery car park	0.1 (too small)	Yes - residential	None	Y - situated on A217	Yes	P	N	Y – the site is currently in council ownership.	N - site is not suitable due to size	NO
35 - Mitcham fire station	0.04 (too small)	Maybe - Mix of uses including residential	None	Y - close proximity to A217	Yes	N	N	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not suitable due to size and is not available	NO
36 - Chaucer Centre	0.62	Yes - mixed use community and residential or solely residential	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - close proximity to A297	Yes	P	N	Y – the site is in council ownership but is not available prior to 2018.	Y - a redeveloped site could enable the provision, however viability is questionable due to its size and allocation for residential development.	NO
37 - Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium	5.29	Maybe - Sporting intensification with enabling use (which may include residential)	None	Y - close proximity to A217	N - relatively isolated location	P	FZ3b	N - site is in private ownership and not likely to be delivered before 2019.	N - site is not suitable due to flood risk, size, is not available and is unlikely to be viable.	NO
41 - Kingston Road opp Lower Downs	0.11	Yes - residential	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - site is situated on A238	Yes	P	N	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not suitable due to size and is not available.	NO
46 - The Old Lamp works, High Path	0.22	Potential - residential or education	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - site is in close proximity to A24	Yes	P	Site is known to be susceptible to surface water flooding.	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not available.	NO
48 - Land at Bushey Road	2.67	No - residential use is not proposed.	None	Y - site is situated on A298 adjacent	N - relatively isolated location	P	Part FZ3b, FZ2	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not available and is not suitable with	NO

				the A3					no residential element proposed.	
53 - Brook House, Mitcham Cricket Green	0.28	Potential - community, nursing/care home, hotel, and/or residential	Existing small scale onsite landscaping	Y - links to A217 and A237	Yes	P	N	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not available.	NO
57 - Morden station offices and retail units	0.08 (too small)	No – residential use is not proposed.	None	Y - close proximity to A24	Yes	N	N	N - site is in private ownership and has existing lease arrangements.	N - site is not suitable for residential and is too small	NO
58 - Sainsburys (Peel House)	0.42	Potential - a range of town centre uses including residential	None	Y - close proximity to A24	Yes	P	N	N - site is in private ownership and has existing lease arrangements.	N - site is not available as it would be required to be compulsorily purchased and is part of Morden Station planning brief.	NO
59 - Corner Baltic House and High St Colliers Wood	0.02 (too small)	Potential - a range of town centre uses including residential	None	Yes - site is situated on A24	Yes	N	F22	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not suitable due to size.	NO
60 - York Close car park, Morden	0.59	Yes - residential	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - close proximity to A24	Yes	P	N	N - site is in private ownership and has existing lease arrangements.	N - site is not available.	NO
61 - Morden station car park	0.33	Yes - residential, employment (B1[a], B1[b], B1[c]) and community.	None	Y - close proximity to A24	Yes	P	N	N - site is in private ownership and has existing lease arrangements.	N - site is not available and is part of Morden Station planning brief	NO
62 - Wimbledon	0.26	Yes - a range of town centre	None	Y - situated on A219	Yes	N	N	N - site is in private	N - site is not considered	NO

YMCA		uses including residential						ownership.	suitable as it is a multi storey town centre location. Site is also not available.	
63 - Highlands House, 165-171 The Broadway	0.16	Yes - a range of town centre uses including residential	None	Y - situated on A219	Yes	N	N	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not considered suitable as it is small and a multi storey town centre location. The site is also not available.	NO
64 - 12A Ravensbury Terrace, Wimbledon Park	0.1 (too small)	Yes - office and residential	None	Y - close proximity to A217	Yes	N	FZ3b	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not available and is in FZ3. The site is also not suitable due to size.	NO
65 - Kenley Road car park, Morden	0.31	Yes - residential	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - close proximity to A24	Yes	P	N	N – the site is in council ownership however access is leased separately.	N - Site could accommodate TSP however the viability is doubted due to the site being part of a planning brief and access is currently leased and not secured long term. A CPO would be required to secure this site.	NO
69 - Sibthorp Road car park	0.26	Maybe - a range of town centre uses including residential	None	Y - situated on A217	Yes	P	N	N – site is in council ownership but not available prior to 2017.	N - site is not likely to be suitable given town centre location and cost, which affects the viability.	NO
70 -	0.9	No -	None	Y - close	Yes	P	FZ3b	N - site is in	N – residential	NO

Haslemere industrial estate		employment led mixed use redevelopment.		proximity to A217				private ownership.	use is not proposed.	
74 - Southey Bowls Club	0.54 (includes designation for open space)	Yes - Bowls club, residential and open space	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - close proximity to A238	Yes	P	N	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not suitable and is to be retained as a bowls club, therefore insufficient area available.	NO
75 - Former Mitcham Gasworks	2.4	Yes - residential led redevelopment and some community use	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - site is situated on A236	Yes	P	N	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not available. Due to its size and that it accommodates an operational gasholder, it is not likely to be viable for G&T pitches which would require decommissioning.	NO
78 - 26 Bushey Road	0.33	Yes - residential	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - site is situated on A298	Yes	P	Site is known to be susceptible to surface water flooding, contamination	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not suitable due to susceptibility to surface water flooding and contamination. Remediation and mitigation is likely to be cost prohibitive.	NO
79 - 191 - 193 Western Road	0.51	Yes - residential	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	Y - site is situated on A236	N - relatively isolated location	P	F22 and contaminated	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is not likely to be suitable given flood risk and contamination. Remediation and mitigation is likely to be cost prohibitive.	NO

80 - Crusoe Road Industrial Buildings	0.12 (too small)	Yes - residential	Could be provided as part of redevelopment	N - residential street, links to A217	Y - site is within 500m of the A217.	P	site is known to be susceptible to surface water flooding	N - site is in private ownership.	N - site is too small and is not available.	NO
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