

REPORT: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 19 September 2007
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment
SUBJECT: Transit Site Provision
WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The report seeks to explain the approach taken in identifying sites and that taken to assess their suitability for use as a Traveller transit site.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That any observations and recommendations made by this Board be reported to the Executive Board for their consideration.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1.1 In July the Executive Board considered a report relating to the provision of a “transit site” in the Borough. Extracts from this report are appended to this report.

3.1.2 The Board resolved that a further report should be received following referral to and consideration of the site selection process by the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.

4.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4.1 The criteria applied to the sites assessed prior to the matter being considered by the Executive Board included such factors, as the availability of the land within the required timeframe, its proximity to services, including schools, impact upon neighbouring uses, whether the land was currently used for an other beneficial or difficult to re-locate use, whether the land was contaminated or otherwise restricted, its potential to be landscaped and where appropriate screen, the ability to deliver relevant consents and whether or not the site was within the area of search identified by the Needs Study.

4.2 As a consequence the sites shown in the table below, were initially considered:

Location/Site (see map appended to report for location)	Comments/Review	Action
Land at Clifton	Site has access difficulties and may be impacted upon by Motorway /Mersey Gateway intersection improvements. Land is in private ownership (English Partnerships). The owners have indicated that they are in process of disposing to other end user.	Discounted: No guarantee of delivery either within or not of timetable.
Land at Astmoor	Although in HBC ownership considered too close to businesses; right in the heart of the industrial estate; and close to other sensitive receptors.	Discounted: Potential long-term management and “neighbour” issues.
Johnsons Lane	Although suitable temporarily, as for example, by accommodating the travelers, whilst the permanent site is improved, it is reserved for EDZ development and Mersey Gateway relocation; Not in area of search identified by Needs Study.	Discounted, as in wrong location and was not permanently available.
Busway Site	Site has proved useful but it cannot be considered as a permanent site. Road/Busway is required to provide access to housing development planned as part of Castlefields regeneration.	Discounted: Not a permanent solution.
Two sites on open land close to the	Deemed to be too close to residential properties	Discounted, mainly because of visual

Expressway/Windmill Hill Avenue Junction	and in very visible locations. Sites also affected by underground pipelines.	prominence.
Warrington Road	Adjacent to existing private caravan site, therefore possibility of shared management arrangements; well screened site; safe access; land owned by HBC and deliverable within time frame; within identified area of need.	Site chosen for further consideration.

- 4.3 The site chosen for further consideration, is in the ownership of the Council and would, it is believed, be possible to be developed as a transit site and to scheme completion within the timeframe available.

Similarly, it is anticipated that whilst the site is capable of being serviced and prepared comparatively easily, the project costs should not exceed the grant monies available and therefore not require capital support.

- 4.4 It may also be useful to the Members of the Board to consider the pattern of unauthorised Traveller encampments prior to the establishment of the tolerated site and since its presence. Although there were a number of incursions to the north of the River Mersey, largely around the EDZ/Widnes Waterfront development area, the majority of incursions prior to the busway site being used were in areas of Runcorn, including Manor Park, Sandymoor, Hallwood Park, Astmoor and around Daresbury.

The number of unauthorised incursions has during the last 10 months and since the busway has been used, been comparatively minimal, although incursions at Manor Park, Daresbury, Ditton and within the EDZ have occurred. In all of these cases the unauthorised encampments were quickly dealt with, with the assistance of the Police.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The capital cost of the scheme can be met from reserves within the Housing Capital programme and other grant monies.

Notwithstanding the potential to vire the capital costs from the above source there will be on going revenue implications. The site will have to be maintained and managed from rental monies generated.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The provision of a well managed and monitored site will assist with ensuring appropriate welfare for the children within the Traveller community.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are no specific implications for this priority.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The provision of a regulate facility will reduce the number of unauthorised incursions and help reduce the potential for tipping/untidy sites and the implications which go with such nuisance.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The provision of a transit site will enable the Council in conjunction with the Police to react positive and quickly in removing unauthorised incursions elsewhere in the Borough.

6.5

Halton's Urban Renewal

The provision of an authorised site will enable the current tolerated site to be relocated and development sites within Castlefields to be brought forward.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Evidence suggests that the provision of a site has reduced the number of incursions elsewhere and enabled the situation to be better managed. It cannot, however, be totally discounted that once the facility is at capacity that other incursions and costs for dealing with them, will occur.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Local consultation will be carried out before the proposal is formally considered. Provision of a transit site in addition to the existing permanent site would make a significant contribution to the Council's efforts to support equality and diversity."

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Document	Place of Inspection	Officer
Traveller Site Needs Study	Rutland House Halton Lea	Phil Watts
Site Assessment	Rutland House Halton Lea	Phil Watts