

PULMORE WATER / WEXFORD PARK CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (2017)

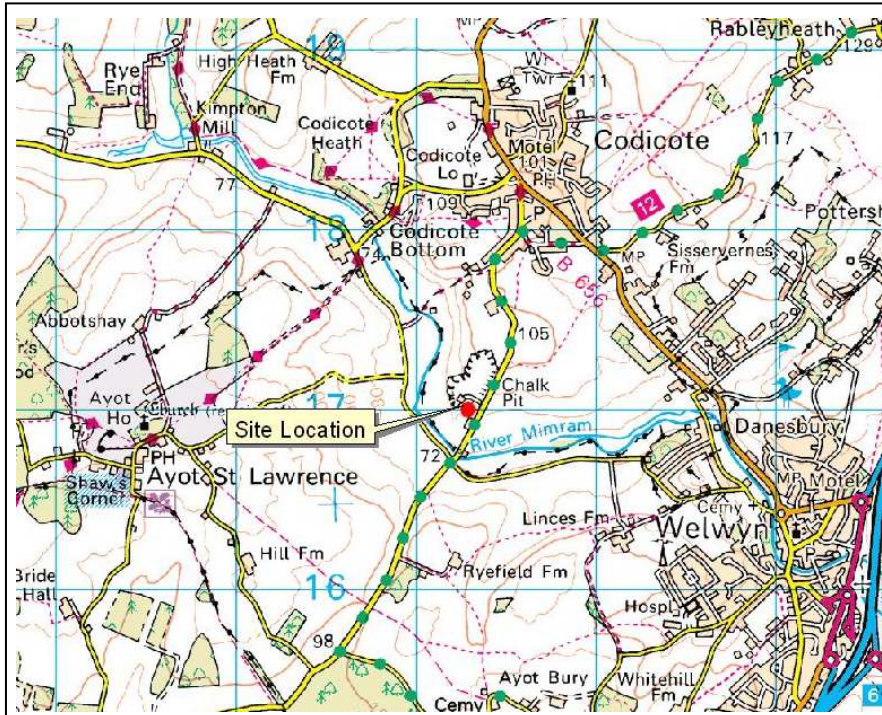
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Introduction

1. The Gypsy and Traveller site at Pulmore Water, Codicote is the only permanent, permitted Gypsy and Traveller site in North Hertfordshire. It has been a Gypsy and Traveller site for in excess of 30 years as planning permission was originally granted on appeal for two pitches in 1984 (1/237/83). It was subsequently granted permission for an additional four pitches in 1987 (1/943/86). The site is located to the south of Codicote, along St Alban's Road as illustrated on the map below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Site Location

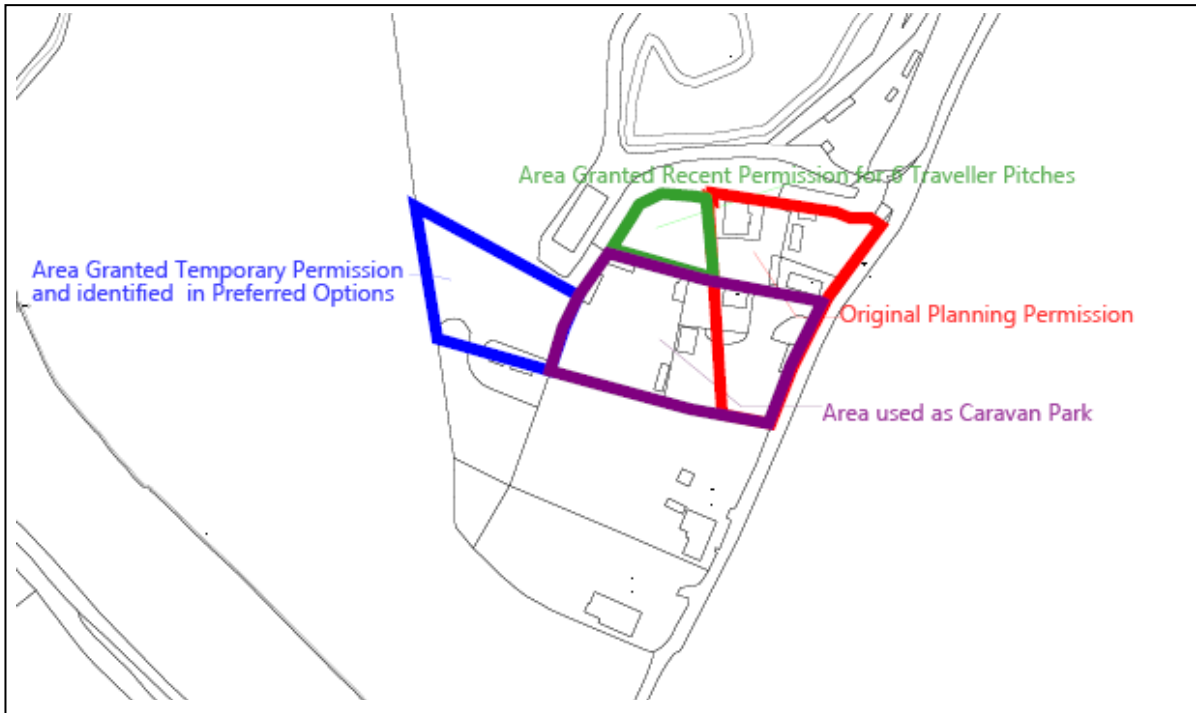


Context

2. The resident population of the site has grown as a result of natural growth as well as the introduction of additional family members to the site. In more recent times certain parts of the site have also been used as a caravan park, housing non-travellers.
3. Planning permission was granted for an additional 6 pitches in 2013 (Ref 11/00788/1) for the area known as Wexford Park (See Fig 2 – area outlined in green). This was granted on the basis of natural growth which was evidenced through the submission of the planning application.
4. Additionally and following an appeal against enforcement action, temporary permission was granted for 6 pitches on land further west of the site. This area was also identified as a potential allocation in the Preferred Options Local Plan (2014) and more recently in the Proposed Submission to accommodate future growth of the site up to 2031.

5. In 2015 a Lawful Development Certificate was granted for part of the site as a residential caravan site (13/01454/1EUD). Part of this permission overlaps the original permissions for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation from 1984 and 1986.
6. This complex situation is best explained through a map which is detailed below in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Different areas and uses on the Pulmore Water / Wexford Park Area



Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)

7. In support of the District Council's Preferred Options Local Plan in 2014, the Council commissioned ORS to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). This document identified current levels of provision and forecast the growth of the district up to 2031 in line with National Guidance in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. ORS undertook a site visit and had discussions with onsite residents regarding future aspirations in reaching their conclusions.
8. Up to 2031 it was forecast that **seven** additional pitches would be needed to meet the growth of the existing population, which is essentially, entirely related to growth of this site.
9. The GTAA did also raise an issue (para 3.41) regarding this site that whilst there is permission for 12 pitches permanently and 6 temporarily, because some of the area covered by original permissions was overlapped by the caravan site (recently granted an Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) that this may compromise the ability of the site to accommodate the figure for future need. Therefore further work was needed to confirm existing capacity of the site and whether there was an ability to accommodate future provision.

Site Visit

10. A site visit was undertaken on the 7th July 2015. Rather than just counting the number of pitches, the site visit was used to assess the capacity of the site, noting, where possible, pitches in use as well as those that weren't. The parts of the site being used for Traveller accommodation were split into areas A – F on **Figure 3** below for ease of understanding.
11. The site visit took place with the site manager who was able to confirm figures for the majority of the areas in question.

Figure 3: Outline of site area



Capacity and Numbers

12. Area A – This area is owned and habited by a Traveller and his family. This area accommodates 3 pitches, however only one was in use at the time.
13. Area B – This area includes the dwelling of a Traveller where he lives with his family and as it is a permanent structure in the form of a bungalow and they no longer travel it is not considered to be a pitch¹.
14. Area C – This area forms part of Wexford Park and accommodates 3 pitches, all of which were in use.

¹ As defined by Planning Policy for Traveller's Sites (2015)

15. Area D – This area is what was the former ablutions block and is lived in by two Travellers. This is considered to be a permanent structure and again it was confirmed that the residents do not travel so it is not counted as a pitch.
16. Area E - This area is representative of the planning permission granted in 2012. Whilst there were six pitches in use, there is capacity for 7 in total as one pitch was not in use at the time of the site visit.
17. Area F – This is the area granted temporary permission on appeal for 6 pitches in 2012. It wasn't clear who was living on this area, although the only known Traveller had moved off the site to live in Hemel Hempstead. Based on the overall area of the site (in comparison to say Area E) there was potential capacity for more than 6 pitches.
18. Totalling the figures above on sites A-F, it would appear that there is capacity on site for at least 19 pitches. This assumes that the permanent residential dwellings currently used by travellers are not counted as pitches as those within them have chosen to live in a permanent structure rather than a caravan (if these are counted, this increases the capacity further).
19. At the time of the visit approximately 10 pitches were in use by Travellers, which roughly corresponds to the GTAA's estimation of last year.

Conclusion

20. It is clear that whilst the lawful development certificate for a caravan park has overlapped the original permissions for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, there remains capacity within the overall site to accommodate the level of need that currently exists and the 7 additional pitches up to 2031.
21. Excluding Area F there are approximately 13 pitches available for Gypsy and Traveller use, 10 of which were in use at the time of the site visit.
22. Based on the size of Area F, there is potential to accommodate in excess of the 6 pitches granted temporary permission. Therefore, this area could potentially provide growth beyond 2031, should it be needed. If Area F is allocated for Gypsy and Traveller uses there is an overall capacity of at least 19 pitches, which provides sufficient capacity to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in North Hertfordshire up to 2031.
23. Currently there is no need to consider additional sites as the need being generated onsite can be accommodated on the existing site.