

Objections to proposed Travellers Site in Grange Road next to Mudford Wood, Christchurch
Site name & settlement: Grange Road DSO, Depot, Grange Road, Christchurch

Basic details of the Proposed Site:

15 Pitches (30+ Caravans and 60 Cars) covering the entire site from the borders of BAE sports and social club to the houses of Delta close bordering Mudford Woods (site of conservation interest) throughout at the rear.

The size of the site will dominate the local landscape – against government edicts and the number of pitches is more than double the recommended size (6). There seems little point in purpose designing a site that conflicts with the preference within the travelling community for smaller sites.

It is overly large area for the purpose and stretches far further than the houses opposite– nearly 5 times the size of the space occupied by the houses opposite. The size of the site area is the equivalent of 2 ¼ football pitches and would be larger than all the houses down the road including delta close at the end.

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Our Main Concerns

Whilst we understand the need for Traveller sites in the form of either/or residential sites or transit sites the site at Grange Road simply is not suitable for this use and will have a damaging effect on local business, established local residential housing, local environment and the wider community who use this area.

There are other sites more suitable that have not even been considered and part of this consultation process is to highlight any such sites to the employed consultants who do not have local knowledge.

Grange road has been shortlisted by Baker Associates through a desk-based GIS (Geographical information System) at this early stage there has been no further research or enquiry and without local knowledge they have not properly examined the damage to the existing local community or the potential future damage to our community.

One of our main concerns is that without those units and offices for start-up businesses Christchurch will be lacking a major economic resource as part of the infrastructure and this sort of space will be both difficult and expensive to replace

The site itself is far too large and will dominate the area, it is open to flood risk, borders a site of national conservation interest and the area has previously always been refused residential planning. It should be rejected as a potential site.

As residents we believe this area has already become over-developed with large business units going at the back of our houses and the last thing we want is any further disruption or development at the front. During evening and weekends this road is quiet and you forget that the units are even there. Any site will create noise and light pollution and will completely alter the character of the area.

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Objections:

Successful opposition to proposed sites or halting the development of a site is achievable but affected residents need to think strategically to influence the local planning authority.

It is crucial to strike a balanced and impartial tone as objections that appear to be motivated by prejudice or are based on false assumptions will be swiftly dismissed

Warning: Do not use racial stereotypes as objections including crime or anti-social behaviour : When residents in another area were asked to provide feedback on council plans to build traveller camps on their doorstep they dutifully responded. More than 3,000 homeowners filled in forms outlining their views, many raising concerns over a possible increase in noise, traffic, rubbish and a detrimental effect on property prices. However, such objections were not appreciated by Mid-Bedfordshire District Council, which partially or fully **rejected nearly nine in ten** of the replies for including comments 'of a racist nature'.

The following is a list of potential objections we have compiled in conjunction with planning consultants, councillors and through research regarding other sites across the UK. Our Suggestion is that you read though the following points under the general headings and use some of these points which you can word in your own way in order to compile your **letters of objection** or fill in the response forms on the back of the **“Have your say: finding sites in Dorset for Gypsies and Travellers” leaflet**.

The response form can be downloaded here: <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=167774&filetype=pdf>

Change of Use

- This is a contentious issue and has seen many years of legal battle – adjacent lands have been refused planning residential planning including land at the rear of Grange road being refused at High Court previously
- The Land is for Business Use only as far as we know. The site is currently regarded as being in employment use and is protected from alternative development by Policy EL1 of the Christchurch Local Plan
- Land is in use and not derelict– so surely other sites should be considered above this one
- If (which is a big IF!) the site is considered to be suitable for residential use is this the best use? National policy presumes in favour of the efficient use of land, and the more acute need for affordable houses and flats, so it could be argued that the most efficient use of the site would be to provide between 30 -50 affordable homes for the settled community rather than 15 pitches for the travelling community.

Removal of 10 Industrial units and 23 offices and all the business they contain

- No other similar enterprise centres in Christchurch
- A significant lack of available similar priced/sized units in the Christchurch area.
- Other suites or units will require additional costs including legal costs, lease and higher rents
- Damaging to the local economy in particular the businesses and their employees
- Replacing part of Christchurch’s infrastructure will be difficult and very costly.
- Loss of income of £123K from the “rent”
- The loss of the existing business facilities at the site would have a significant adverse impact on existing and future employment opportunities in Christchurch.
- The site is highly unlikely to become available in a manner that will not result in the loss of jobs and an important employment resource within the foreseeable future.

Local Infrastructure

- Do the schools in the area have space to provide child places particularly for specific religions? Many report a lack of places and a travellers site is likely to have a high density of children according to the Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide .
- There may be a need for provision of special needs teaching which will need to be addressed
- There will also be a requirement for local GP's and other health services to provide services and these are also seen to be at full capacity.

Impact on landscape/ light pollution = Overpowering Site

- The size of the site will dominate the local landscape – which is against government recommendations
- The number of pitches is more than double the preferred size (6). There seems little point in purpose designing a site that conflicts with the preference within the travelling community for smaller sites.
- It is overly large area for the purpose and stretches far further than the houses opposite– nearly 5 times the size of the space occupied by the houses opposite. *Images and details can be found on Google Earth.*
- It is the size of the area is the equivalent of 2 ¼ football pitches and would be larger than all the houses down the road including delta close at the end
- The development of the site could have an adverse effect on the landscape and environment although it is an existing industrial area the demolition and re-sculpting of the site is bound to raise issues
- There will be increased noise and light pollution from the site especially due to the size and there is very little disruption from the existing site during evenings and weekends

Outside planning boundaries (what the site will border)

- Conservation Issues – borders on areas of conservational interest (SNCI) – Mudeford Woods is a designated conservation area and the site will directly border the area. Bats and foxes are known to be in the local area along with protected species of birds. Further research is required to know what else may be in the area that could be affected.
- The frequent and intensive evening and weekend use of the sports club and pitches may create unacceptable noise and disturbance to the potential future residents.
- If the site were to be developed, and subsequent complaints were raised by the residents about noise and disturbance from the sports field, the result could be that the use of the sports club could be curtailed.

Highway issues / increased traffic

- Highway issues, increased traffic – there is difficulty in exiting and access to Grange road already. It is estimated an additional 135-165 movements every day with the site based on Highways Agency data.
- Access and safety – There is only one entrance into Grange Road directly leading onto a busy dual carriageway heavily used by fast traffic which could create safety issues.

Flood Risk

- The site falls within the flood plain of the Mude.
- The proposed use of the site would be highly vulnerable to flooding.
- The benefit of the proposed use to the wider community would not outweigh the risk of flooding to the occupants of the site and others.
- Any measures to reduce the risk of flooding on the site would be likely to increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

Historic Site

- It could be argued that the site which was once the site of the Somerford Grange and the summer home for the Priors should not be developed further and should be preserved for archaeological research

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Alternative Sites

The local authority is under an obligation to provide housing for gypsies and travellers as part of its housing strategy. We need to look for alternative sites as this problem won't just go away and separate sites do need to be provided for residential and transit.

The consultation document makes it clear that a significant number of potentially suitable sites have been discounted because they are not available. The Council does, however, have a right to forcibly acquire land through compulsory purchase if there is a genuine public benefit, although this will be as a last resort.

The reasons why other sites have been discounted need to be explored in more depth as some appear to have been discounted even though the shortlisted site has exactly the same issues.

Given the availability of the proposed site at Grange Road – i.e. the need to acquire alternative premises for the existing business use with the associated cost and timescale – it seems to me that the site is perhaps no more 'available' than many that have been discounted. Surely this shouldn't have ever been shortlisted?

Should you know of any alternative sites that could be suggested please include them with your objections

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For Further research:

The Government's own guidelines for the selection of Gypsy and Traveller sites can be found in publication 08GTU05266 which was published in May 2008. This document, entitled Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide has a whole Chapter on recommendations for the location of such sites. It makes 23 recommendations, which are summarised below

Guidelines for sites can be found here:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/designinggypsiesites>

3.1 poorly located sites with no easy access to major roads or public transport will have a detrimental effect...

3.2 easy access to local services and social contact with residents...greater sense of community...

3.3 safe environment for the residents

3.4 refers circular 01/2006 on factors for sustainability

- means of access, availability of transport modes and distances from services
- promotion of integrated co-existence between site and local community
- easy access to GP and other health services
- near to bus route, shops, schools
- ground conditions and levels of land
- **avoid high flood risk**

3.5 visual and acoustic privacy, sympathetic to local environment, consider relatively high density of children likely

3.6 avoid sites that are inappropriate for ordinary residential dwellings unless exceptional circumstances apply. The circumstances must not affect the health & safety of the residents or the sustainability of the site

3.7 near to housing for the settled community as part of mainstream residential developments

3.8 sites link in with other broader strategies for improving community cohesion and be a key issue in them

3.9 sustainable coexistence with the local community. Noise/disturbance to residents, neighbours, especially with movement of vehicles

3.10 travellers prefer rural location but on edge or closely located to large town or city. They do not like isolation or great distances to facilities due safety (eg. walking home at night)

3.11 where joint residential/commercial is envisaged (showpeople) this must be compatible with local land use

3.12 a case study

3.13 essential mains water, electricity, drainage and sanitation

3.14 sewerage through mains systems where possible, otherwise suggests biodisc plant system

3.15 all sanitation to meet legislation, regulations and British Standards

3.16 not contaminated land

3.17 brownfield OK, but not near rubbish tips, landfill, pylons or heavy industry

3.18 main roads, flyovers and railway lines - health and safety - greater noise transference through walls of caravans

3.19 level site without risk of caravans overturning or flooding

3.20 risk of flooding must be determined prior to allocation of the site

3.21 PPS25 flood risk test - caravans highly vulnerable

3.22 Further guidance on areas at high risk of flooding

3.23 Flood avoidance schemes, but must allow safe evacuation

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LINKS

<http://www.hall-end.co.uk/object.htm> - Example of specific objections to a planned travellers site

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/designinggypsiesites>

http://consult.huntsdc.gov.uk/portal/pp/shlaa_update/shlaagt?pointId=1265897596160&do=view

Registered objections logged with consultants & council for another area as examples

<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/travellerpitches> - Christchurch and Dorset information

<http://consultationtracker.dorsetforyou.com/00,consultation,10292,330,00.htm> Christchurch and Dorset consultation link with the relevant forms information and documents