

Planning Statement

Extension to travelling showpersons' site to
provide 7(no.) additional yards and recreation / amenity area

Five Counties Park

Greetham

Oakham



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1. Introduction

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1. The statement relates to a full planning application for the use of an approximate 1.22ha site as an extension to the existing Five Counties Park to provide seven additional yards for travelling showpeople. As well as providing additional / extended yards, the application also seeks to utilise part of the identified site as a recreation and amenity area for what is a large and established residential community. The Five Counties Park is located to the south of Greetham Inn Lane, Greetham, a short distance to the west of the A1. This application follows the grant of planning permission for 5(no.) additional yards as an extension to the existing Five Counties site in March 2023 (2022/1326/FUL). Subsequent that grant, the applicant has been made aware of the significantly increased assessed demand for pitches in the County (as set out in the *Rutland County Council Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTTSA)(March 2023)*), and has been encouraged by the authority to submit proposals for additional yards to contribute to the satisfaction of the identified demand. This proposal, on the same site as the earlier 5-yard consent, provides a total of 7 yards together with an amenity area.
2. The extension site in this instance is located directly to the south of the existing site and accessed directly from it. There are presently 20 yards within the existing Five Counties Park site and the seven additional yards proposed in this case are intended to address some existing overcrowding issues within the existing plots, as the children of existing plot owners seek their own yards. Some of the existing yards are becoming overcrowded, not simply in terms of the level of occupation (with several households and extended family groupings in some instances) but also in terms of the amount of fairground vehicles and equipment that need to be accommodated.
3. The applicant in this case is the original developer of the Five Counties Park, who resides on one of the yards and has sold the remaining yards to travelling showperson families. The plot occupiers are travelling showpeople (as per the definition in Annex 1 to the DCLG document "Planning Policy for Travellers Sites") and most are members of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain. Until recently it was a condition of the planning permission relating to the Five Counties site, that occupiers were members of the Showmen's Guild. This requirement has been modified by permission ref: APP/2013/0009, and now restricts occupation to the DCLG travelling showperson definition.
4. A number of the existing plot occupiers are experiencing plot overcrowding, both in terms of the number of households occupying individual plots, and in terms of space to accommodate equipment (something recognised in the recent GTSAA report). In many instances the children of original yard occupiers have reached an age where they have their own families, but are still residing on their parent's plot, through lack of alternative accommodation. They wish to continue the showperson tradition, have their own equipment, and are in need of their own yards to set up homes. The existing yards within the site are not large enough to accommodate several generations of the same family and all their associated equipment, and the applicant is wishing to create additional plots within the application site specifically to meet the needs of existing families on the site. It is not anticipated that there will be any additional incoming traveller families, and that the new yards will simply address existing overcrowding issues within the existing site. All of the yards are privately owned and occupied.

5. This eventuality has been anticipated within the Site Allocations and Policies DPD (as well as background papers forming part of the recent Local Plan examination) which refers to the likelihood of the site owners wishing to expand the boundaries of the existing facility. The more recent GTSAA report re-inforces this. The expansion proposals are supported by Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy and by the DCLG Document ‘Planning Policy for traveller sites’ (August 2015). The most recent RCC Needs Survey published in March 2023 identifies a significant need during the forthcoming GTSAA period (to 2046) for additional yards – principally to accommodate the needs of existing multi-generation households. The March 2023 assessed need significantly exceeds that previously identified (in the *South Kesteven & Rutland Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment 2016; RRR Consultancy Limited*). The Council’s submissions to the Local Plan examination (PCC 004c) referenced the 2016 report and recognised that future need would best be accommodated by an expansion of the existing Five Counties site, rather than on new sites. These proposals seek to address identified need in this manner. It delivers the greatest number of plots within current ownership constraints.

6. There are demonstrably no available plots within the existing site to meet the overcrowding / need for additional yards that is presently arising, and the proposed expansion to create 7 additional yards represents a logical and appropriate addition to the existing site that will result in no adverse visual or environmental impacts or policy conflicts that would justify a refusal of planning permission. The principle of extending the site to provide 5 additional yards has been agreed and the consent (**2022/1326/FUL**) remains extant. This represents a relevant and material fall back consideration in this case.

2. The application site

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7. The application site in this case comprises an approximate 1.2ha parcel of agricultural land located to the south of the existing Five Counties Park, which is situated on the southern side of Greetham Inn Lane, Greetham. The site is located a short distance to the west of the A1, 0.5km south-west of Stretton and 2km north-east of Greetham. The Ram Jam Inn and the adjoining service station and garage are located a short distance to the north of the site. To the north of Greetham Inn lane, between the land and the A1 slip-road is an additional showpersons site that was granted planning permission in 2013 to address one family's overcrowding within the Five Counties park site (APP/2013/1020).



OS plan (not to scale) identifying the broad location of the application site

9. The present application site comprises an inverted triangular-shaped parcel of land set directly to the south of the existing Five Counties Park, which is located on Greetham Inn Lane. The application site, is bounded to the north by the existing Five Counties Park site. To the south-east it is bounded by an area of established woodland, whilst to the south-west is agricultural land. A short boundary to the east is defined by a close-boarded timber fence running alongside a roadway, running parallel to the A1, serving the former Greetham Inn (which is a continuation of Greetham Inn Lane). Greetham Inn Lane is a west-east running public road, which runs off the B668 Stretton Road a short distance to the west of the Five Counties site. The road runs eastwards from its junction with Stretton Road for approximately 160m, up to (but not meeting) the A1. At this point, the public road stops, and the road turns and continues southwards as a private road, leading 600m southwards to Greetham Inn, a complex of buildings, including dwellings, located alongside the A1, and with northbound access onto/off the A1.
10. The Five Counties Park site abuts this road on its western side, separated by an established hedge and by fencing. The northern boundary of the Five Counties site abuts Greetham Inn Lane and is similarly defined by established hedges. The western boundary of the overall Five

Counties site is defined by an approximate 5m deep tree and shrub belt. The southern boundary has a less substantial definition, although there is a fence and limited hedge line.

11. The Five Counties Park is an established 3ha site for travelling showpeople. The original site was granted planning permission in 2005 (FUL/2004/0782) for a total of 16 plots ('yards'). Planning permission was granted for a southward extension of the site in June 2017, that provided 4 additional yards (2016/1231/FUL). As the photographs below show, the site is well screened around its perimeter and has a limited visibility from public vantage points in the vicinity. More visible, are the substantial telecommunications masts set adjacent the site alongside Greetham Inn Lane.
12. The 20 roughly equal-sized plots are accessed from a network of hardcored service roads. The overall site was originally established by a travelling showperson who resides on one of the plots within the site. The other plots have been sold to travelling showperson families and are individually occupied by them. The service roads are owned and maintained by the original site developer, and a service charge applies for the maintenance of communal facilities (including drainage).



Site location: The plan illustrates the location of the application site, and its relationship to the existing Five Counties Park site, and surrounding roads, including the A1 to the east. The photo illustrates the extent of overcrowding on some of the plots. To the north of the Five Counties site, is the additional yard consented under application ref: 2013/1020/FUL.

13. Located to the north of Greetham Inn Lane, on the opposite side of the road to the Five Counties site is an additional plot, which was granted planning permission under application ref: 2013/1020/FUL. This consent was granted to a family resident on the Five Counties site, who were experiencing overcrowding. The new plot enabled the Plot 15 owners to relocate to a larger plot, whilst enabling their son to remain on Plot 15 with his own home and equipment.
14. As the photographs below (and the aerial photograph above) illustrate, the existing Five Counties site is bounded by a strong and established tree and hedge screen, particularly to the north, west and east. These are robust boundary treatments and serve to screen the interior of the site from view, from surrounding public vantage points. The overall site has assimilated well into its rural location, and has no wider adverse impacts.



View towards the existing Five Counties Park from the B668, looking east. The site, and activity on it, is largely screened from view by roadside hedges and perimeter screening.



Greetham Inn Lane looking east. The Five Counties Park is to the right



The application site and the existing Five Counties Park are well screened from the A1 by several rows of established hedgerows.



Entrance to the Five Counties site.

15. The application site in this case has an area of approximately 1.22ha. It is located directly to the south of the existing site and comprises an inverted triangular shaped site that tapers southwards to a point. At its northern end the site is adjoined by an internal site road that provides access to yard nos.17-20. A short eastern boundary abuts the road leading to the former Greetham Inn and adjoining dwellings (The Olde Greetham Inn, The Barn and The Forge). To the south-east the site extends up to an area of established woodland. To the south-west the site is bounded by agricultural pasture land). This boundary is presently defined by post and wire fencing. The site falls gently north to south. Towards the southern end of the site there is a shallow depression. The land is laid to grass with no distinguishing

features. Access to the site is via the existing Five Counties Park access roads. It is presently accessed via a field gate from the adjoining access road.

16. The vicinity of the application site comprises an attractive, gently undulating landscape of arable fields and paddocks, and woodlands. Fields are generally well defined by mature, managed hedgerows and trees, and the landscape is dotted with established plantations and woodland areas. Human interventions, in the form of the A1 and its roadside facilities, as well as large intensive agricultural uses, golf courses and quarrying have all made their mark upon the landscape, albeit that its attractive qualities, generally prevail. The existing Five Counties site use has been assimilated into the landscape and due to its effective landscape screen, is largely screened and has no harmful visual impacts.

3. The proposed development

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17. The applicant in this case, is the original applicant who established the Five Counties Park. The applicant is a travelling showperson, who resides on one of the plots. Within the overall site the individual plots have been sold to individual showpeople and their families, whilst the applicant retains ownership of the common areas and access roads. As individually owned plots, the plot owners utilise their plots, as their operating base, for their equipment and caravans. In many instances, a plot will be vacated whilst the owners are travelling the country at fairs and events, although in some cases equipment will be stored at the site, and in some cases some family members will remain on site whilst others are travelling. Typically, showpersons and their families will occupy touring type caravans that they can take with them whilst travelling. In some cases, larger mobile-home type caravans (referred to as 'chalets'; that fall within the legal definition of a caravan) have been installed to enable a more stable home environment. Whilst all the site occupiers are travelling showpeople, they do not travel collectively to events; different families will travel to different events. Rather than a single collective group, the site essentially comprises a small complex of individual owner-occupiers, with common site requirements, and all fulfilling the travelling showman occupancy requirement of the relevant planning permissions.

15. As families grow, it is frequently the case that children of the original site occupiers, will wish to establish their own fairground / show businesses, with their own equipment and caravans. As in a bricks-and-mortar context, young adults wish to set up their own home and business. In many instances, the lack of available sites means that these young adults are forced to share a plot with their parents, until such time as a new plot becomes available. Overcrowding is the consequence and there are some instances within the existing site where 10 people and their attendant caravans and equipment (essentially 3 or 4 generations of the same family) are occupying a single plot. This overcrowding is now resulting in some of the equipment and lorries being parked on the internal service roads or on adjoining land because they cannot be physically accommodated within the plots. Some plots are being shared by separate, unrelated households ('doubling up'). Whilst at some times of the year it may appear that some plots are under utilised, this is generally due to the owners being away from the site working, and generally speaking, these plots will become fully occupied during quieter periods.

16. Under planning application ref: APP/2013/1020, one family experiencing such overcrowding sought to create an additional plot adjoining the Five Counties site north of Greetham Inn Lane to enable one of their children to establish their own plot. Consent ref: 2016/1231/FUL established four additional yards and again, these have generally been acquired and occupied to relieve overcrowding issues elsewhere within the site.

17. The circumstance has again arisen where existing site occupiers are seeking additional space both to accommodate their equipment and to accommodate newly created households, which are presently forced to share plots with their parents / relatives. In order to address this recognised problem of overcrowding, this application seeks to extend the existing site southwards to create five additional plots. At the same time, it is proposed to create a communal open space area – to include a children's football pitch and an amenity / picnic area, available for use by all site residents.

18. Under planning application ref: 2022/1326/FUL, planning permission was sought for five additional plots on the triangular site to the south of the existing site (see submitted plan below). These additional yards were to be served firstly from the existing site access road serving Yards 17-20. The five plots were shown to be of a broadly similar size to the existing plots. It was also proposed to extend the existing yard 17 (itself part of yard 9) a short distance southwards and south-eastwards to create an enlarged yard.



Application ref: 2022/1326/FUL: Extract of proposed block plan (5 additional yards).

19. The individual plots were shown to be fenced with indigenous hedges established around them, and the southern boundary would incorporate a more substantial hedge and tree screen. Individual plots will be levelled and surfaced with hardcore.
20. No buildings were proposed as part of this application, and the site was intended to provide five plots to accommodate overcrowding and new household formation within the existing site. As we identify within the following section, this overcrowding issue has been recognised both within development plan policies and associated survey work and the development proposals are thus fully anticipated and supported by policy. Development plan documents identify that extension of the existing site represents a more sustainable option than creating a new free-standing site elsewhere. The screened nature of the site is such that its use as additional / overflow plots for travelling showpeople would have no impacts upon the wider locality. Conditions can reasonably be imposed requiring the retention of the existing hedges and the provision of additional site landscaping. Access to the site is via the existing site off Greetham Inn Lane.
21. An ecological assessment of the land the subject of the application site was undertaken as part of application ref: 2016/1231/FUL. This identified no ecological barriers to the proposed development.
22. Planning permission was granted for the 5-yard extension in March 2023.

The proposed development

23. In response to emerging information that there is a significant demand for additional yards in the County, and with some encouragement from the local authority's team with responsibilities for traveller and travelling showperson sites, the applicant has explored means by which the capacity of the overall site could be increased. The provision of additional yards is constrained by ownerships at the present time, but the present application site – which is the same as the 5-yard extension site – is considered to have some capacity to accommodate additional yards. Whilst it has never been a planning requirement *per se*, the applicant has placed some importance in creating an amenity area within the overall site, particularly for children's play. This was included in the 5-year proposals and the applicant would wish to retain similar provision within any revised scheme.
24. The application in this case proposes a total of 7(no.) yards – 2 more than previously approved. As illustrated below, these 2 additional yards are set to the south of the (previously approved) west-east running yards south of the existing access road. An access road, runs southwards between the two eastern most yards and an additional yard is provided to either side of this road. The road will also provide access to the amenity area. There is some minor re-configuration of the boundaries between the yards (although their overall sizes are typically maintained) to accommodate the new access road position. The overall red-line extent of the site is otherwise exactly the same as that of the earlier consent.
25. The existing Five Counties Park permission (APP/2004/0782) originally restricted occupation to members of the Showmen's Guild. That condition was subsequently modified to apply the restriction to a more general definition of travelling showpeople (APP/2013/0009). Whilst most occupiers are members of the Showmen's Guild, and intend to remain so, a more appropriate condition restricting use of the extended site would be one which applied the more general definition as laid out in the new DCLG Guidance of "Planning Policy for Traveller Sites", as per the recent permission (APP/2013/00009). (Whilst most travelling showpeople are members of the Showmen's Guild, membership of the Guild, or indeed any other similar organisation, is not a necessary requirement to ply their trade. There are a number of other

representative organisations). Existing and future site occupiers satisfy the relevant DCLG definition.



Block plan extract identifying 7-additional yards on the application site

4.Planning considerations

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Travelling Showpeople

26. Traditionally, travelling showpeople enjoyed a peripatetic lifestyle, travelling from fair to fair, mainly through the summer months and settling on more permanent sites, known as 'winter quarters' during the winter months. Increasingly however, sites are being occupied all year round, by some family members. A reduction in the number of large-scale fairs has tended to result in more localised travelling, with a need for more permanent bases. Sites are generally few and far between and great difficulty can be experienced finding suitable sites for permanent bases.
24. Travelling showpeople require a permanent base where they can store, maintain and repair their equipment and where they can station their caravans, when they are not travelling for the purpose of their business. This has traditionally been known as a winter quarter site as historically it has only been occupied through the winter months - October to Easter - when a permanent base is required. Today, however, more showpeople are wishing to occupy these sites on a permanent basis and during periods of the summer; older family members require less seasonal occupation and a more permanent base assist in the education of the children. It is not uncommon for travelling show-people to have part-time or seasonal jobs to cover the periods when they are not engaged in travelling to shows / fairs.
25. The Showmen's Guild indicate that throughout the country the number of showperson sites has diminished, primarily through different forms of redevelopment and sometimes as a result of compulsory purchase. At the same time, Guild membership has remained relatively constant. Where traditional sites have survived, the Guild identify that there has been a tendency for these to become overcrowded and, as single-family units have expanded, other showpeople have been displaced. In many parts of the country, demand for plots significantly exceeds supply.

Planning policy for traveller sites(DCLG August 2015)

26. Concurrent with the publication of the NPPF in March 2012, the Government published revised guidance on the planning issues associated with traveller sites. 'Traveller sites' refers to sites for both gypsies and travellers, and to travelling showpeople. It replaced two separate planning circulars; Circular 01/2006 relating to planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites and Circular 04/2007 relating to Planning or Travelling Showpeople. The new guidance was intended to be read alongside the NPPF. It was intended to inform the preparation of development plans, and to be taken into account in the determination of planning applications. Since its initial publication, the document has been further revised, and the current version of the document is dated August 2015.
27. The overarching aim of the policy is '*to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community*' (Para.2). Paragraph 4 of the guidance sets out the key aims in respect of travellers sites;

- ❖ That local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning.

- ❖ To ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites.
- ❖ To encourage local planning authorities to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale.
- ❖ That plan-making and decision-taking should protect Green Belt from inappropriate development.
- ❖ To promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites.
- ❖ That plan-making and decision-taking should aim to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and make enforcement more effective.
- ❖ For local planning authorities to ensure that their Local Plan includes fair, realistic and inclusive policies
- ❖ To increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply
- ❖ To reduce tensions between settled and traveller communities in plan-making and planning decisions.
- ❖ To enable provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure.
- ❖ For local planning authorities to have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment.

28. The guidance continues by setting out 9 policies (policies A-I) relating to all aspects of planning control for traveller sites. The most relevant sections are:-

Policy A : Using evidence to plan positively and manage development.

Policy B : Planning for traveller sites.

Policy C : Sites in rural areas and the countryside

Policy D : Rural Exception sites.

Policy H : Determining planning applications for traveller sites.

We consider and discuss each of these sections in turn below.

Policy A : Using evidence to plan positively and manage development

29. Policy A of the guidance emphasises that a robust evidence base should inform the LPA's planning approach. It states the need for community engagement, and co-operation with travellers and their representative organisations. The Council's should maintain an up to date understanding of the likely permanent and transit accommodation needs of their areas over the lifespan of their development plan.

30. The evidence base should then be used to inform policy preparation and development, and to aid decision making on individual planning applications.

31. The Council undertook a "*Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Study (Opinion Research Service)* (May 2012). This study was used as background evidence to the Site Allocations and Policies DPD. A further study (*South Kesteven & Rutland Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople (2016)*) was undertaken by RRR Consultancy Limited.

32. More recently, a further needs assessment has been undertaken by Opinion Research Limited, the results of which were published in March 2023 (*Rutland County Council Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTTSA)*). The research for this assessment was underway at the time of the previous 5-year application, but the results had not been published at the time of submission of the application.
33. The RRR Study of 2016 appeared to contain some inconsistencies. The report suggests that as at 2016, there were 12 authorised travelling showperson plots in Rutland. However, at that time, there were 16 plots at Five Counties Park together with the additional plot to the north of Five Counties Park that was consented in 2013 (2013/1020/FUL), as well as a site elsewhere in the county containing 2 yards. Thus, whilst there were actually at least 19 plots within the County, the report only included 12 of the 19 plots within the survey. Ten face to face surveys were undertaken, and the results factored up to reflect the 12 plots identified. In reality, there was at that time, substantially more plots than those surveyed and counted, and as a result, it would appear that the overall results and assessment of need were significantly understated.
34. Despite this under-reporting, the study nevertheless identified a significant unmet need for additional sites. Paragraph 7.29 of the report stated;

7.29 A lack of suitable accommodation is apparent with no households stating that there is a sufficient number of plots within the study area. However, no families stated that there is a need for transit provision mainly due to concerns about security. Also, relatively few households stated that one or more family members had moved out of the local area due to a lack of provision. Families would prefer new accommodation to be in the form of small, family sized yards. Only one family stated that they would like to develop their own yard but were not financially able to do so. Importantly, in relation to the assessment of accommodation needs 7 families stated that they contain household members who require separate accommodation within the next 5 years.

35. The Needs Study assessed a need for **10 travelling showperson plots** in Rutland over the period **2016-2036**. Paragraph 8.68 of the assessment states;

8.68 Table 8.10 summarises the number of residential, transit pitches/temporary stopping places, and bricks and mortar accommodation required over the period 2016-36. It shows that a further 32 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and 9 Travelling Showpeople plots are needed over twenty years in South Kesteven, and 13 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and 10 Travelling Showpeople plots in Rutland. A total of 19 bricks and mortar accommodation units are required for period 2016-36 in South Kesteven and 5 in Rutland. This need can be met from existing stock, but it is important for local authorities to be aware that 19 housing units will be required by members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

This requirement is summarised in Table 8.10b;

Rutland

| Period | Residential pitches | Travelling Showpeople plots | Bricks and mortar accommodation |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Total 2016-19 | 8 | 4 | 2 |
| Total 2019-24 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Total 2024-29 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Total 2029-36 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Total 2016-2036 | 13 | 10 | 5 |

Source: South Kesteven & Rutland GTAA 2016

Extract from South Kesteven and Rutland Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment 2016 (RRR Consultancy Limited).

36. As indicated above, the assessment appears to have under-stated the number of yards and under-estimated the level of need.
37. The summary section of the report (9.31), indicates that expansion of existing sites may contribute towards meeting existing need.
38. Since the needs assessment was completed, planning permission has been granted for additional yards at Five Counties Park (Plots 17-20).
39. The needs assessment was utilised as part of the background evidence for the preparation of the Local Plan. Local Plan Examination response paper RCC 004a discusses the level of need and how this might be delivered in the future;

2.17 The need for 10 plots for Travelling Showpeople for the period up to 2036 as set out in the Document HOU8 does not take account of 4 plots granted consent since then, attached to the existing Five Counties yard at Greetham (Reference: 2016/1231/FUL, granted 8th June 2017).

2.18 This reduces the accommodation requirement for Travelling Showpeople down to 6 plots over the plan period: 2 required by 2024; a further 2 between 2024 and 2029; and the remaining 2 between 2029 and 2036. Evidence from the MATU's liaison with local Travelling Showpeople suggests that much of the current need for plots in Rutland arises from the need to accommodate existing families and may be better met through extension to existing sites – although it has been more challenging to track this recently due to the impact of Covid-19 on the livelihoods of Travelling Showpeople. This approach is in line with paragraph 9.31 of the Document HOU8 which notes that there are families within the study area who would like to increase the number of pitches and plots and/or number of caravans allowed per pitch or plot on existing site/yards and considers that the expansion of sites with adequate space would contribute towards meeting existing need.

2.19 Given that the future need in Rutland arises from the growth of existing families that are already resident in the County, the Council's approach will be to respond to those needs where they arise. The Council's approach seeks to meet the identified assessed needs where possible through the extension of existing sites together with any suitable policy compliant application before considering the

allocation of new sites. The Council will work with stakeholders and our specialist advisors MATU to ensure that this need is met.

2.20 Again, given that the requirement for Travelling Showpeople is relatively small taking into consideration the permissions granted since the assessment and that this relates in the main to the specific requirements of one family, it is considered that the short term requirement for 2 plots can be accommodated by an extension to the existing Five Counties site at Greetham. This will be dependent on an application being compliant to national and local planning policies coming forward.

2.21 Beyond 2026, the submitted Local Plan Policy H11 sets out future provision will be delivered through: safeguarding authorised sites; extending existing sites; and as part of the new garden community. Policy H3 proposes that provision will be made for a minimum of 10 serviced plots for Traveling Showpeople in line with Policy H11 at St George's Barracks as part of the proposal to develop a new garden community. This will address the identified requirement from 2026 to 2036.

2.22 These policies identify a supply of specific, developable sites which will ensure the delivery of the requirement for the period between 2026 and 2036, as required under Policy B of the Government's Planning policy for traveller sites (PPTS). This approach will also provide for contingency if any policy compliant applications do not come forward 2021-26, as well as potentially allow for provision to cater for needs arising beyond 2036 on the site of St. George's Barracks.

40. Several key points emerge from the above;

- ❖ That the level of identified need appears to have been understated
- ❖ Although understated, there is an unmet need for at least 6 sites / yards. This need is largely attributable to existing overcrowding and new household formation.
- ❖ That the preferred method of meeting future need for travelling showperson sites/ yards is by the extension of the existing Five Counties site.
- ❖ The Council's intention to make future provision for 10 serviced plots at St. Georges Barracks is not likely to be realised in the future (certainly not in the short term) as the redevelopment of the Barracks site was determined to be unviable. This was a significant factor in the withdrawal of the Local Plan.

41. Fundamentally, the report showed an existing need, and that that need can be most readily satisfied by means of the expansion of the existing site. The assessed level of need was understated (and arguably out of date) and as we illustrate below the subsequent survey undertaken by Opinion Research has affirmed a significantly greater level of unmet need.

42. The Opinion Research Assessment (March 2023), following extensive interviews , reaches the following conclusions in respect of need;

7.34 Analysis of the household interviews for those that met the planning definition has identified a need from 12 concealed or doubled-up households or single adults; 11 teenagers who will need a pitch of their own in the next 5 years; and 14 from new household formation using a rate of 1.20% derived from the demographics of the residents.

7.35 Therefore, the overall level of need for those households who met the planning definition of a Travelling Showpeople is for 37 plots over the GTTSAA period.

43. Whilst the time frame for the assessment is now to 2046, the assessment includes a more accurate assessment of the actual number of existing yards at Five Counties Park (21 yards), and the assessed yard requirement of 37 is over and above the pre-existing number of yards at Five Counties. There is demonstrably a very high level of need for additional yards, and the proposed yards in this case (7(no.) total), will contribute significantly to the satisfaction of that demand. The proposed expansion of an existing site will most readily meet the need, and avoid the need to identify a new free-standing suite elsewhere in the County. Expansion of the site, as presently proposed, will also enable existing site amenities to be significantly improved by the provision of new open space and amenity areas available to all site users.

44. Paragraph 27 of the national guidance, states:

“... If a local planning authority cannot demonstrate an up to date five-year supply of deliverable sites, this should be a significant material consideration in any subsequent planning decision when considering applications for the grant of temporary planning permission.”

45. Whilst we are seeking a permanent grant of permission in this case, the guidance makes clear that an absence of sites to meet recognised needs is an important and relevant material consideration in the determination of applications. It is a consideration to which significant weight should be applied in this case. The previous grant of planning permission has established the in-principle suitability of the site for the proposed use.

46. Whilst in a few cases, an extended family group might seek a larger plot to accommodate a growing multi-generation household, this will be the exception. In most cases, most newly forming households (for example young adults marrying and setting up home on their own) will want and require a new plot. The application proposals directly meet this need. The additional yards in this case are proposed to address overcrowding on existing sites and will enable newly formed households to own their own yard.

47. The Council's own evidence recognises and acknowledges the overcrowding issue, and the Site Allocations and Policies DPD acknowledges that the expansion of the existing site beyond its existing boundaries is necessary. The development plan policy framework does not however presently provide an appropriate framework for this. There is a clear disconnection between the evidence base and the policy. Whilst the Core Strategy – Policy CS12 - contemplated additional policies and potential allocations coming forward in the Site Allocations and Policies DPD, there is no policy in that document, simply the lower-case text referenced above. Whilst we might anticipate new Local Plan policy will be informed by the findings of the March 2023 assessment, that report does not inform present policies, which are demonstrably out of date.

The Rutland Core Strategy Policy CS12: Gypsies and Travellers

48. This policy forms part of the Core Strategy adopted in July 2011. The policy notably predates both versions of the national policy guidance for traveller sites. The policy reads as follows:-

Policy CS12 – Gypsies and travellers

Site for gypsies and travellers and showpeople will be identified through the Site Allocations and Policies DPD and/or the planning application process,

The future need for sites for gypsies and travellers and showpeople beyond 2012 will be assessed in a review of the Leicestershire and Rutland Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment to be carried out in 2012. In determining suitable sites the following considerations will be taken into account:

- a) in the case of permanent sites, there should be reasonable and convenient access to schools, medical services, shops and other community facilities;*
- b) the site should be well located and provide safe and convenient vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access and adequate parking and not result in a level of traffic generation which is inappropriate for roads in the area;*
- c) the impact of landscape character and/or sites/area of nature conservation value including the internationally designated nature conservation site of Rutland Water*
- d) the site must provide adequate on-site facilities for parking, storage, play and residential amenity (including basic essential services);*
- e) the site should not be unacceptably visually intrusive nor detrimental to amenities of adjacent occupiers;*
- f) adequate level of privacy and residential amenity for occupiers should be provided*

49. This policy, by its wording seeks to establish the framework for the allocation of sites for gypsies, travellers and showpeople through the Site Allocations and Policies DPD. As we have highlighted, the Site Allocations DPD does not actually propose any sites for allocation, nor is it, as identified by the Needs Survey, identifying a criteria-based policy for the determination of windfall applications.
50. The criteria within Policy CS12 the policy are intended principally to inform site allocation. They serve as a poor proxy for a criteria-based policy, although our belief is that this will become a criteria-based policy by-default. Set out below, we list the criteria set out in the policy, and demonstrate that the development proposed in this case is in line with these selection criteria.

| POLICY CS12 Gypsies and travellers; In determination suitable sites the following considerations will be taken into account: | | |
|---|--|--|
| No | Criteria | Comment |
| a | In the case of permanent sites, there should be reasonable and convenient access to schools, medical services shops and other facilities. | The site is well located relative to services and facilities. The Five Counties site, by its approval as a site for travelling show people, was demonstrably recognised as being suitably located relative to services and facilities. Schools and shops and community facilities are available nearby. Similar considerations apply to this extension site. |
| b | The site should be well located and provide safe and convenient vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access and adequate parking, and not result in a level of traffic generation which is inappropriate for roads in the area: | The site is well located relative to services and facilities. The Five Counties site, by its approval as a site for travelling show people, was demonstrably recognised as being well located and offering good accessibility. The application site shares the accessibility benefits of the adjoining site. Similar considerations apply to this extension site. |
| c | The impact of landscape character and/or sites/area of nature conservation value including the internationally designated nature conservation site of Rutland Water | The development will have no adverse impact upon landscape character. The site enjoys significant planting to its boundaries that will screen on-site activity. Additional landscaping is proposed to site boundaries to screen the extension site. There will be no adverse visual impacts upon the wider locality or countryside. |
| d | The site must provide adequate on-site facilities for parking, storage, play and residential amenity (including basic essential services); | There is adequate space on site for parking, storage, play and residential amenity. The site enjoys access to services (electricity and water). The site can be adequately drained by means of an existing on-site package treatment plant. The intention is to upgrade existing facilities and provision is made within the expansion site for a new package treatment plant. |
| e | The site should not be unacceptably visually intrusive nor detrimental to amenities of adjacent occupiers; | The use of the extension site will have no adverse visual impacts. The use of the site will have no detrimental impact upon adjoining land uses. There will be no residential amenity impacts. |
| f | Adequate level of privacy and residential amenity for occupiers should be provided | The development will offer acceptable standards of residential amenity for future occupiers. The proposals include provision for a play area to serve the overall site. |

51. We can thus identify no conflicts with the principles outlined in this policy.

52. As indicated above, the Site Allocations and Policies DPD contains no specific policies relating to traveller sites. The only references are the lower-case text at paragraphs 6.6-6.8;

6.6 The ORS study also found no evidence of extra provision being necessary for showmen or Circus Performers in the future although it is likely that the residents of an existing facility will seek to expand its boundaries in the near future to reduce overcrowding.

6.7 With respect to planning policy provision, the conclusion reached by ORS is that it is important for the Council to continue to utilise the planning policies and criteria set out in Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy to facilitate the potential development of new Gypsy and Traveller sites in the areas. The policy guidance at Policy SP8 is not an additional requirement in consideration of sites for gypsies and travellers as adequate guidance is provided by Core Strategy Policy CS12.

6.8 From this the Council concludes that a sufficient potential supply of sites currently exists to meet a 5 year requirement and this can be maintained by an annual review of needs evidence and through the criteria based policy approach already set out at Core Strategy Policy CS12 (Gypsies and travellers). No specific sites for gypsies and travellers are therefore allocated in the plan.

53. The above suggests that based upon the earlier ORS 2012 study, there was not considered to be any identified need for additional showpersons sites (although this was based upon a very small, unrepresentative sample size). However, the 2016 RRR Survey and more recently the Opinion Research 2023 study, do both identify a significant level of need, a substantial proportion of which remains unmet at this time. Analysis of the 2016 and 2023 studies makes clear that Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy is the starting point against which proposals for sites may be considered. As we have demonstrated above, against the considerations set out in the policy, the proposals are compliant.

Policy B : Planning for Traveller Sites.

54. Paragraph 9 of the “Planning Policy for Traveller Sites” guidance states that Local Planning Authorities should set pitch targets for gypsies and travellers and plot targets for travelling showpeople, which address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs for travellers in their area, working collaboratively with neighbouring local authorities.
55. Paragraph 10 continues by stating the Local Plans should include a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of sites against locally set targets with broad locations identified for future delivery for year 6 onwards. The number of plots/pitches should be related to the circumstances of the specific size and location of these sites and the surrounding population’s size and density. Identified sites should protect local amenity and environment.
56. For the reasons elaborated above, we do not consider that the current development plan documents are adequately addressing this site identification requirement, particularly in the light of the confirmed overcrowding issue on the travelling showpersons site (affirmed by the 2023 needs assessment). Overcrowding is a consequence of newly forming households within existing sites. Inadequate account has previously been taken of this new household formation, and until the March 2023 report this has not been fully quantified. In the circumstances, where no sites are identified, sites that come forward to meet a genuine need must be viewed favourably, particularly if, as we have demonstrated, the use can be accommodated without impacting adversely upon local amenity and the environment.
57. Paragraph 11 of the guidance identifies that in cases where there is no identified need (not relevant in this case in this case), criteria-based policies should be included to provide a basis for decisions in case applications nevertheless come forward. Criteria policies, the guidance states, be fair and should facilitate the traditional and nomadic life of travellers whilst respecting the interest of the settled community. Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy appears to be largely intended as a policy to frame allocations (despite the fact that no allocations are

proposed). It does not, in our view, necessarily represent the criteria-based policy intended by the later guidance, although as we have shown above, if it is to be used as such, the application proposals demonstrably satisfy the considerations within the policy.

58. Paragraph 13 of the guidance identifies eight considerations that Local Plan Policies should address. Core Strategy Policy CS12 is not fully consistent with these requirements. However, we nevertheless consider that the application proposals are generally consistent with these requirements:

- ❖ Promote peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community
The proposed development, adjoining, and serving as an extension to, an existing site, will continue to be modest in scale and will have no adverse impacts upon the local settled communities.
- ❖ Promote, in collaboration with commissioners of health services, access to appropriate health services.
The site will enjoy equivalent access to facilities as the existing site adjoining.
- ❖ Ensure that children can attend school on a regular basis
Locals schools are within easy reach of the application site (Cottesmore and Exton)
- ❖ Provide a settled base that reduces the need for long-distance travelling and possible environmental damage caused by unauthorised encampment
The site will provide a settled base that will enable the wider family group to stay together in one location.
- ❖ Provide for proper consideration of the effect of local environmental quality (such as noise and air quality) on the health and well-being of any travellers that may locate there or on others as a result of new development
The site, as the existing site, will offer satisfactory living standards for future site occupiers.
- ❖ Avoid placing undue pressure on local infrastructure and services.
There will be no impacts upon local infrastructure and services.
- ❖ Do not locate sites in areas at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplains, given the particular vulnerability of caravans.
The site is not located in an area at risk of flooding.
- ❖ Reflect the extent to which traditional lifestyles (whereby some travellers live and work from the same location thereby omitting many travel to work journeys) can contribute to sustainability
A settled base for will contribute positively to local sustainability.

Policy C: Sites in rural area and the countryside.

59. Paragraph 14 of the policy guidance states that when assessing the suitability of sites in rural or semi-rural settings, Local Planning Authorities should ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled communities.

60. The existing site in this case is located some distance from the nearest settled communities (albeit sufficiently close for services to be accessed). In the case of Stretton, the site and village are separated by the A1. The site is some distance from Greetham to the west, and unseen from it. The existing site and the neighbouring site, combined with the extension site are modest in scale, comprising 25 plots overall. By their modest scale, the development

does not result in any adverse impacts upon the local settled communities and the proposed use will have no adverse impacts upon the character and appearance of the locality.

Policy D : Rural exception sites.

61. Policy D of the guidance relates to rural exceptions sites. The guidance states that if there is a lack of affordable land to meet local traveller needs, Councils should consider allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable traveller sites, and using a rural exception site policy to manage applications. A rural exceptions site policy should seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection, whilst also ensuring that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed, inclusive communities.
62. This policy in some respects appears to link site affordability and site needs. In reality, certainly in the local area, site affordability is not the key issue, but site availability. Local families suffering overcrowding are not impaired in their choices by the affordability of suitable sites (as none are specifically available/allocated), but instead by a more simple issue of availability. The second half of paragraph 15 of the guidance acknowledges that an exceptions policy should seek to address the needs of the local community, by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. The circumstances of this particular application clearly demonstrate a genuine local need, of existing established family. This in our view represents the type of exceptional need contemplated by the policy.

Policy H: Determining applications for traveller sites.

63. Paragraph 24 of the policy guidance states that local planning authorities should consider the following five issues when considering application for traveller sites:
- ❖ The existing level of local provision and need for sites
Whilst there is local provision for travelling show people on Five Counties Park, there is a clear and acknowledged overcrowding on some plots. There is a demand for additional plots from within the existing park, as a result of new household formation and the existing overcrowding that results from it.
 - ❖ The availability (or lack) of alternative accommodation for the applicants.
There is no alternative accommodation available to the applicant to meet this need. The application site is proximate to existing plots and will enable family groups to remain together in the same overall location.
 - ❖ Other personal circumstance of the applicant
This is as outlined above: ie. that the additional space is required to address existing overcrowding problems.
 - ❖ That the locally specific criteria used to guide the allocation of sites in plans or which form the policy where there is not identified need for pitches/plots should be used to assess application that may come forward on unallocated sites.
This has been covered in the earlier submissions; the application proposals are consistent with the criteria outlined in Policy SC12 of the Local Plan.
 - ❖ That they should determine applications for sites from any travellers and not just those with local connections.

The occupants seeking to take plots within the expansion site have local connections insofar as they occupy plots on the adjoining Five Counties Park site.

64. Paragraph 25 of the guidance suggests that Local Planning Authorities should limit new traveller sites in open countryside away from existing settlements. Sites in rural areas should respect the scale of and not dominate the nearest settled community, and avoid placing undue pressure on local infrastructure. The development in this case, by its scale will not dominate the nearest settled communities. The development will not place any significant demands upon local infrastructure. Electricity and water are available on the site, and drainage can be accommodated via a package treatment plant discharging to adjoining ditches. The existing Five Counties site was demonstrably found to be acceptable in this rural location, and earlier site expansion proposals have been supported. Relative to that existing development, the proposed site expansion is modest and proportionate. Existing site facilities will be enhanced.
65. Paragraph 26 states that in considering applications, planning authorities should attach weight to the following matters:
- ❖ Effective use of previously developed (brownfield, untidy or derelict land).
The site does not comprise previously development land. However, we are not aware of any previously developed land in the immediate vicinity that would be suitable or available for the proposed use.
 - ❖ Sites being well planned or soft landscaped in such a way as to positively enhance the environment and increase its openness.
The existing site enjoys robust boundary screening which is to be retained. Additional complementary landscaping is proposed as part of the present application; a provision that can be secured by condition.
 - ❖ Promoting opportunities or healthy lifestyles, such as ensuring adequate landscaping and play areas for children.
Space is proposed within the site for children's play and there is scope for additional landscaping.
 - ❖ Not enclosing a site with so much hard landscaping, high walls or fences that the impression may be given that the site and its occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community.
The proposed tree screening/hedging around the site, whilst serving a screening role is not so substantial as to cause any sense of isolation. In its treatment the site will be similar to the screening around the existing Five Counties Park.
66. Based upon the above, it is considered that the application proposal are fully compliant with the national planning policy guidance and development plan policies relating to travelling showpeople.
67. We also consider there to be no conflict with Policy CS4 in this case. There are demonstrably no suitable or available locations within or adjoining any existing settlements. Policy CS12 relating to gypsies, travellers and showpeople certainly does not preclude countryside locations for any new showperson development, and the location of such development in the countryside must therefore be seen to be in accordance with Policy CS4. Paragraph 3.41 references that sites should be located *in or close to* existing settlements, not within them. The proposed location clearly satisfies that requirement being close to both Greetham and Stretton. The existing Five Counties site was clearly found to be acceptable in this location and similar considerations must also apply in this case. There are clear advantages to co-

locating adjacent the existing site, and this must represent the most sustainable option, rather than identifying a new location elsewhere.

68. As part of this application, we have demonstrated that the proposals comply with both Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy and the National Guidance. Policy CS12 essentially relates to the merits of an identified site rather than to the principle of development. We have shown that the relevant criteria have been satisfied in this case.

5. Conclusions

Extension to travelling showpersons' site to provide 7(no.) additional yards and recreation / amenity area,
Five Counties Park Greetham Inn Lane, Greetham, Oakham

71. These submissions have demonstrated that the proposed site extension will satisfy a demonstrable need for additional plot space and will fully accord with the NPPF, national guidance on planning policy for sites for travelling showpeople and the Rutland Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Policies DPD. The site will be well screened by substantial boundary hedges, and adjoins existing site for travelling showpeople. The use is appropriate in scale, would have no impacts upon the wide locality and will have no impacts on the nearest settled communities.
72. The existing site is demonstrably overcrowded. Development plan documents recognise that there is a need to expand the boundaries of the existing site to recognise this overcrowding and new household formation.
73. The principle of expanding the existing Five Counties site, by the provision of 5 additional yards on the present site has been agreed. This proposal enables the provision of 7 yards within the same site, whilst also providing amenity / play space as previously. The increased provision will contribute significantly to meeting identified demand.
74. Accordingly, we consider that there is no barrier to a grant of planning permission in this instance.

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November 2023