

Great Baddow Parish Council Comments on Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Options

I would like to begin by saying that GBPC understands the need to provide permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites and the pressure that is coming from the Government for this provision. However we wish to comment specifically on the proposal to include site 7, land adjacent to Church Street and Molrams Lane in Great Baddow, in the consultation document.

Firstly, we find the description of the land involved somewhat vague, particularly the map indication by a circle, which extends into green belt land on the village side of the A1114. If there was any intention of placing a site on green belt land, we feel that is inappropriate, given that expansion of permanent housing is not permitted in green belt areas.

Related to that issue is the continual erosion of green space within Great Baddow, which has seen several areas of green space lost to large new housing developments in the last few years. This site would further erode what little we have left, particularly in this part of the village, which saw the open area next to Newport Close lost to a housing estate. In compensation for the loss of that land, we managed to secure the Bringey Playing Field, previously known as the cabbage patch, although there have been considerable problems in achieving a similar quality of surface to the land which we lost. Part of the site suggested borders on that land, and we have great concern that the playing field land would be vulnerable to further expansion of any such site in the future, whether official or unofficial. Part of the site suggested also has many mature trees with very little grass area, which seems to make it unsuitable as it stands, and we would certainly object to any attempt to remove these trees.

It is also worth noting that planning applications in Molrams Lane itself have been turned down for potentially harming the character of the lane and the setting of the estate.

Site access to any of the land being considered is proposed to be via Molrams Lane, which we consider to be unsuitable and potentially dangerous. The access would be almost immediately following a left turn from Church Street into Molrams Lane, with very poor visibility for drivers coming from Church Street or anyone turning into the site off Molrams Lane. Molrams Lane itself is a busy road, with school traffic for Baddow Hall schools and Sandon School and much traffic using it to reach Danbury, Maldon, Woodham Ferrers and the A12. It should be noted that access from Molrams Lane was considered unsuitable for Isaac Square, the new development I referred to before, hence the need to make the access from Newport Close, and nothing has changed since then. Part of the site suggested includes land adjacent to the slip road on to the A1114 and we consider that any access from there would also be extremely hazardous.

Our residents understandably have concerns about the ability of the existing infrastructure to cope with yet more expansion, particularly schools and GP services, which have already had to cope with a considerable number of new housing

developments. Fear of crime is another issue which has been strongly brought to our attention by residents, who attended a Parish Council meeting in force yesterday evening (nearly 200 of them), and concern for vulnerable residents living close to the site in Hargrave House.

Looking at the site from the point of view of potential occupants, we also have concerns. The site is very close to the A1114, the Baddow bypass, an extremely busy and frequently congested road between the A12 and the Army & Navy roundabout. There is concern that emissions from cars and heavy vehicles using that road and the busy junction of Molrams lane and Church Street could be a hazard to anyone living there. The site can clearly be overlooked from Church Street, which raises privacy issues. We expect the borough council to consult representatives from the gypsy and traveller community and support workers attached to an existing site, before pressing on with proposing a site which they themselves may not consider suitable.

We wanted mainly to comment about this proposed site, but I want to finish by briefly referring to sites you have already rejected as unsuitable. Site 8, west of the Park & Ride, has been very briefly dismissed. The only concrete reason for rejection given in Appendix 3 is the busy A414, but as we have said, the site in Molrams Lane has highway and air quality issues of its own. The comment that Site 7 is further away from the Park and Ride is a statement of fact, but reasons for this making it a better choice are not spelled out. We think the public deserve much better explanations than have been provided here. Similarly, you have said in the comment on Site 3, that it is suitable, but that expanding existing sites is not desirable. Because....?

We hope that you will take note of the issues we and residents have raised and reconsider your assessment of suitable sites. Plainly, if you proceed with including this site in your consultation document, we and residents will be expanding on our comments so far.

Thank you for giving us the time to present our views tonight.

Cllr Mrs Chris Shaw
Chairman, Great Baddow Parish Council
15.9.09