

## Supplementary to Council minutes – 27 July 2022

Response to Councillor Wilson's question under minute number 120

In respect of 'negotiated stopping places' or 'temporary stopping places', the Council does not currently have any sites which serve that purpose. The consideration of such provision would be dependent on a number of factors, including evidence of demand for such facilities, operating/licensing arrangements, and, importantly, whether any suitable site/s in appropriate location/s could be found should they be needed. In respect of demand, the GTANA has already identified (paragraph 5.10) that:

Short-term unauthorised encampments in the area are rare. It was suggested that there have been no encampments over the past 18 months.

and (at paragraph 7.39) that:

Due to historic low numbers of unauthorised encampments, and the existence of a public transit site in Hertsmere, it is not recommended that there is a need for a formal public transit site in East Herts at this time.

The report goes on to recommend (paragraph 7.41) that:

a review of the evidence base relating to unauthorised encampments, including the monitoring referred to above, should be undertaken on a Hertfordshire-wide basis. This will establish whether there is a need for investment in any new transit provision or emergency stopping places, or whether a managed approach is preferable.

Paragraph 7.42 states:

In the short-term the Council should continue to use its current approach when dealing with unauthorised encampments and

management-based approaches such as negotiated stopping agreements could also be considered.

A further description of 'negotiated stopping' is also provided (paragraph 7.43).

However, while the report asks us to consider negotiated stopping agreements and it is a recognised good principle, we do not currently have the evidence to demonstrate that they are actually needed in the district – a low propensity of unauthorised encampments has been stated in the GTANA (which are, of course, totally separate to unauthorised developments private land). Establishment of this type of site would not be a no-cost option to the Council, as facilities such as mains water, waste disposal and toilets would need to be provided, managed and maintained in addition to securing the land in the first instance. Although charges could be made for these facilities, there would still be outgoings at the outset and receipts from occupants are not guaranteed. This would be an outlay for the Council which is not currently budgeted for and would involve additional funding and thus it would be important to establish whether it can be demonstrated that there is an actual, rather than perceived, need for them prior to committing funds for their provision.

In terms of actually providing a site, we know from our experience with the Identification of Potential Sites Study in 2014, that it has been extremely difficult to identify suitable and available land in policy compliant locations in the district. Call for sites exercises (stand alone and wider District Plan related) were not previously productive in this respect. This would be even more challenging where the nature of a negotiated stopping site (as opposed to a permanent residential site) would predispose the location to being

close to good road access. Any site would also need to comply with the provisions of HOU9.

Therefore, a sensible approach in the first instance, as and when staff resources allow, may be for initial joint working with other Hertfordshire authorities to be undertaken to more fully understand any need/demand and assess potential supply sources across the county. Shared service opportunities could also be discussed, especially as we do not currently have expertise in site management. For information, HCC, who manages the only transit site in the county, as well as several public sites, are understood to not be taking responsibility for any additional sites.

Therefore, it is suggested dialogue with all other local authorities in the county should be instigated as a first step and consideration then made of whether any need for temporary or negotiated stopping places would be appropriate in the county or the East Herts district in due course.