

Item No. 30/02	Classification OPEN	Decision Level PLANNING COMMITTEE	Date 04.03.2003
From DEVELOPMENT & BUILDING CONTROL MANAGER		Title of Report DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
Proposal (02-CO-2109) Permanent retention of existing travellers site including provision of new amenity facilities, remodelling of site and environmental improvements.		Address Burnhill Close, Leo Street SE15 Ward Livesey	

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the above application which is for Committee consideration due to the number of objections received and because this is a Council's Own Development.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Grant planning permission

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The application site was granted temporary planning permission for continued use as a travellers site in March 1994, although it has existed since 1991. The permission was for a period of five years and it expired on 31st January 1999. As such, for the past 3 years the traveller's site has existed without planning permission. It was agreed at the meeting of the Executive held on 17 September 2002 to consider a planning application to upgrade the two existing temporary travellers sites to permanent status and apply for a Gypsy Site Refurbishment Grant.
- 3.2 This application is seeking to retain the Burnhill Close travellers' site on a permanent basis and carry out improvements to the existing facilities to improve the standard of accommodation available to the travelling community. An application to make the other temporary site at Springtide Close, Staffordshire Street permanent is also presented on this agenda.
- 3.3 Burnhill Close is divided into 6 pitches which have an average size of 170 square metres. Each pitch has its own amenity block with a toilet, kitchen and bathroom. Each pitch also contains mobile vans of varying sizes. The site has two driveway accesses, one to Gervase Street and the other to Leo Street. The Gervase Street access is for emergency access only.
- 3.4 The locality is of mixed character with residential, retail and industrial land use. To the west of the site is the former Southwark College which has recently been converted into residential flats, to the south are back gardens of houses facing Drovers Place, to the east is an industrial unit occupied by SG Smith trucks and to the north is a large retail warehouse.

4. FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

Main Issues

- 4.1 The main issues in this case are the need for retention of the site, the standard of accommodation created for occupants, the impact on streetscene and the impact the permanent retention of the site will have on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Planning Policy

- 4.2 Southwark Unitary Development Plan 1995 [UDP]:

Policy E.2.3: Aesthetic Control - complies, the refurbishments to the buildings will improve the overall appearance of the site.

Policy E.2.4: Access and Facilities for People with Disabilities - complies, the new amenity blocks have been designed to lifetime homes standards and will allow for disabled access which is lacking in the existing amenity blocks.

Policy E.3.1: Protection of Amenity - complies, the proposal will not result in any undue loss of light, outlook or privacy and is appropriate in this mixed use area.

Policy H.2.1: Rehabilitation and Improvement of Housing - complies, will improve an existing travellers site.

Policy H.4.3: Travellers - complies, the site is provided with basic services and is well located to transportation, shops and schools.

Draft Southwark Plan [agreed for Deposit November 2002]:

Policy 3.2: Protection of Amenity - complies, the proposal is acceptable in this mixed character area.

Policy 4.7 - Specific Housing Needs - complies, will retain and upgrade an existing travellers site.

Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Residential Design Standards' para. 8.3 - complies, the application will result in health and safety improvements to the temporary travellers site.

Consultations

- 4.3 Site Notice: 20.12.02 (exp.10.01.03) Press Notice: No

Consultees:

1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13 Gervase Street, London, SE15 2RN
1 to 36 (incl) Harry Lambourn House, Gervase Street, London, SE15 2RN
Flats 1 to 48 (incl) Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 2RN
Queen Elizabeth Public House, 61 Asylum Road, London, SE15 2RJ
63, 65A, 65B, 67, 67A, 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79 Asylum Road, London, SE15 2RJ
1 to 46 (incl) Drovers Place, London, SE15 2RR
1 to 6 (incl.) Burnhill Close, Leo Street, London, SE15
760, 812, 814, 816 Old Kent Road, London, SE15

Replies from:

Public Protection, Pollution Control - no objections

Public Protection, Residential Team - The site needs to meet the standards of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 Model Standards (this includes fire precautions). There needs to be a door between the kitchen and the WC and bathroom. Wash hand basins also need to be provided.

77C Asylum Road, SE15 - The entrance/exit is disruptive for the flow of existing traffic

and is dangerous for pedestrians entering and passing. The environmental impact of a transient population means consistent and unmanageable noise and traffic. The transient nature of the structures will cause a distraction/disturbance to the people of the immediate area. The residents of the site will have no play or recreation areas, apart from the road which is dangerous.

Flat 35, Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 2RS - This development will damage the rejuvenation of the surrounding area. Domestic violence on the site is already common and it can be intimidating for visitors and other residents who walk past the site. Noise pollution from children, violence and animals. Visual impact of the site. Rubbish dumping: this month alone a bath, cooker, washing machine, bed, sofa have been dumped.

Objection on behalf of one owner/occupier of Grenier Apts - The Grenier Apartments are a very exclusive and very expensive complex of flats which have come into being from a building which was once a school. My client wishes the following points to be known. After your team had erected signs publicising the intention to make the site permanent, the signs were removed. Around the site there is permanent rubbish and mess which extends outside of the camp site and as already stated does not seem to disappear at all. The travellers' dogs run riot and bark almost incessantly through out the day and night. The dilapidated vehicles which are around, are in themselves a disgrace and contribute in every single way to the below par condition of the area both for the local residents as well as the Council. The fights that appear to go on at the site are most worrying and very concerning both for children and also wives. I had made special enquiries through my agents, both sales and solicitors that the then current agreement for the Close being used by the travellers was almost finished and that they would then be moving out.

Flat 18, Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 - Raise complete opposition to permanent retention of the existing travellers site. The travellers have nothing of the same regard for our rights and well being as their neighbours sharing a dense urban environment and despite many hours of effort on our behalf, Southwark Council has proven highly ineffective in managing its tenants and unwilling to enforce the law to protect all its residents equally. Principal concerns are noise, pollution from burning rubbish and industrial waste, street dumping and loss of amenity through poor quality environment. Southwark Council has been ineffective in its management of the site and the proposal to make this permanent is both unjust and unacceptable.

Flat 24, Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 - My concerns are to noise pollution from dogs barking and people arguing, the unsightly appearance of the buildings and from refuse and scrap being left around the site which is a health and safety issue and crime as a result of youths from the site breaking into cars and fighting which is intimidating. The site permission expired in 1999 and an extension was never granted, surely this makes the site unlawful. If the occupiers had a right to purchase the site after 3 years what protection would neighbours have against the above concerns.

Flat 10, Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 - I support the continuation of the travellers site, however, this needs to be coupled with a strong management commitment from the Council to address problems of noise disturbance and appearance. Unless this is present, my support is retracted. There should be a contract with the occupiers of the site which requires them to address noise, behaviour, pollution, fly-tipping, occupancy levels and care and maintenance of the property. If any conditions are breached, lease of the property should be rescinded as with any other lease. Also concerned about control should the site be sold to the

travellers which they may have a right to purchase after 12 years of occupancy.

Occupant, Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 - same objections as detailed above.

Occupant, Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 - same objections as detailed above.

Flat 12 Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 - same objections as detailed above and concerns about threatening behaviour towards members of the public.

Flat 5, Grenier Apartments, 18 Gervase Street, London, SE15 - same objections as detailed above.

5 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Need for Permanent Retention

5.1 There are 76 gypsy and traveller households within Southwark who are accommodated either on official travellers sites or within public housing. Of these, 42 families have pitches on one of the 4 official sites within Southwark. There are two permanent sites within Southwark providing 31 pitches, one at Ilderton Road and the other at Brideale Close. The two temporary sites at Springtide Close, Staffordshire Street and Burnhill Close, Leo Street provide a further 11 pitches.

5.2 The families living on the temporary site at Burnhill Close, Leo Street are long standing residents of Southwark and have existed on the site since it was first established in January 1991. Temporary planning permission was then obtained in February 1994 and the site was developed, with hardstandings, amenity huts and electricity supply. While the site is quite small and contains a limited number of pitches it provides much needed traveller accommodation. The site is well located to transportation, schools and shopping which is supported by policy H.4.3 'Travellers'. The Housing Department have not been able to locate suitable alternative sites and for this reason recent independent reports (Needs of the Traveller Community in Southwark, 2000 and the Starfish Report, 2001) have recommended that all existing travellers sites be retained, refurbished and made permanent. There is a clear need to upgrade this site and make it permanent, which is supported in principle by UDP policies and central government guidance.

Standard of Accommodation

5.3 The existing amenity huts on the site are unacceptable having regard to current day thermal efficiency and accessibility needs. The existing amenity huts which have a floor area of 20 square metres contain a kitchen, bathroom and WC. It is proposed to improve these facilities by demolition of the old blocks and construction of new amenity blocks, increasing their size 27 square metres. The new amenity blocks will be to lifetime home standards allowing for disabled access. A new 2 metre high brick wall is also proposed around the perimeter of the site which will provide a consistent boundary treatment to neighbouring properties. It is considered that remodelling of the site and the provision of new amenity blocks will considerably improve the standard of accommodation for occupants of the site which is supported by Policy H.2.1 'Rehabilitation and Improvement of Housing' of the Southwark UDP.

Impact on Streetscene and Locality

5.4 The proposed improvements will not significantly alter the layout and design of the site and therefore the proposal will have limited impact on the streetscene. The new 2.0m high boundary wall will provide a consistent boundary treatment to the surrounding

street frontages which is supported given the poor state of the existing fence.

Impact on Neighbour's Amenity

- 5.5 A number of objections have raised concerns about anti-social behaviour associated with the occupants of this site. Whilst this may cause problems from time to time it is not a material planning consideration and it is not a matter that can be controlled under planning legislation. In general, domestic disturbance is a matter for the police and not the Council. However, the Acorn Neighbourhood Housing Office have investigated complaints in the past and any future complaints would need to be managed by the Neighbourhood Housing Office.
- 5.6 The new amenity huts, although slightly larger than the existing buildings, will not have a negative impact on the light, outlook or privacy of neighbouring properties and are therefore considered acceptable with respect to policy E.3.1 'Protection of Amenity' of the Southwark UDP.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The remodelling of the site and provision of new amenity buildings will be to Lifetime Homes Standards meeting the needs of disabled occupants. The permanent retention of the site will also provide much needed travellers accommodation within the Borough.

7. LOCAL AGENDA 21 [Sustainable Development] IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposal will make use of existing urban land and create more energy efficient buildings within the site.

LEAD OFFICER
REPORT AUTHOR
CASE FILE
Papers held at:

Andrew Cook
Carolyn Turk
TP/2426-A
Council Offices, Chiltern,
Portland Street SE17 2ES
[tel. 020 7525 5402]

Development and Building Control Manager
[tel. 020 7525 5421]