

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Executive – 1 June 2022

**Subject:** Gypsies and Travellers – The closure of the Dantzic Street Site

**Report of:** Strategic Director (Growth and Development)

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**Summary**

This report provides an update on the current position in relation to the City Council's Traveller site at Dantzic Street in Cheetham ward. It also provides information about an update to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and a review of the Council's approach to unauthorised encampments.

The report seeks the Executive's approval to formally close the Dantzic Street caravan site as it is no longer occupied and has previously been identified as no longer suitable for meeting the needs of existing residents.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Note the current condition of the Dantzic Street site.
  - (2) Note that the former residents have left the site and are pursuing 'bricks and mortar' accommodation following unrest within the wider Traveller community.
  - (3) Approve the proposal to close the Dantzic Street site as it is no longer suitable as a Traveller site.
  - (4) Note the proposal to update the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment to inform the future provision of Traveller sites in Manchester.
  - (5) Approve a commitment that those residents who left the site last summer will be offered a plot or pitch on any new permanent site provided in Manchester in the future.
  - (6) Note the outcomes of an Equality Impact Assessment.
  - (7) Agree that Discretionary Home Loss payments will be made to former plot holders moving into bricks and mortar accommodation.
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**Wards Affected:** Cheetham

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the decisions proposed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
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The Dantzic Street Traveller site does not meet modern standards, its condition is poor and is no longer fit for purpose. The site is unoccupied. An update to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment has been commissioned to identify future need and inform the process to identify new sites. Any future Traveller site reprovision will be designed to be sustainable and compliant with environmental standards. The Dantzic Street site is located immediately next to the River Irk and closure of the site will provide an opportunity to renaturalise this stretch of the river as part of the Victoria North regeneration initiative.

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of the contribution to the strategy</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Not directly applicable
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Not directly applicable
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The review of the Council's approach to unauthorised encampments by Gypsies and Travellers will seek to learn from the experience of other local authorities and organisations representing the Traveller community to find an effective and equitable response to the common issues unauthorised encampments can create.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Not directly applicable
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Not directly applicable

**Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for**

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

## **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

Revenue costs are incurred in respect of repairs and maintenance and utilities, and the annual expenditure budget is c£30k. This is offset by income from tenants in terms of rent, service charge and utility costs. Any future provision will work on a similar basis and details will be worked through once a suitable site or sites are identified.

## **Financial Consequences – Capital**

There are no direct financial implications for the City Council arising from this report, and any future consequences will be determined once a site is identified and any ask for capital resources will be subject to the usual capital approvals process.

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### **Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Gypsies and Travellers, Executive, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015
- Northern Gateway Strategic Regeneration Framework Update, Executive, February 2019
- Northern Gateway – Implementation and Delivery, Executive, February 2019

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council has one permanent Gypsy and Traveller site located off Dantzic Street in the Red Bank area of the Cheetham ward. The site was developed in the early 1980s and originally comprised 16 individual plots. Plots are fenced off hardstanding spaces, each with an external shower and wc block with washing facilities. Residents provide their own static and/or touring caravans for their plot.
- 1.2 In January 2015 the Executive approved the following:
- The closure of the Dantzic Street Traveller Site, owing to its poor condition, upon the identification and development of a suitable replacement and the relocation of the residents.
  - A set of criteria for identifying a new site.
  - Suspension of lettings for any further pitches on the site.
  - Consultation with residents about their future accommodation requirements.
  - Rehousing priority for residents wanting a 'bricks and mortar' home.
- 1.3 Also approved was a set of criteria for the location of a transit site to provide temporary short stay accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.

## **2.0 Consultation and the search for a replacement site**

- 2.1 Consultation with the Dantzic Street site residents in early 2015 provided a clear steer on their specific accommodation requirements and aspirations for a new site. Potential residential sites were assessed against the Executive agreed site criteria. Those that met, or nearly met, the criteria underwent desktop checks and assessments for flood risk, potential ground contamination and air pollution, vehicle access and land ownership. It proved challenging however to identify suitable available sites.
- 2.2 In early 2021 a specialist in working with the Traveller community, was engaged to undertake consultation with the Dantzic Street residents about two potential replacement sites – it should be noted that this exercise was undertaken to identify and meet the specific requirements of the existing residents. One of the two sites was unanimously preferred by the residents. A feasibility study of the site to identify any risks that might preclude development on the site was undertaken and discussions about the design of the new site with the residents began.
- 2.3 However, in the summer of 2020, there was some serious conflict within the North West Traveller community which resulted in violent attacks on some sites, including at Dantzic Street. Although relationships had appeared to have returned to normal, in the summer of 2021 there were further violent incidents in the region and again at Dantzic Street. As a result of this incident, all the residents left the site.
- 2.4 Initially, the move off site was expected to be of a temporary nature but after a

number of weeks the residents indicated that they did not intend to return, and all asked to be rehoused into 'bricks and mortar' homes. Most of the residents were provided with support and advocacy by Irish Community Care, a charity working with the Irish community and with Irish Travellers. All the former residents were offered or provided with temporary accommodation while their longer-term accommodation needs are being resolved. Former residents looking to be rehoused within the Manchester boundary have rehousing priority as approved by the Executive in 2015. Most of the former residents who remained in Manchester now have permanent 'bricks and mortar' homes.

- 2.5 A further incident at the Dantzic Street site in October 2021 resulted in some of the remaining vacant caravans being set on fire. The site also became a target for fly-tipping and was secured in early November 2021 by the Council to prevent any further occurrences.

### **3.0 Closure of the Dantzic Street site**

- 3.1 The Dantzic Street Traveller site, developed in the early 1980s, does not meet modern standards. It is small, less than half a hectare in size; the individual plots are cramped; there are fenced off vacant plots which further detract from the appearance of the site; and there is no green space or play facilities for the children who lived there, nor is there space on the site to create these. The washing and toilet facilities are outdoor and are of a low quality. A condition survey of the site in 2015 described the overall condition of the site as poor. In January 2015 the Executive approved the closure of the Dantzic Street Traveller Site, owing to its poor condition, upon the identification and development of a suitable replacement and the relocation of the residents.
- 3.2 The site is immediately adjacent to the River Irk and is in flood zone 2 (medium risk). Caravan sites are classified within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as being 'highly vulnerable' to flood risk. Highly vulnerable developments are no longer permitted in areas of high flood risk and in areas of medium flood risk (flood zone 2) are subject to passing the 'Exception Test' as set out in the NPPF.
- 3.3 A degree of privacy in the location of caravan sites is a particularly important concern for Gypsies and Travellers. Until now the Dantzic Street site has been the only residential part of the immediate neighbourhood so has benefitted from a high degree of privacy and seclusion. However, the Dantzic Street area is within the Victoria North regeneration initiative area and will change very significantly over the next few years.
- 3.4 A Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for Victoria North (formerly known as the Northern Gateway) was approved by the Executive in February 2019. Residential led development planned for the area around the site will mean that the seclusion the site has enjoyed until now will soon disappear. The Dantzic Street Traveller site is located within the new Red Bank neighbourhood, one of seven new neighbourhoods identified by the SRF. The closest new neighbourhood to the city centre, Red Bank will become an extension to it.

#### **4.0 Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment**

- 4.1 An update to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) undertaken in 2014 is being commissioned to provide an updated evidence base for the emerging Local Plan for Manchester. The study will identify the future requirement for Traveller provision in the city. The assessment is expected to be completed in summer 2022 and the refreshed Local Plan will be brought to the Executive for approval later this year. As part of the development of the GTAA former Dantzic Street Traveller Site residents and organisations representing the interests of Gypsy and Traveller interest groups will be consulted.

#### **5.0 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been developed to assess the impact of the closure of the Dantzic Street site on both the former residents and the wider Gypsy and Traveller community. As part of the process of evaluating the impact, consultation with the former residents of the site, with Irish Community Care, a charity who have been providing support and advocacy of behalf of some of the former resident families, and with national and regional organisations representing Gypsy and Traveller interests and rights was undertaken.
- 5.2 Gypsies and Travellers experience some of the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a wide range of social indicators. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published several reports highlighting the multiple inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers. The contributory factors are complex and often inter-related, but may include deprivation, social exclusion and discrimination.

- **Health**

The poor health experiences of Gypsy and Traveller groups compared with the general population, include higher rates of mortality, morbidity and long-term health conditions, low child immunisation levels, and a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression. A range of factors, such as poor accommodation, discrimination, poor health literacy, and a lack of cultural awareness and understanding by health professionals of Gypsy and Traveller health and social needs, are thought to create barriers to accessing healthcare.

- **Education**

Children from Gypsy and Traveller communities attain and progress significantly below the national average throughout compulsory education. In 2018, only 19% of pupils from Irish Traveller backgrounds and 13% from Gypsy and Roma backgrounds attained GCSEs in English and Maths at grade 4/C or above, compared to 64% of pupils nationally. Gypsy and Traveller pupils also have a high rate of school exclusions and report high levels of bullying and racial abuse.

- **Employment and training**

The 2011 Census found that Gypsy or Irish Traveller was the ethnic group with the lowest employment rates and highest levels of economic inactivity. Of those who were economically active, Gypsies and Irish Travellers were more likely to be unemployed and self-employed than the general population in England and Wales. Inactive Gypsies and Travellers were significantly less likely to be students or retired than the general population. There is evidence that Gypsies and Travellers face barriers in accessing employment.

- **Criminal justice system**

Prisoners identifying as Gypsy or Traveller are significantly over-represented in the prison population and are more likely to have concerns about their safety and to have suffered victimisation (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014). There is evidence that Gypsy and Traveller children are significantly over-represented in the youth justice system.

5.3 It is clear from the consultation undertaken for the development of the EIA that the impact on the former residents of the circumstances events that led up to them losing their homes at Dantzic Street and since: the deteriorating community relations, the attack on the site and the subsequent move to temporary or emergency accommodation beyond Manchester has had a severe impact on their health and wellbeing. The lack of culturally appropriate emergency, temporary and permanent accommodation in Manchester and beyond continues to severely impact on the mental health of many of the former residents.

5.4 Most of the former residents have expressed a wish to live on a Traveller site again in the future. The outcomes of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment update will inform the future provision of Traveller sites in Manchester. Accordingly, a commitment has been made to those former residents who left Dantzic Street following the incident last summer and who want to live on a site in the future that they will be given priority for any new permanent site even though they might be considered to be 'adequately housed' in bricks and mortar. This assurance is given in acknowledgment of the impact on their culture and way of life of having no other option than to move into bricks and mortar accommodation because there is no culturally appropriate alternative for them currently in Manchester.

5.5 The wider Gypsy and Traveller community are not directly impacted by the closure of the Dantzic Street site as it was not available as a stopping place or transit site and the Executive decision in 2015 suspended any further lettings on the site.

## **6.0 Unauthorised Encampments**

6.1 Whilst a nomadic lifestyle is lawful, the transient nature of the Traveller culture can sometimes lead to the establishment of unauthorised encampments, where a group enter land without the permission of the owner. There is

however no legal right of trespass and as such the law provides a wide range of powers to remove such trespassers. It is often a delicate balance between the rights of the Traveller community to lead this lifestyle and those of the landowner and the settled community.

- 6.2 Every year the City Council deals with a number of unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampments. These cause significant inconvenience to local residents and often require considerable resources to persuade the occupants to vacate the site and to reinstate the land after they have moved.
- 6.3 In January 2015 the Executive approved a set of criteria for the location of a transit site to provide temporary short stay accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. A search for a suitable location was undertaken but there is a lack of suitable available land within Manchester.
- 6.4 Examples of best practise within Greater Manchester and the wider North West area were identified and it is intended to complete a review of the way in which unauthorised encampments are managed in Manchester. The review will be completed in summer 2022 and a report detailing the findings will be brought back to the Executive.

## **7.0 Contributing to a Zero-Carbon City**

- 7.1 This report does not directly contribute to a Zero-Carbon City.

## **8.0 Contributing to the Manchester Strategy**

### **(a) A thriving and sustainable city**

- 8.1 Not applicable.

### **(b) A highly skilled city**

- 8.2 Not applicable.

### **(c) A progressive and equitable city**

- 8.3 The review of the Council's approach to unauthorised encampments by Gypsies and Travellers will seek to learn from the experience of other authorities to find an effective and equitable response to the common issues unauthorised encampments can create. An update to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment will review the need for future provision in Manchester.

### **(d) A liveable and low carbon city**

- 8.4 Not applicable.

### **(e) A connected city**



8.5 Not applicable.

## **9.0 Key Policies and Considerations**

### **(a) Equal Opportunities**

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the closure of the Dantzic Street site on the former residents and the wider Gypsy and Travelling community has been developed. A number of national and regional organisations advocating for Gypsies and Travellers as well as the former residents of the Dantzic Street site have been consulted. An update to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment will inform need for future Traveller provision in Manchester.

### **(b) Risk Management**

9.2 There is a risk that should future Traveller site provision be identified by the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment there will be a shortfall in provision until such time that a location for a new site can be identified and a site developed. However, the outcomes of a review of the Council's approach to unauthorised encampments will be reported back to the Executive in summer 2022.

### **(c) Legal Considerations**

9.3 Legal Services have and will continue to provide legal advice on the proposed closure of the Dantzic Street site, and the undertaking of a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment to assess current and future need. Legal Services will continue to support and advise the team on all aspects of this project to facilitate deliver and ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, regulation, and contractual terms.