



Scoping Study of available sites in North region of Mid Ulster District Council Area.

Prepared by:

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1.0 **Background**

- 1.01 **mha** were appointed on 18th January 2018 to conduct research within the Northern region of Mid Ulster District Council to identify lands available for potential future development of council facilities for the travelling community. It was requested that all unused council owned land, lands owned or registered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and other statutory bodies, and lands available to purchase on the open market be considered for this exercise.
- 1.02 The Irish Traveller Community has been long established in Northern Ireland, dating back to 1970's. Traveller history and traditions stretch back many years within the Mid Ulster Council Area.
- 1.03 Mid Ulster District Council have realised that travellers have distinctive housing needs. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive are responsible for the provision and management of accommodation for the Traveller Community and to this end are responsible for establishing the accommodation needs for the Traveller Community across Northern Ireland.

1.1 NIHE Involvement:

1.1.1 Comprehensive Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments:

To establish the accommodation needs (for social housing, Traveller specific Group Housing, serviced sites and transit sites) of the Traveller Community across Northern Ireland, NIHE commissioned Comprehensive Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments in 2002, 2008 and 2015.

1.1.2 NIHE Traveller Accommodation Programme:

The needs assessment informs the development of the Traveller Accommodation Programme. Currently the accommodation programme is reviewed on a yearly basis in conjunction with all interested stakeholders, to reflect the changing needs and aspirations of the Traveller Community. A new Traveller Accommodation Programme will be developed following analysis of the findings from the forthcoming Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

1.1.3 Land identification process:

In terms of future accommodation provision, the NIHE has completed a comprehensive review of all NIHE land and non-NIHE land in areas of identified accommodation need. This includes extensive advertising in the local press in all the areas where accommodation need has been identified, for expressions of interest in selling private lands for Traveller accommodation.

NIHE manage a co-operation policy that allows Travellers to camp on a temporary basis. However, this is not a substitute for permanent or transit sites. It is meant as a way of dealing with a humane requirement rather than an alternative to the permanent sites.

1.1.4 What does the policy allow?

This policy allows Travellers to remain on public land subject to the following conditions:

- Occupation does not constitute a measurable public health hazard or cause pollution to water supplies - district councils should liaise with the landowner, support groups and Traveller families to ensure services (eg, refuse collection) are in place to eliminate any public health hazard
- Occupation does not create a traffic hazard.
- Occupation does not create a right to long-term use of the site. The situation should be reviewed at regular intervals not exceeding 3 months.
- There is no current or immediate use for the land.
- The Travellers behave in a reasonable and orderly manner.
- NIHE recognise that there will always be exceptional cases with special circumstances which would require a different approach.

1.2 Planning:

PPS 12 policy HS 3 (amended) Travellers Accommodation (see below fig .1) recommends, that where possible, specific sites for travellers accommodation be identified within local development plans. When considering potential sites for traveller specific accommodation, planning would give due consideration when housing need cannot be met with existing settlements. Planning may be granted as part of a grouped housing scheme, serviced site or transit site. Where a service site or transit site has been identified as a need type, planning applications are required under PPS 21 CTY5 – social and affordable housing.

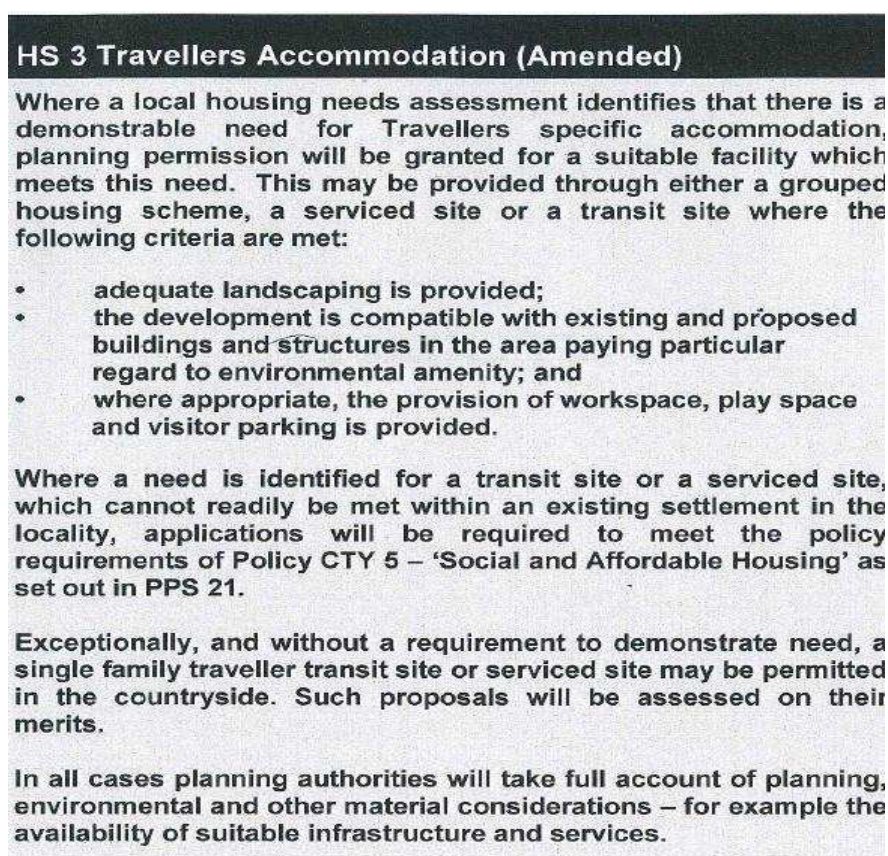


Fig 1. HS3 – Travellers Accommodation Planning Policy

2.0 **Brief**

2.01 The brief is to provide Mid Ulster District Council with a range of sites that can be developed / redeveloped into a grouped housing scheme, services site or transit site from members of the Irish Travelling Community within the following areas:

- Ballyronan;
- Magherafelt;
- Castledawson;
- Bellaghy;
- Tobermore;
- Maghera;
- Knockloughrim;
- Gulladuff;
- Culnady;
- Upperlands;
- Maghera;
- Swatragh;
- Clady;

2.02 This study will focus on all available sites within the North region of Mid Ulster District Council areas. Sites are considered across all sectors including:

- Unused council owned land;
- Unused lands owned by statutory bodies;
- Lands for sale on open market;
- Lands that can be obtained on a long term lease;

2.03 Traveller sites that will be evaluated should be between 0.5 -1.0 acres in size and can facilitate the following:

- Housing (approximately 6 no. units);
- Hard standing for a caravan;
- Space to park cars and other vehicles;
- Space for additional caravans to provide for guests;
- Toilets;
- Showers or baths;
- Storage space;
- A secure mailbox.

2.04 As part of our brief, **mha** will investigate the following:

- Identify sites that can potentially be utilised for traveller accommodation;
- Site description;
- Location details;
- Size and cost of site;
- Services / non-serviced highlighting issues;
- Valuation details for site;
- Ownership;
- Planning matters/issues;
- Planning history on site;
- Potential impacts on surrounding areas;
- Access to facilities and services;
- Risk considerations to all noted sites;
- Recommendations.

3.0 **Best Practice**

3.01 Michael Herron met the following persons from NIHE on 14th February 2018 to discuss the Travelling community within the Northern area of Mid Ulster Council . The following NIHE personnel were in attendance:

- Comghal McQuillan, Regional Manager (South)
- Ailbhe Hickey, Head of PlaceShaping, South
- Kevin Corrigan, Town Planner, PlaceShaping South
- Connor Smith, Traveller's Unit (Strategic Partnerships)

3.02 During discussion with NIHE, it was noted that they had carried out a project 'Acorn Grove' in Craigavon (see fig. 2) which they considered as a example of best practice that could be used as benchmark in design, scope, scale and complexity for a scheme in the Mid Ulster Area although this project consisted of 8 no. dwellings; Fig 3 Entrance (overleaf) Fig 4 Aerial View (overleaf)

3.03 The following areas were addressed within this scheme:

- Housing ;
- Hard standing or a caravan;
- Space to park cars and other vehicles;
- Space for additional caravans to provide for guests;
- Toilets
- Showers or baths
- Storage space
- A secure mailbox

The added advantage here was good screen planting.



Fig. 2, sample completed project 'Acorn Grove'



Fig. 3 - Entrance of Acorn Grove



Fig. 4 - Aerial view of Acorn Grove

4.0 **Existing Travellers**

4.1 M Herron discussed the various villages and towns with NIHE as follows:

- Ballyronan;
- Magherafelt;
- Castledawson;
- Bellaghy;
- Tobermore;
- Maghera;
- Knockloughrim;
- Gulladuff;
- Culnady;
- Upperlands;
- Maghera;
- Swatragh;
- Clady;

4.2 It was concluded from the NIHE findings, within the above areas there were 2 separate distinct families located within Ballyronan and Toomebridge areas respectively.

4.2.1 **Ballyronan:**

This family were classified as 'English Travellers' and were located at the Gaugers site, Ballyronan – see below map; Representatives from NIHE noted that as they were English Travellers, legislation that pertains to Irish travellers is not applicable and they are under no obligation to re-house them.

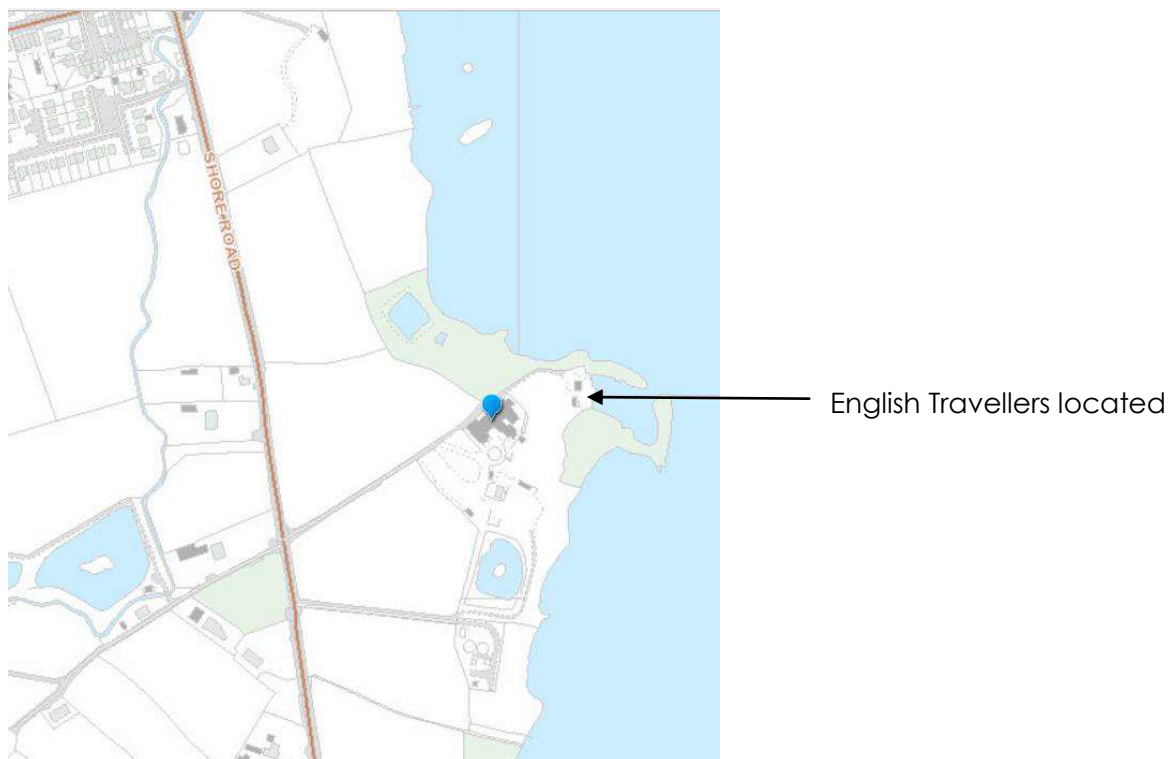


Fig. 5 – Site of English Travellers @ Gaugers site

4.2.2 Invest NI site, Toomebridge – Family of Irish Travellers, McDonnells, who wishes to remain in this area as children are schooled nearby. NIHE have a strategic responsibility for accommodating for the Irish Traveller community in Northern Ireland. The Housing Order (NI) 2003 transferred ownership of and responsibility for Traveller serviced sites from District Councils to the Housing Executive.

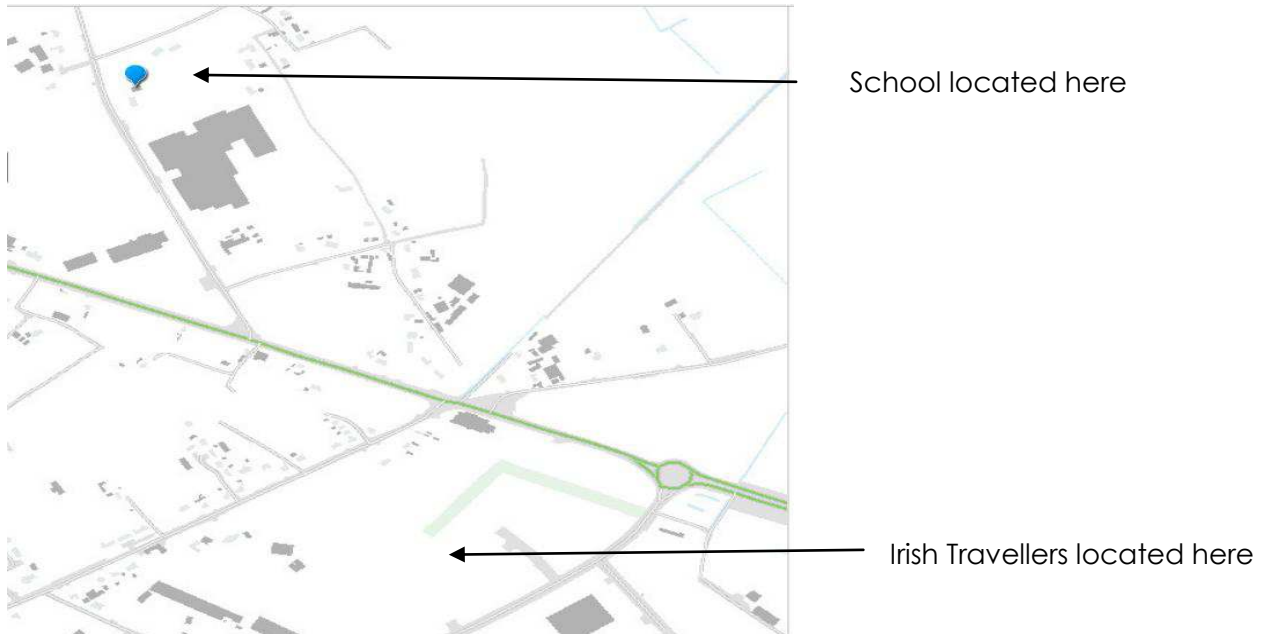
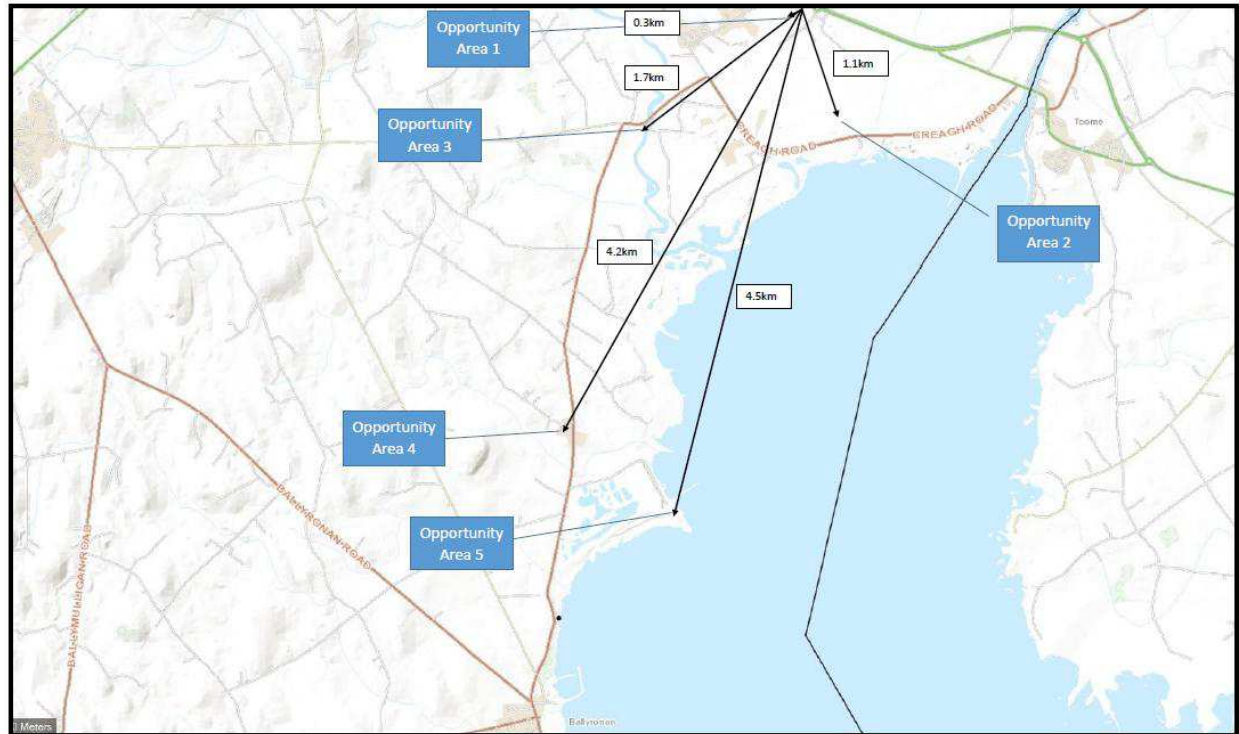
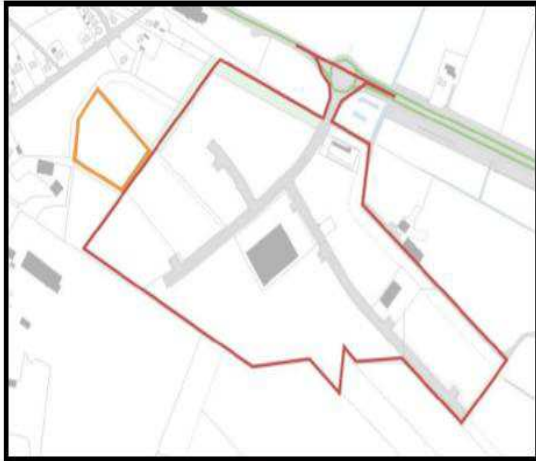


Fig. 6 – Site of Irish Travellers @ Invest NI site

5.0 Opportunity Areas



Opportunity Area 1 – Map

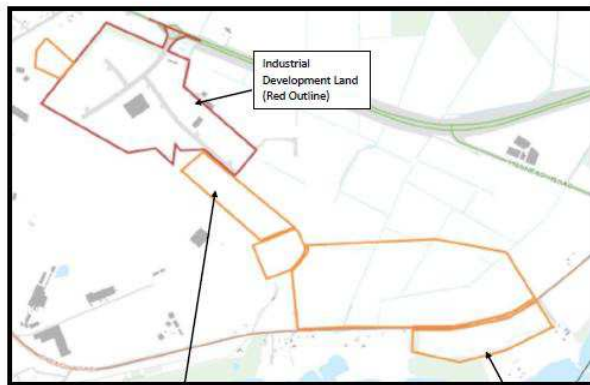


Opportunity Area 1 – Map

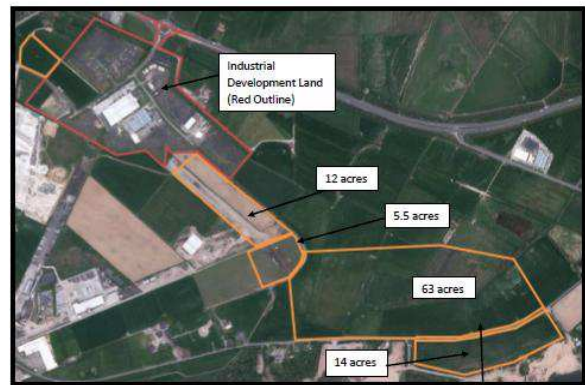


Opportunity Area 1 – Map

Opportunity Area 2 – Map



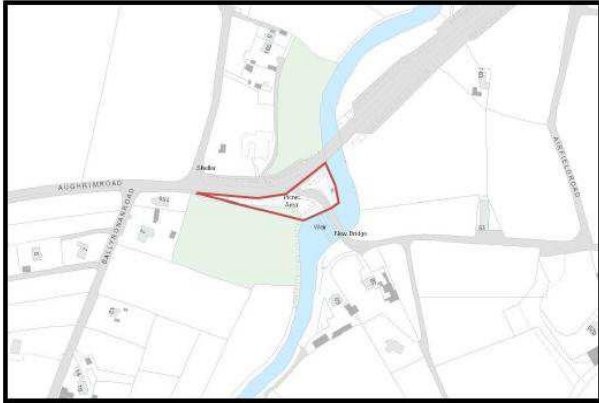
Opportunity Area 2 – Map



Opportunity Area 2 – Ariel Photo



Opportunity Area 3 – Map



Opportunity Area 3 – Map



Opportunity Area 3 – Ariel Photo



Opportunity Area 4 – Map



Opportunity Area 4 – Map



Opportunity Area 4 – Ariel Photo



An aerial photograph showing a 9.5-acre property outlined in red. The property is located on a peninsula or near a body of water, surrounded by dense green trees. A small building is visible within the outlined area. A white label with the text "9.5 acres" is placed over the property. In the background, a residential area with several houses and a driveway is visible. The surrounding water is dark, and there are some smaller ponds or wetlands nearby.

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6.0 Conclusion

On Wednesday 18th April 2018, Michael Herron presented a power point presentation at Mid Ulster District Council office in Magherafelt to Council representatives, Michael Dallat NIHE and Ailbhe Hickey, NIHE. Mark Kelso, Director of Public Health & Infrastructure chaired the meeting.

Michael Herron explained the background to the situation in the Mid Ulster area with regards lack of facilities for the travelling community. The main body of the presentation looked at 5 no. opportunity sites as follows:

Opportunity site no. 1:

3 acres of land adjacent to Creagh Industrial site.

Local councillors present felt it would be difficult to convince land owners as this site was privately owned.

Opportunity site no. 2:

Runway portion of land adjacent to Creagh Industrial site.

Again, Local councillors present felt it would be difficult to convince land owners as this site was privately owned.

Opportunity site no. 3:

Picnic area site adjacent to Moyola River

Local councillors present felt there was possibility here. NIHE agreed to look at further from a feasibility point of view.

Opportunity site no. 4:

1.1 acre site, O'Neill Park,

NIHE felt that this site was too small.

Opportunity site no. 4:

9.5 acre site, Traad Point, Ballyronan

Local Councillors felt this was the best site of the 5, NIHE agreed to look at further from a feasibility point of view.



Signed: _____

Michael Herron RIBA
Chartered Architect

Date: 27.04.18

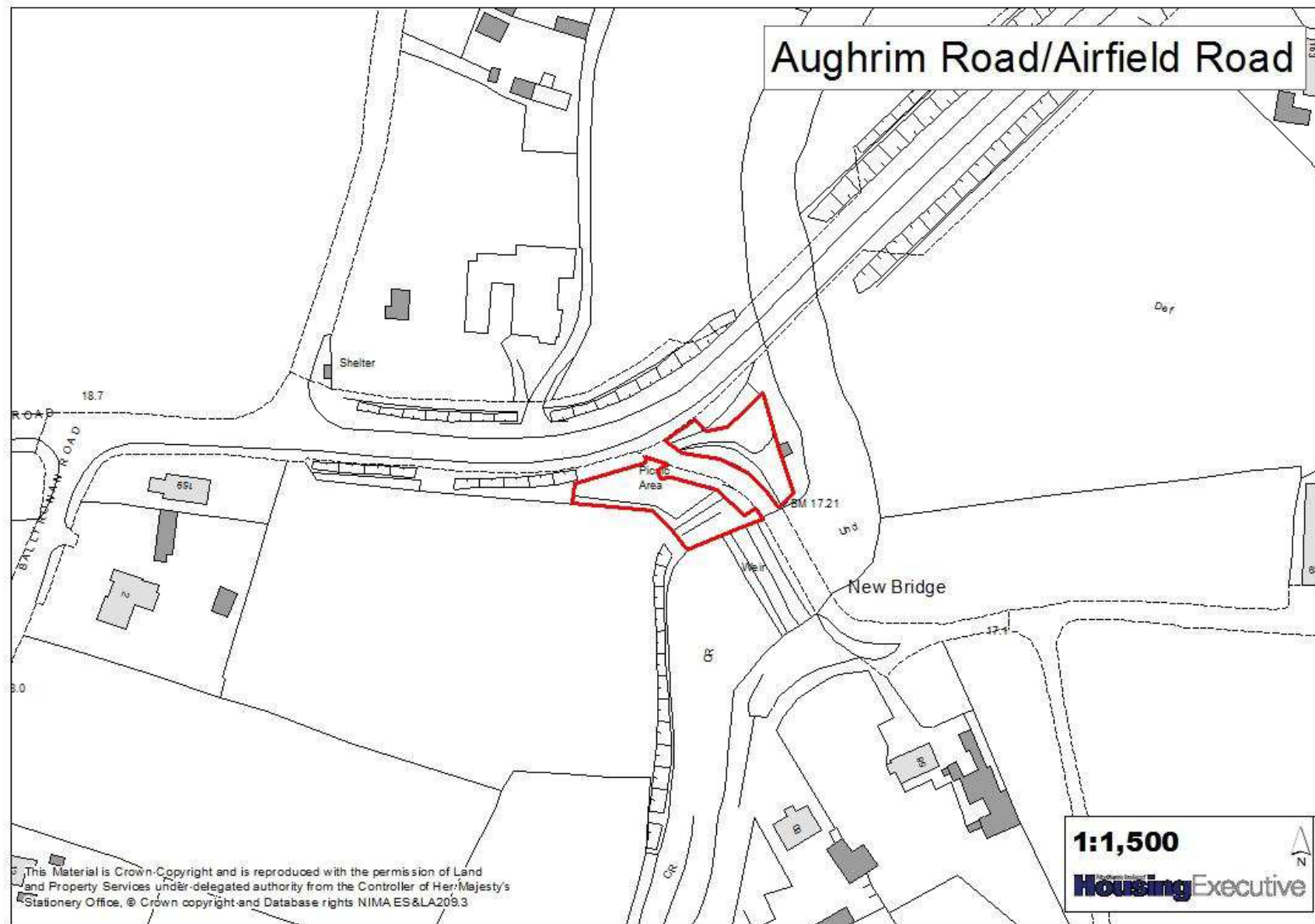
Potential Traveller Sites in Mid Ulster – Initial Feasibility

Below is an initial study of three opportunity areas provided by Michael Herron Architects for the provision of traveller accommodation in the North Region of Mid Ulster District Council. On review of the three sites, the site at Traad Point is the preferred option, however further feasibility would be required as access was not available to the site. See further details on each site below.

Site Location	Area (ha)	Planning Context/History	Comments
Aughrim Road/Airfield Road	0.14	<p>Site is not within any settlement limit and is within Local Landscape Policy Area CH02 as designated in the Magherafelt Area Plan 2015. This includes the listed bridge over the Moyola River, including its setting and views.</p> <p>No planning history as per EPIC Planning Portal.</p>	<p>Site is in use as a recreational/picnic area adjacent to Moyola River/Bridge to the east and Aughrim Road to the west.</p> <p>Site is constrained by its size and layout as it is split in two across Airfield Road.</p> <p>Access to the site may be an issue due to intensification at junction, consultation with Transport NI would be required.</p> <p>PPS 21 applies to the site.</p> <p>Likely to be high level of objection due to amenity, aesthetics and recreational value of the area.</p> <p>The portion of land to the south west of the site is in private ownership but could be investigated to extend the proposed site.</p>

O'Neill Park, Ballymaguigan	0.45	<p>Site is just outside the settlement limit of Ballymaguigan as designated in the Magherafelt Area Plan 2015.</p> <p>A portion of the site to the east has planning approval for a car park. LA09/2015/0049/F - Proposed car park adjacent to existing minor playing fields.</p>	<p>Site is in use as a maintained playing field serving O'Neill Park, it is the only area of open space within the estate.</p> <p>Planning application for a car park on the eastern portion of the site has been approved, the remaining site will be constrained by size for any development.</p> <p>No. 7-12 O'Neill Park are overlooking the site.</p> <p>Although the site is outside the settlement limit, PPS 8 would still apply as it is an area of existing open space.</p> <p>PPS 21 applies to the site.</p> <p>Likely to be high level of objection from adjacent residents due to the loss of the open space.</p>
Traad Point	1.40	<p>Site is not within any settlement limit. The area along the shores of Lough Neagh as a whole has been designated as an Area of High Scenic Value by the Magherafelt Area Plan 2015.</p> <p>No planning history as per EPIC Planning Portal.</p>	<p>Site is accessed via a long narrow road (Point Road) approx. 0.75 miles from Shore Road, consultation with Transport NI required to assess suitability of access.</p> <p>Site is a University of Ulster building and is surrounded by mature trees with Lough Neagh further east and ponds to the west.</p> <p>Access not available to the site due to padlocked gate, access would be required to provide further feasibility.</p> <p>Due to the location in close proximity to Lough Neagh a drainage assessment and bio diversity survey may be required.</p> <p>PPS 21 applies to the site.</p>

Aughrim Road/Airfield Road



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Aughrim Road/Airfield Road Site Photos



View of site looking south west



View of site looking west



View of site looking north west



View of site looking north

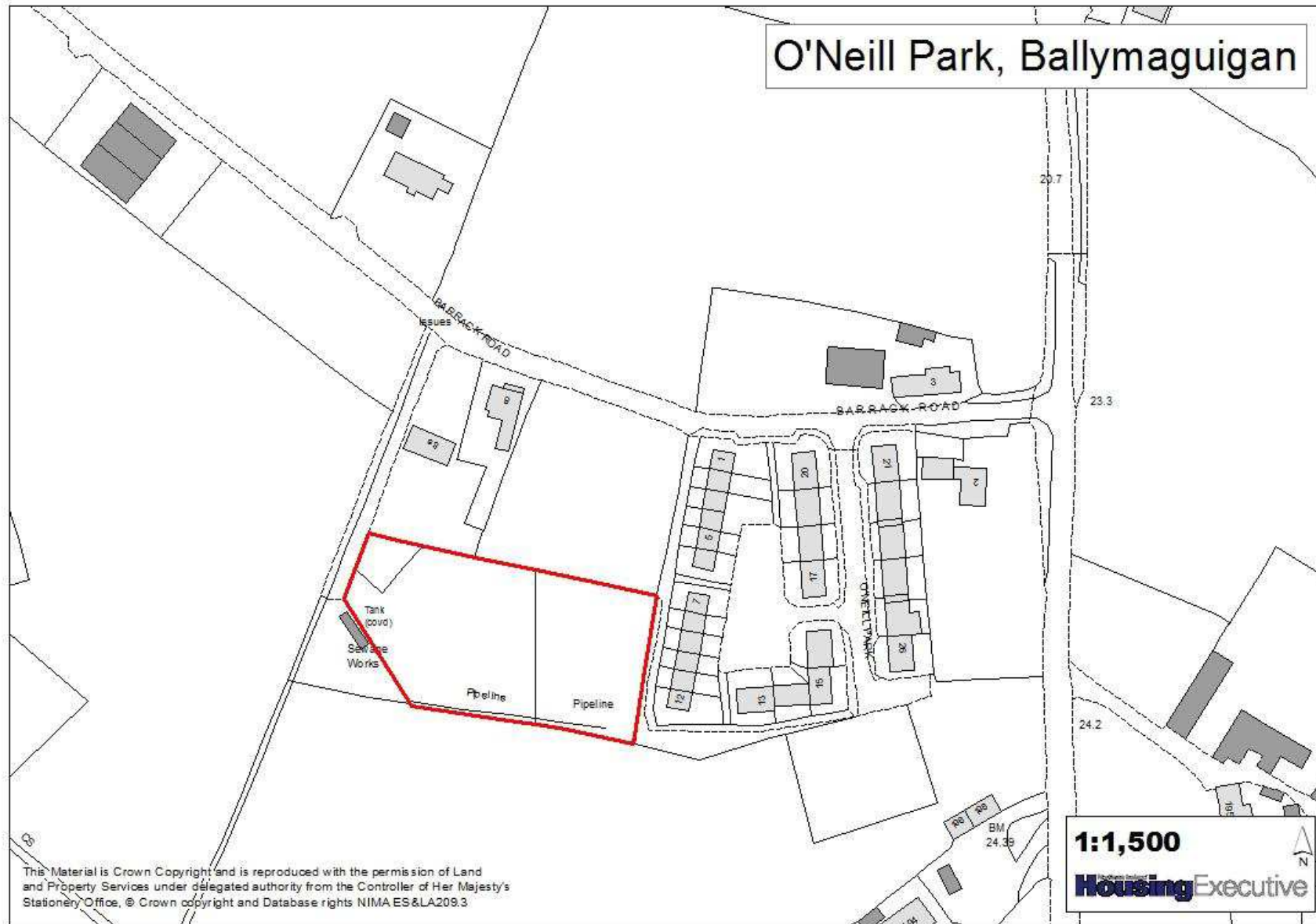


View of eastern portion of site



View of site looking south east

O'Neill Park, Ballymaguigan



O'Neill Park, Ballymaguigan Site Photos



View of site looking south west



View of site looking south



View of site looking east



View of site looking west



View of site looking south west



View of adjacent properties to north

