

**Teignbridge District Council
Executive Committee
Meeting date 29/07/2025**

The Management of Unauthorised Encampments.

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the Council's approach to managing Unauthorised Encampments (UE) and seek approval from Executive on the future approach and proposed actions to mitigate the risk of future encampments in Teignbridge.

The Committee RESOLVES to:

- (1) Consider the proposed measures in the specified parks and determine whether it wishes to proceed with the work and allocate the associated budget to deliver.
- (2) Support the proposed re-engagement with other Councils and partner agencies to explore potential solutions for a network of transit sites.
- (3) Support the Option 2 proposed future approach to managing Unauthorised Encampments as detailed in Section 2.3.

Financial Implications

There are Section 106 funds available to fund the works identified in Section 3.1 of this report.

Martin Flitcroft
Chief Finance Officer & Director of Corporate Services
Email: martin.flitcroft@teignbridge.gov.uk

Legal Implications

Paul Woodhead, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Email: paul.woodhead@teignbridge.gov.uk

Report Author

Chris Braines - Head of Environmental Services
Email: chris.braines@teignbridge.gov.uk

Executive Members

Cllr Peter Williams - Executive Member for Environmental Services

Cllr David Palethorpe - Executive Member for Assets, Economic Development, Major Projects and Communication

Cllr Richard Buscombe - Executive Member for Housing and Homelessness

Appendices

A1 – Measures and proposals

A2 – Osborne Park specifics

Background Papers

Executive decision to approve current Policy. 3rd May 2022 [Teignbridge District Council Unauthorised Encampments Policy](#)

1. Background

An unauthorised encampment (UE) is where any person camps without permission (in vans, trailers or any other moveable accommodation) on land that they do not own and is legally considered as trespass.

Where the Council acts to remove an unauthorised encampment, we do so as the landowner. There is no statutory duty for the Council to act, and we have no powers to intervene if the encampment is on private land.

Before taking any action to evict an unauthorised encampment we have an obligation to carry out welfare assessments, and where necessary inform partner agencies, such as the police.

Further detail on how we deal with unauthorised encampments is available online here: [Unauthorised Encampments - Frequently asked questions - Teignbridge District Council](#)

Unauthorised encampments create significant demands on our resources beyond the process to seek a 'Possession Order' through the courts. This is typically through the requirement to clean the site and surrounding areas, repair any damage caused and deal with complaints from residents and businesses that have been impacted.

There were 23 formal complaints between 2019 and 2024.

2. Proposals

2.1 Target Hardening Measures and Proposals

As sites previously used are made harder to access there is a tendency for new sites to be targeted. Appendix 1 details work that has been undertaken at key sites in recent years and the proposals for further target hardening at the following sites.

- Bakers Park
- Courtenay Park
- Dawlish Countryside Park
- Forde Park
- Osborne Park
- Sandringham Park

Osborne Park has raised some challenges with the measures typically used, such as soil bunding and wooden posts. Soil bunding would only be possible on the west of the park due to the longer-term risk of damage to the mature trees that border the park as they are sensitive to additional weight on their root systems. This approach would also interfere with the football pitch's runoff area. The area closest to Tuckers Maltings contains numerous underground services that also need to be factored into any measures introduced.

The proposal for this park is detailed in Appendix 2. The need for full consideration of the challenges at this site have meant it has taken longer than anticipated to develop a suitable design, with a requirement to consider root protection zone issues and various options discounted and requires approval to assign the budget required. Consultation with local businesses and users of the park will also be required to ensure designs are compatible with authorised events and activities that take place at the site such as the annual beer festival.

2.2 Strategic Transit Sites

Gypsy and Traveller households regularly travel within and across the South West including through Teignbridge. In accordance with the Council's policy, depending on the location and any impact on the land and the neighbouring community unauthorised encampments on Council land may be tolerated for a period but where the site is unsuitable and there are adverse impacts, following an assessment of needs, legal action may be taken to require the occupants to move on. On occasion this then results in a further unauthorised encampment being established in a new location and the process repeats.

It has been recognised for some time that the availability of transit sites would assist travelling households and mitigate the issues arising from unauthorised encampments in terms of impact and cost. There is currently no transit site provision in Teignbridge or in Devon more widely. Some authorities have established such provision, e.g. Cornwall Council set-up its first transit site in recent years on the A38 near Liskeard.

There have been past discussions with other Devon District Councils about this issue but there are acknowledged challenges in finding suitable sites and no significant progress was made. In parallel with the measures proposed in this paper to prevent encampments in unsuitable locations it is suggested that the Council re-engage with other Devon authorities, the Police and other relevant stakeholders to seek to develop an approach to bring forward transit provision. It is suggested that one approach to explore could be to identify potential locations where new and upgraded road provision has left redundant lay-by areas or similar which could be used as tolerated stopping spaces for limited periods of time. Basic facilities would need to be provided when they were used and there would be some associated cost, and this would need to be considered against the cost of currently dealing with unauthorised encampments. It is proposed to re-engage with other Councils in Devon and partner agencies to explore potential solutions and report further to the Executive on the outcome of these discussions.

The Teignbridge Gypsy and Traveller Forum meeting on 18 June 2025 was supportive of further consideration being given to such provision, including the

potential for the operation of tolerated stopping places. Concern was expressed that unauthorised encampments can generate and amplify negative attitudes towards Gypsy and Traveller people.

2.3 Refined approach to managing Unauthorised Encampments

The current Unauthorised Encampments Policy was adopted by the Executive in May 2022. With the creation of the Neighbourhoods service area there is an opportunity to improve the efficiency and co-ordination of visits and assessments of sites by deploying officers from that team, rather than placing the initial requirement for assessment on the team responsible for managing the asset. The current approach can lead to varying response times due to availability of staff.

The lead officer accountable for the asset would remain responsible for determining what action should be taken, communication to members and providing an instruction to the relevant teams to ensure a co-ordinated response.

The options available to improve our approach to enforcement are set out below with the relevant costs.

	Options	Availability	Response time	Revenue Pressure on current budget
1	Current approach	Dependant on the Teignbridge asset.	Varies between teams	N/A
2	New Neighbourhood approach	08:00 – 17:30 Mon – Fri 09:00 – 17:00 Sat 08:30 – 16:30 Sun (July, August and September) 1	2 hours	N/A
3	Enhanced Neighbourhood approach	08:00 – 18:00 Mon – Fri 09:00 – 17:00 Sat and Sun	2 hours	£5,525

4	24 hour 7 days a week option	08:00 – 18:00 Mon – Fri 09:00 – 17:00 Sat and Sun 2 officers covering corporate standby for the Council. 2	2 hours	£26,690
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1 – Currently two staff available during the summer with one member of staff working Sundays the rest of the year. Visits will require two members of staff

2 -Currently one member of staff covering corporate standby for all Council functions. A second member of staff would be required to guarantee visits could be made out of hours. This would have an impact on other standby functions.

Due to the infrequent nature of encampments, it is recommended to adopt the New neighbourhood approach, option 2. This balances the need for a consistent and timely response with no additional revenue pressures.

3. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

3.1 Financial

The total estimated costs to deliver the proposed target hardening measures is £73,200. There are Section 106 funds available to fund the works identified in Section 2.1 of this report.

These costs need to be considered against the costs of taking enforcement action of unauthorised encampments. There were 8 unauthorised encampments in 2024 on TDC land that progressed to legal action.

The average estimated cost per encampment is detailed below. These exclude any costs associated with complaint handling and site repairs which vary considerably between encampments. The costs in bold are internal costs and would not correlate to a reduced cost to the Council if the number of encampments reduced.

Activity	Cost (£)
Waste & Cleansing provision	1,628*

Site Visits & Reports	376*
Legal Team Costs	230*
County Court Possession Claim	404
Total Cost	2,638

There are no additional revenue costs for the New Neighbourhood approach to tackling enforcement as proposed. The additional costs to enhance this approach are detailed in Section 2.3 of this report.

The financial implications of bringing forward and operating transit site or stopping place provision will be assessed as part of the discussions with other Councils on potential solutions and will be advised when the outcome of those discussions are reported to the Executive.

3.2 Legal

The use of Part 55 of the Civil Procedure Rules is widely used by local authorities for the management of unauthorised encampments as it continues to be the most cost effective, reliable and expedient route in managing such encampments on Council owned land.

This approach also demonstrates compliance by us of our obligations and commitment to undertake necessary health and welfare checks and seeks to preclude any subsequent legal challenge in this regard, as we and the Court are public bodies which must determine that its decisions are proportionate.

The Government [Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Camping \(2004\)](#) indicates that local authorities should not use their common law powers to evict unauthorised encampments but should, instead, use eviction procedures which involve court action.

Officers have used powers under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to issue Community Protection Warnings to encampments where there are significant impacts on the wider community.

3.3 Risks

Whilst the measures proposed will not guarantee a stop to further unauthorised encampments at these sites it may reduce the likelihood of them reoccurring. However, there is a risk that the encampments may move to other Teignbridge Council owned land which are more accessible.

There is a risk that alternative sites will be targeted if known sites are more difficult to access, some of which could be the responsibility of the Council to manage.

There are reputational risks associated with not taking steps to address the concerns raised at the sites detailed.

Alternative Options

There are no real alternatives in relation to the target hardening measures proposed, other than to continue to reactively manage the unauthorised occupation of the parks and accept the associated costs, complaints and impacts on local residents and businesses.

Transit Sites – The Council could bring forward its own transit site and/or stopping place provision in isolation from the approach of other Councils, but a coordinated County-wide approach is likely to be more effective in addressing the needs of travelling households and in reducing the incidence of unauthorised encampments.

The alternative options with the relative revenue costs for changing the approach to enforcement are set out in section 2.3.

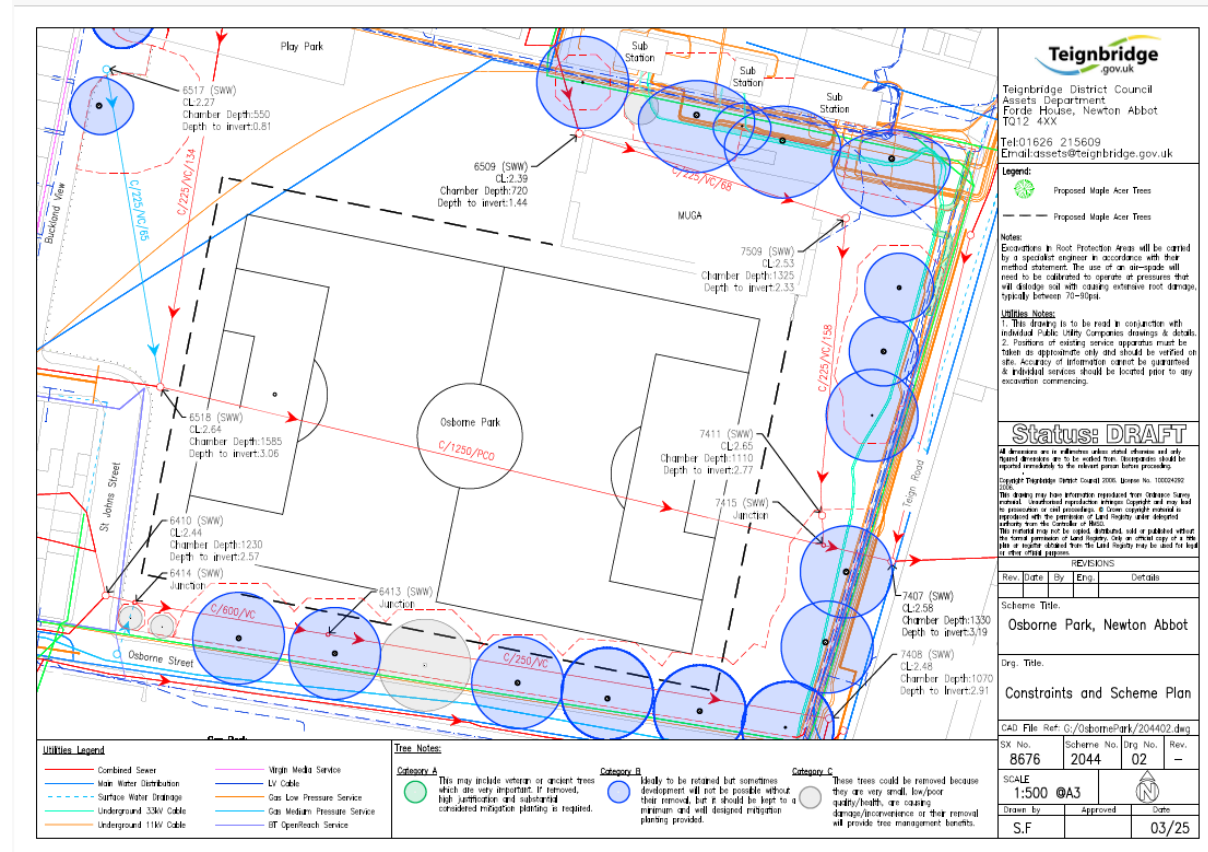
Appendix 1

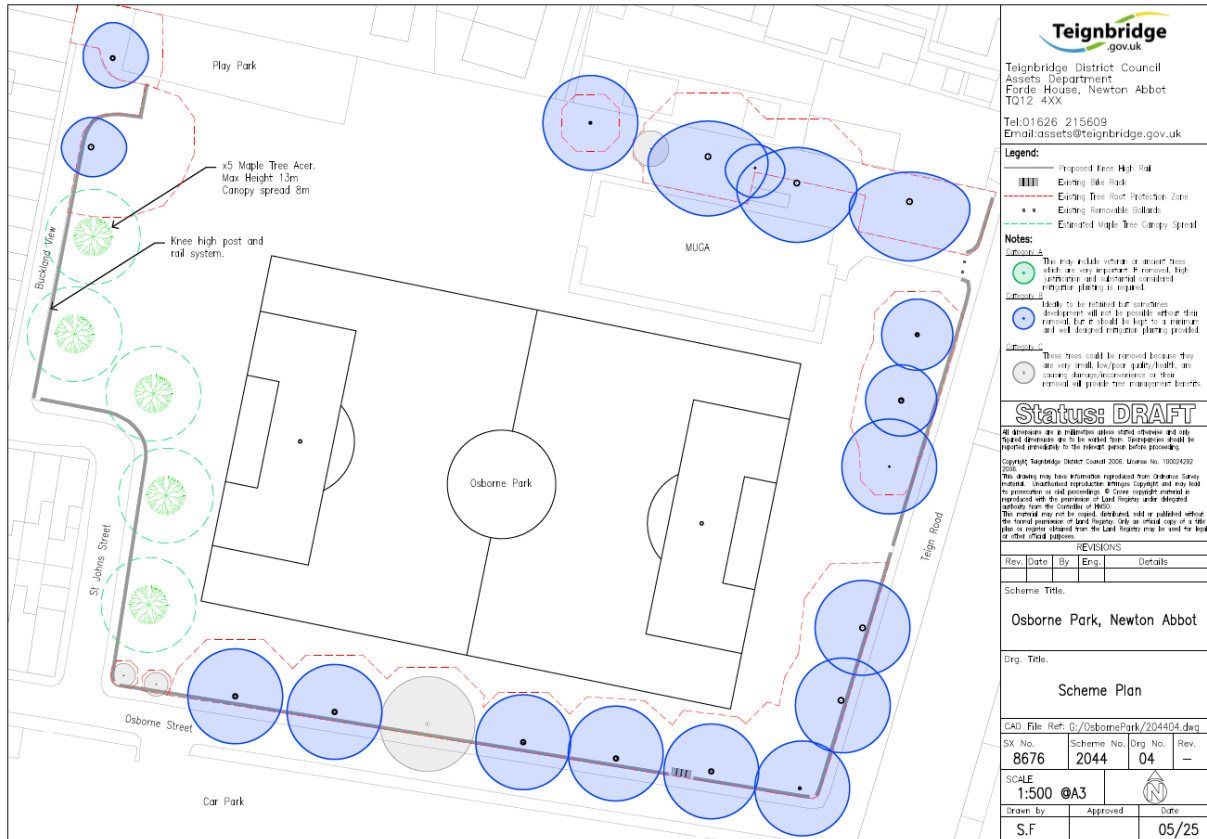
Location	Measure implements – proposed	Anticipated timescales	Estimated Cost (£)
Bakers Park	<p>Implemented - Height barrier – steel access Gate – two telescopic bollards to the rear of the gate – wooden bollards adjacent to the passing place on Steppe’s meadow – galvanised steel uprights and wooden rails around exposed car park spaces and to rear of soil bunds Telescopic / collapsable bollards at vehicle entrances on the top access road (both ends)</p> <p>Proposed Either soil bunding or large boulders on the path side of the passing area on Steppes Meadow</p>	Autumn 25	£1000
Decoy countryside park	Implemented - Soil bunding with large rocks incorporated in the overflow car park access point onto the green space	No further measures required	£0
Dawlish Leisure centre open space	Implemented – soil bunding to the Sandy Lane side of the open space – Wooden gate in vehicle access point of leisure centre car park with two collapsable bollards on the car park side. Bollards replaced June 2025 with higher security specification	No further measures required. Consider height barrier if further issues.	£0
Sandringham Park Newton Abbot	<p>Implemented - Steel farm gate – two telescopic bollards to the rear of the gate – soil bunding at the Penn Inn Close end of the park 1.8 m posts near the community centre end of the park</p> <p>Proposed – import large boulders in access points near the outdoor gym and adjacent the footpath on the car park side of the community centre</p>	Dependant upon sourcing boulders , securing a contractor to transport and install	£1200
Coach Road Newton Abbot	Implemented - Car park height barrier – telescopic bollards on the maintenance access point of the field- additional medium height barrier	No further measures required	£0

Strand Car Park Starcross	Implemented - Telescopic bollards to rear of cycle path access gate – soil bunding over wooden posts at the end of the car park where it meets the open space	No further measures required	£0
Osborne Park	Proposed – Knee rail with galvanised steel posts to the perimeter of the open space , set at 1.5m centres – tree planting (autumn)	2-4 months- subject tender process	£62,000
Courtenay Park	Proposed – Lockable recycled plastic bollard at five (5) access points - 32 wooden posts , various locations – Tree planting (Autumn) - subject funding	1-2 months	£6,000
Forde Park	Proposed - Lockable recycled plastic bollard at two (2) access points - 12 wooden posts , various locations – Tree planting (Autumn) subject to funding	1-2 months	£3,000
Dawlish Countryside Park	Implemented -Height Barrier Proposed – higher spec barrier to be installed - subject to external funding	TBC	£0 (seeking external funding)
Michaels Field	Implemented - Height barrier – galvanised steel gate and posts – Wooden fencing with hedge planting around the car park	No further measures required	£0
Sandygate Mill Kingsteignton	Implemented – install of 50 wooden posts to edges of two grass areas	Will require replacement in the next 2-3 years	£0
Hackney Lane open space	Implemented – install of 80 wooden posts to the edge of the grass area	Will require replacement in the next 2-3 years	£0

Appendix 2 – Osborne Park

Plans showing underground services and proposed, railings and tree planting





Galvanised rail fencing is proposed to improve resistance to vandalism to gain entry and increase durability over standard wooden posts. Tree planting to offer longer term protection would also be introduced in boundary areas currently open to entry.