
SAWSTON PARISH COUNCIL



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Sawston Parish Council - Policy adopted May 2025

Policy on illegal and unauthorised encampments

1. Legal definition

When travellers move their caravans onto a piece of land they do not own, without the permission of the landowner, this is called an illegal or unauthorised encampment. This is a civil matter of trespass between the landowner and the travellers, and it is the responsibility of the landowner to deal with the encampment.

1.1. Anti-social or criminal behaviour

If travellers are involved in behaviour which causes a nuisance or fear and intimidation to people living near to an encampment, this is anti-social behaviour and should be reported to the police with exact details of time and place.

2. Encampment on private land

If the land is privately owned by a company or individual, they need to take advice from their solicitor about obtaining a Possession Order through the County Court.

2.1. Parish Council action

Parish Councillors should not approach the encampment.

3. Encampment on land owned by another local authority

Government policy recommends that a local authority must show that they have taken the housing, health, welfare and education needs of the travellers into consideration before making the decision to take legal action. This generally involves a visit to the encampment by the Cambridgeshire County Council Gypsy Liaison Officer.

The local authority can then apply for a Possession Order to evict the Travellers using common law.

4. Encampment on land owned by Sawston Parish Council

4.1. Our policy

The policy of Sawston Parish Council is to evict unauthorised vehicles as promptly as is practical. The cost of removal shall be met by Sawston Parish Council and reported at the next appropriate meeting.

The procedure for removal can be authorised by a clerk and two councillors, or by three councillors if neither clerk is available.

4.2. Procedure

4.2.1. Communication

The Parish Council should expect a lot of calls from residents during any unauthorised encampment. The clerk, assistant clerk and councillors should stay calm and explain to the public the legal process that has been started. The clerk or assistant clerk should update the website with progress reports.

Members of the public should be advised not to confront the travellers. To report any issues, they should call the police non-emergency 101 number.

Contact should be maintained with:

- the local police
- the County Council Enforcement Officer George Hay on 01223 715616
- South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) – 01954 713000

4.2.2. Preparation

For Parish Councillors and Staff

- do not approach the encampment
- notify the Clerk, Assistant Clerk or Chairman; if unavailable the Vice Chairman; if unavailable, other councillors.

4.2.4. Eviction notice

If there are no reasons why the travellers cannot be moved on, the Clerk will contact a legal representative/baliffs and place instructions for notice to be served for immediate eviction. The legal representative will need:

- details of the number of vehicles and people
- details of the location of the encampment location
- contact details for an authorising representative of the Parish Council, so they can maintain contact
- terms and conditions agreed by email, by the Clerk or another nominated representative.

Once terms and conditions have been agreed, signed and returned, the legal representative/baliff will prepare notices to be served on the travellers, advising them of the deadline by which they should move and warning them that they will be evicted if they fail to do so.

The notices will be served on the travellers by the legal representatives' staff/baliffs on the day of the eviction, an appropriate number of hours before the deadline.

Liaison between the legal representative/baliffs, the Parish Council and Police is essential. It is likely that the legal representative/baliffs will require at least one police officer to be present at the time of the notices being served and at the time of the eviction. Actual numbers required at the eviction will depend on the scale of the occupation.

4.2.5. Preparing for eviction

Once the time of the eviction is known, consider:

- cleaning the site
- securing other Parish Council property that may be used as an alternative site
- in conjunction with the police, notifying local organisations or individuals of the eviction in time to enable them to secure other likely target sites
- traffic and pedestrian management in the surrounding area – there may be a need to close a road or control traffic movements during the eviction period.