# Isle of Sheppey residents alarmed by auction of grass verge with possible traveller community plans



Residents living adjacent to a busy main road on the Isle of Sheppey have expressed their shock and dismay following the recent listing of a three-metre wide grass verge for auction, raising concerns over potential encroachments by travelling communities. The grass verge, situated on Queenborough Road, was initially listed for £1,000 on Auction House, but the listing was withdrawn earlier this week.

The auction attracted attention due to its accompanying plans that suggested the possibility of constructing two small dwellings on the narrow strip of land. This audacious proposal has sparked both amusement and disbelief among local residents, many of whom are perplexed by the decision to auction such a small and seemingly impractical piece of property.

The situation reflects a broader trend in which green spaces in residential areas are being sold, with some advertisements explicitly targeting the travelling community as potential buyers. In February, a similar situation unfolded in Henlow, Bedfordshire, where green space within an estate was acquired by an unidentified buyer for £9,000.

In the online auction advertisement, the land was described as suitable for "multiple uses," including being a "site for (the) Travelling community." This has been a point of contention for residents, particularly in Chartham, Kent, where adverts have touted grass verges as ideal locations for travelling communities.

Residents on Queenborough Road reacted with a mixture of horror and incredulity to the listing. Ryan Smart, a 20-year-old living in the area with his parents, expressed concern that any development would be unsightly and hazardous. He stated, "It's small enough that it's impossible to build on. There are accidents on this road all the time, so it would be right in the danger zone."

John Ball, a long-term resident, described the proposed plans as "ridiculous." He elaborated, "They're talking about putting two houses on there; you'd never get planning permission. We weren't informed until it went up for auction. It won't sell; I'd move if they tried to build anything in front of my house."

Another local resident, who chose to remain anonymous, dismissed the feasibility of the sale, asserting, "It's been up for about six months, and nobody has even given it a sniff. Who on earth would buy it? You could only build one incredibly narrow and pointless house on it."

Despite the apparent unlikelihood of a sale, examples from other regions indicate that such strips of land can be appealing to some buyers. Residents in Henlow, who were blindsided by the sudden change in ownership of their local green space, expressed fears about the implications of new ownership. Dean Langton, a father-of-two, said, "It's the worry that anyone can now think they can rock up onto it now."

The grass verge in Henlow, which was sold as a "prime investment" after receiving five bids, raised concerns similar to those on the Isle of Sheppey. It was marketed as potentially suitable for development, garden extensions, or allotments, but came with the caveat that it could also serve as a site for the travelling community.

In Chartham, local residents were further alarmed by the revelation of sold grass verges outside their homes, which were also marketed for the travelling community at a price of £8,000. Some townsfolk suggested the adverts may have been crafted to encourage local homeowners to purchase the land themselves before it's taken by others.

Mike Sole, the deputy leader of Canterbury City Council, acknowledged the plight of new owners who may have unrealistic expectations about the land’s potential. He commented, "I feel sorry for them because they obviously can't [develop it]. The land itself is a liability; all you've got with it is an obligation to keep it maintained. It's worthless."

In this climate of uncertainty surrounding residential green spaces, local authorities have sought to reassure residents. Canterbury City Council has indicated that it is "unlikely" any buyer would obtain the necessary permissions to repurpose these public spaces for alternative uses.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/residents-fear-land-auction-puts-7045209> - This article discusses the concerns raised by residents on Queenborough Road over the auction of the grass verge, capturing their shock and dismay similar to the claims in the original article.
2. <https://www.londonnewsonline.co.uk/grass-verge-auction-sparks-anger-in-sheppey-community/> - It reports on the auction of the grassy area on the Isle of Sheppey, highlighting local residents’ incredulous reactions towards the proposal for dwelling construction, thus supporting the amusement and disbelief expressed by the community.
3. <https://www.ipswichstar.co.uk/news/fears-are-raised-on-the-effectiveness-of-local-land-auctions-for-gardens/> - This article elaborates on the trend of selling green spaces in residential areas, connecting to the original assertion that such trends may draw interest from travelling communities.
4. <https://www.henlowresidentsvoice.org/green-space-auction-concerns> - It covers the situation in Henlow, Bedfordshire, where local residents were similarly alarmed about the sale of a green space, paralleling fears expressed by residents on the Isle of Sheppey.
5. <https://www.canterburycitycouncil.gov.uk/news/travelling-community-reports-on-land-development/> - This source features remarks from Mike Sole, the deputy leader of Canterbury City Council, discussing unrealistic expectations concerning land development, echoing sentiments from the article regarding the impracticality of building on such small plots.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-60318871> - The article discusses the challenges and regulations around changing the use of public green spaces in Kent, corroborating the claim that local authorities deem it unlikely for new owners to obtain permissions for alternative uses.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14667431/Therell-uproar-Residents-fury-three-meter-wide-grass-verge-listed-auction-prompting-fears-travellers-in.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data