# Isle of Sheppey residents alarmed as grass verge auction sparks fears of traveller encampments



Residents in close proximity to a busy thoroughfare on the Isle of Sheppey have expressed alarm and incredulity following the listing of a three-metre wide grass verge for auction, with concerns arising over the potential for travellers to move onto the land. The verge, located on Queenborough Road, was initially offered for sale by Auction House for £1,000 before being withdrawn earlier this week.

Annexed to the auction listing were plans suggesting the construction of two small dwellings on the narrow strip of grass, further unsettling long-term residents who deemed the sale both baffling and presumptuous. One local, John Ball, stated, "They're talking about putting two houses on there; it's ridiculous - you'd never get planning permission." He added that he had not been informed until the verge was already up for auction, expressing that he would consider relocating if any developments were to take place.

Another resident, twenty-year-old Ryan Smart, articulated that the small size of the verge posed insurmountable challenges for development. "It’s small enough that it’s impossible to build on," he remarked. "There are accidents on this road all the time, so it would be right in the danger zone." An anonymous neighbour echoed similar sentiments, questioning the viability of the sale, insisting, “Nobody has even given it a sniff. Who the f\*\*\* is going to buy it?”

The situation on the Isle of Sheppey is emblematic of a wider trend occurring across the UK, where residential green spaces are being listed for sale. In February, a section of green space at the centre of a housing estate in Henlow, Bedfordshire, was purchased by an undisclosed buyer for £9,000. The listing for this land described it as suitable for "multiple uses," including as a "site for the Travelling community."

Residents in Chartham, Kent, have similarly reacted negatively after advertisements appeared selling grass verges outside their homes, which were promoted as potential sites for the travelling community. The listings, with asking prices reaching up to £8,000, have led to speculation that the provocative wording was intended to incite local residents into purchasing the land before external buyers could acquire it.

Canterbury City Council has sought to reassure concerned residents, stating that any prospective buyer would "unlikely" secure permission for alternative uses of the public spaces. Mike Sole, the deputy leader of the council, highlighted that the new owners might face significant challenges, even if they were part of the travelling community. “I feel for them because they obviously can't,” he commented, adding that owning such land could become a liability, as it entails ongoing maintenance responsibilities.

The trend of marketing residential green spaces with implications for the travelling community appears to be attracting significant attention and concern, prompting varied responses from local communities as they grapple with the potential implications for their neighbourhoods.

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

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sheerness/news/environment-agency-to-meet-fed-up-villagers-272448/> - This piece covers residents' complaints in Eastchurch, Isle of Sheppey, about environmental issues caused by lorries and illegal tipping, reflecting local concerns over land use and environmental management.
3. <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Councils-selling-off-parks-and-green-spaces/41585> - This report highlights that more than half of local authorities have sold or transferred parks and green spaces, indicating a broader trend of selling public land for development.
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6. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/may/10/british-gardens-lost-development> - This article discusses the trend of selling private gardens to developers, leading to concerns about over-development and the loss of green spaces in suburban areas.
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