

By: Mike Austerberry, Corporate Director, Enterprise and Environment
To: Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Board – 24 November 2011
Subject: **PROVISION OF PUBLIC TRAVELLER SITES IN KENT**
Classification: Unrestricted.

Summary: An item which reviews the current and planned further public site provision in Kent and Medway. It also includes the overall position on all site provision for Gypsies and Travellers.

Background

1. There are currently 17 local authority owned and managed sites within the administrative county of Kent. There is one site owned and managed by Medway Council.
2. Of those 18 sites, seven are owned by KCC. The Gypsy and Traveller Unit, within the Planning & Environment Division of Enterprise and Environment, manage those and three others, two of which are for Maidstone Borough Council and one for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.
3. A full list of those current sites appears at Appendix A to this item and is also available at:
http://www.kent.gov.uk/community_and_living/gypsies_and_travellers/sites_in_kent_and_medway.aspx
4. In total, there is capacity for just under 300 caravans on all those sites. In January 2011, as part of a standard half-yearly national count conducted by all local authorities in England, 302 caravans were counted on those sites.
5. Public site provision therefore catered for almost exactly 25% of the overall counted (authorised and unauthorised) Gypsy and Traveller caravans in Kent and Medway in January of this year.
6. On one site in Gravesham, the occupiers have a 25-year lease of their pitches. On one KCC site, two occupiers each have 999-year leases, which they have purchased. Otherwise, all the pitches are believed to be on weekly licences.

Affordable Homes Programme

7. In February 2011, Providers of Housing registered with the Tenant Services Authority (RPs for short) were given the opportunity to bid, either alone, or jointly with local authorities and other partners, for funding for Traveller pitches for the period 2011-2015.
8. Maidstone Borough Council, working with Town and Country Housing Association, bid for a 15-pitch new site to be provided around 2013 or 2014. The bid has been submitted to the HCA's national panel and its decision on funding is expected by mid November. No location has yet been identified for the proposed site.
9. In a partnership with Amicus Horizon Housing Association, KCC has bid for a 14-pitch site within Swale Borough, again likely to be built in 2013. The bid has been

accepted, and is now subject to detailed evaluation. No suitable location has yet been identified for the proposed site.

10. Sevenoaks District Council received a grant of £1.308m from DCLG to provide 4 extra pitches and upgrade the existing 12 pitches under the Gypsy and Travellers Grant Scheme in 2008-2011. This work is due for completion in November 2011. An application for funding for the clearing of WWII bombs found during the construction was made to the Homes and Communities Agency in May 2011.
11. Following a review of whether “social housing”, legally, includes Traveller pitches, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) appear to have decided that it does not, and therefore that, in future, some or all District, Unitary and County Councils will be able to make bids in their sole names. We await clarification of that.
12. As the bid deadline for the Affordable Homes Programme was eventually 29 July of this year, it remains to be seen whether there will be a further opportunity to bid, and when that will occur, and which organisations will be eligible to bid.
13. The HCA is maintaining a consistent line that it will only fund any Traveller pitches, as with affordable housing, in part, and the balance of the funds need to be provided from elsewhere. However, it is not clear what remaining percentage of agreed costs they may require, although they have a ceiling for total pitch costs.

Coldharbour site, Aylesford, Tonbridge & Malling

14. Just before the end of the last financial year, funds from Cornwall, which had not been spent on a planned site project there, were offered to KCC for the Coldharbour site in Tonbridge & Malling Borough.
15. This £932k was accepted, even though it was only part of the funding needed for a site designed in 2009, which did not get Government grant.
16. The original scheme has been completely revised, and a planning application has been submitted, and is awaiting determination, for a 26 pitch site.
17. Under the contract between the HCA and KCC, a start on site with building works needs to happen by 31 March 2012.
18. All being well, 18 of the planned 26 pitches (replacing the current eight-pitch site) will be complete by the end of 2012.

Impact of planned projects

19. If all the planned projects, for which bids have already been submitted, are successfully established, then the increase in provision of public pitches will be as in the table below.

Council	Current public pitches (and caravan capacity)	Additional public pitches – if current projects are successfully completed	All caravans (mobiles & tourers) not on legal or tolerated sites in January 2011 (CLG Caravan Count data)
Ashford	16 (16?)		12
Canterbury	18 (30)		10
Dartford	12 (12)		0
Dover	14 (28)		5
Gravesham	24 (32) ?		0
Maidstone	32 (32)	15 (29)	104

Medway	11 (12)		0
Sevenoaks	54 (83)	4 (8)	4
Swale	15 (25)	14 (28)	22
Thanet	0 (0)		0
Tonbridge & Malling	22 (30)	18 (36)	9
Tunbridge Wells	9 (9)		7

20. The right hand column above is a very raw snapshot of the January 2011 position from the latest published Government data, as collected by all local planning authorities. It does not reflect the extent to which authorities have identified site needs, and met them, through the planning process.
21. Perhaps more useful is the table from 2007 which shows the projected need for further pitch provision for Kent and Medway for the five years 2006-2011. This follows. However, it comes with the strong caveat that some of these figures, especially for Sevenoaks District, were modified during the Regional Planning process, as a result of an aim to apply consistent methodology across four GTAA studies, conducted using slightly different approaches.
22. The GTAA data is still relevant, with any necessary updating, within current planning processes, even though the South East Plan is due to expire as the Localism Act becomes law shortly.

Initial Five Years Provision

<i>District/GTAA area</i>	<i>Gypsy and Travellers: Additional Pitch Provision Years 1-5</i>
Ashford	14
Maidstone	32
Ton & Malling	10
Tunbridge Wells	8
West Kent GTAA area	64
Sevenoaks	64
Sevenoaks GTAA area	64
Dartford	27
Gravesham	15
Medway	10
Swale	62
North Kent GTAA area	114
Canterbury	22
Dover	3
Shepway	2
Thanet	4
East Kent GTAA area	31
Kent and Medway	273

23. The full advice to the SE Regional Assembly in 2007, based on the last round of GTAA's and provision to date then, is at:

http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning_in_kent/strategies_and_plans/gypsies_and_travellers/accomodation_advice.aspx

24. Further site provision, mainly through private sites, has been granted consent since 2007, to meet the needs, and those figures may be available in time for the meeting. In Maidstone and Sevenoaks, for example, they have met the identified GTAA needs, but still have further demand. They are currently reviewing their GTAA figure. Other councils in Kent are also taking stock, identifying needs, taking forward their own LDF process, and awaiting the outcome of the Government's consultations on 1. Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites and 2. The National Planning Policy Framework, which KCC and other authorities have responded to.

Kent Forum and Kent and Medway Housing Strategy

25. The Gypsy and Traveller numbers were discussed at the September Kent Forum with members requesting further information and advice from the Kent Planning Officers Group and Kent Housing Group. This is being addressed as part of joint work to inform the refresh of the Kent Forum Housing Strategy.

Linked planning issues

26. Board members will be aware of the controversy that can surround unauthorised developments by Gypsies and Travellers (or others), typified, in an exceptional case, by Dale Farm in Basildon, Essex.
27. Although any individual or group is free to submit a planning application for any development within the UK, whether or not they own the land, attention is being focused in Kent on applicants who move on to land and develop it, without prior planning consent, claiming that lack of site provision means that they have no choice.
28. In addition to measures in the Localism Act, if confirmed, which will enable councils to decline to determine certain retrospective planning applications, other measures are being considered to enable councils to cater for further Gypsy and Traveller site need, and to restrict developments in unsuitable locations. These will primarily be through allocations under Local Development Framework policies.
29. By early next year, it should also be clear what the new planning framework (both the National Planning Policy Framework and the promised new "light-touch" guidance on this particular subject) will look like, including in the context of the Localism agenda.

Recommendation

30. Members of the Board are asked to note the report, and endorse the efforts to achieve further public site provision.

Bill Forrester
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Background papers: 2007 Advice to South East Regional Assembly

APPENDIX A – LIST OF COUNCIL SITES IN KENT AND MEDWAY

- Aylesham Caravan Site Snowdown
Dover
CT15 4LS
Managed by Kent County Council
01622 221798
gypsy.traveller@kent.gov.uk
- Barnfield Park Caravan Site
New Ash Green
Sevenoaks
TN15 7LY
Managed by Kent County Council. Two pitches are occupied with 999-year leases.
01622 221798
gypsy.traveller@kent.gov.uk
- Bean Caravan Site
Claywood Lane
Bean
Dartford
DA2 8BU
Managed by Dartford Borough Council.
01322 343434
- Chilmington Caravan Site
Chart Road
Great Chart
Ashford
TN23 3AE
Managed by Ashford Borough Council.
01233 637311
- Cinderhill Wood Caravan Site
Matfield,
Brenchley
Tunbridge Wells
TN12 7ED
Managed by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
01892 526121 ext 3160
- Coldharbour Caravan Site
Old London Road
Aylesford
ME20 7NZ
Managed by Kent County Council
01622 221798
gypsy.traveller@kent.gov.uk
- Cuxton Caravan Site
Sundridge Hill
Cuxton
ME2 1LE
Managed by Medway Council.
01634 333171
- Denton Caravan Site
Westcourt Marshes

Shamrock Road
Gravesend
DA12 2LL
Managed by Gravesham Borough Council.
01474 564422/824785

- Springvale
1-8 Springvale
Springhead Road
Northfleet

Gravesend
DA11 8HW

Managed by Gravesham Borough Council. Residents have 25-year leases.
01474 564422/824785

- Greenbridge Park (formely known as Vauxhall Road Caravan Site)

Vauxhall Road
Canterbury
CT1 1YZ
Managed by Kent County Council
01622 221798
gypsy.traveller@kent.gov.uk

- Heartenoak Caravan Site

Heartenoak Road
Hawkhurst
TN18 5EU
Managed by KCC

- Polhill Caravan Site

Dunton Green
Sevenoaks
TN13 2TQ
Managed by Kent County Council
01622 221798
gypsy.traveller@kent.gov.uk

- Romani Way

Hever Road
Edenbridge
TN8 5NQ Managed by Sevenoaks District Council.
[01732 227312](tel:01732 227312)

- Silverspot Caravan Site

Old Ferry Road
Iwade
ME9 8SP
Managed by Swale Borough Council
01795 417349

- Stilebridge Caravan Site

Stilebridge Lane
Marden
Maidstone
TN12 9BJ
Managed by Kent County Council
01622 221798
gypsy.traveller@kent.gov.uk

- Three Lakes Park (formerly known as Murston Caravan Site)
Castle Road
Sittingbourne
ME10 3NL
Managed by Kent county council

- Water Lane Caravan Site
Ulcombe
Maidstone
ME17 1DH
Managed by Kent County Council
01622 221798
gypsy.traveller@kent.gov.uk

- Windmill Lane Caravan Site
Windmill Lane
West Malling
ME19 6PJ
Managed by Kent County Council
01622 221798
gypsy.traveller@kent.gov.uk