

By: Oliver Mills, Managing Director, Adult Social Services

To: Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Board – 30 November 2007

Subject: **FUTURE PLANS FOR GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION IN KENT**

Classification: Unrestricted.

Summary: An overview of the planning advice to SEERA by Kent and Medway planning authorities, plus recommendations about KCC involvement in future processes.

Background

1. The South East Plan will be published during 2009, and, for the first time, such Regional Plans (known as Regional Spatial Strategies) will include the amount of site accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller needs which each Council area will need to ensure is provided during the period 2006-2016.
2. The exact allocation of land for sites to meet the need, in each local authority area, will be within the Local Development Frameworks that are the successor to the former Local Plans.
3. This report begins by detailing the planning advice provided to the Regional Assembly, and then goes on to consider the further stages of the planning process and the role of KCC, Medway Council and the District Councils of Kent, including
 - a) Opportunities for close collaboration between authorities over identifying the necessary further sites, and improvements to existing ones
 - b) The Public Consultation by SEERA in summer 2008
 - c) Relationships with other relevant partners, including Registered Social Landlords

Kent and Medway Planning Advice to the Regional Assembly

4. This report outlines the statutory planning advice submitted collectively by the local authorities in Kent and Medway to the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) on future provision for gypsy and traveller accommodation in Kent 2006-2016. This advice will inform a partial review of the South East Plan on this subject. As required by the Assembly the Advice provides for two planning options for the district by district distribution of future accommodation (pitches) for gypsies and travellers together with advice on future provision for transit accommodation and matters relating to implementation and delivery.
5. The South East Regional Assembly (SEERA) is carrying out a 'partial review' of the South East Plan (the regional spatial strategy (RSS) for the region) to provide

statutory strategic planning policy and guidance on the level and distribution of gypsy and traveller accommodation across the South East. The 'driver' for this work is ODPM Circular 01/2006 which requires that the RSS identify the number of pitches required (but not their location) for each local planning authority taking account of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) and a strategic view of needs across each region.

6. The partial review is to be informed by advice to SEERA provided by all local authorities in the region pursuant to their statutory advisory role under Section 5(5) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. SEERA has set out the nature and scope of the advice required in a brief issued to local authorities in December 2006 (as revised in February 2007).
7. The Advice is to be prepared and submitted on the basis of groupings of authorities. These groupings can either be based on the GTAA areas (four in Kent), or on the basis of all authorities in a county area. Whatever the basis adopted the Regional Assembly expects that the advice to have been considered and agreed by a steering group(s) which should comprise an elected member from each constituent local authority. There is also a requirement to demonstrate how stakeholders, including representatives of the gypsy and traveller community, have been engaged in the development of the advice.
8. Following discussion between the County Council and all the local authorities in Kent KCC has hosted and facilitated a Kent and Medway grouping of authorities to guide the submission of the required planning advice. County Councillor John Fullarton has chaired this group.

Options for the Distribution of Additional Pitches

9. *SEERA's brief requires the provision of two, district based, distributions for a single proposed level of additional pitch provision covering the ten year period 2006-2016, with advice provided on pitch requirements for the two periods 2006-2011 and 2011-2016. The Brief envisages that one of the options be based on a distribution which seeks to meet needs as identified through the needs assessment studies (GTAAs), including a response to unauthorised encampments. The basis for the second distribution however is more indeterminate but intended to consider the wider context set by other planning principles including protection of the natural environment, making best use of previously developed land and existing/planned infrastructure and facilitating access to employment opportunities and local services. At this stage authorities are not asked to express a preference between the options developed. It is important to note that the development of these options is not site specific but relates to the distribution of provision between districts. Consideration of site specific matters and site allocations will be a matter for Local Development Documents.*

Transit Needs and Travelling Showpeople

10. The brief to local authorities also seeks a qualitative assessment of the demand for and type of transit provision and how this may be impacted by an increase in the provision of permanent caravan pitches. Where relevant, account should also be taken of the needs of travelling showpeople. Authorities are also asked to address a number of additional matters relating to implementation and delivery of additional sites/pitches including:
 - Advice on the cost and type of facilities required on caravan sites
 - Estimated implementation costs for the proposed level of provision and potential sources of funding
 - Responsibilities for the delivery and management of pitches including the role of social landlords
 - Anticipated timing of the preparation of relevant LDF Local Development Documents setting out site allocations for gypsy and traveller caravan pitches
 - Advice on the strategic site location criteria which the RSS should include to inform the preparation of the LDDs
 - Anticipated split between public and private provision of pitches
11. Following submission of the local authority advice SEERA will determine its preferred option for the number of pitches to be provided in each local authority area. This will be subject to full public consultation in summer 2008 prior to submission to Government and likely consideration through a public examination. The 2008 public consultation will provide a full opportunity for the local authorities to put forward their preferred view of the provision to be made. Once determined land allocations to meet district pitch requirements will have to be included in local authorities' Local Development Frameworks.
12. The county wide member steering group has met on three occasions to guide the development of the advice. This has also been informed by two stakeholder engagement events held respectively prior to, and following, the development of the draft distribution options. In mid October the steering group agreed the terms of the advice for submission to the Assembly on the basis that this should be 'without prejudice' to the terms of future representations that authorities might wish to make as a result of formal public consultation on proposals that the Assembly may put forward.
13. Appendix 1 to this report provides a summary of the two options for pitch distribution. Both of these reflect an overall requirement for some 390 additional pitches across Kent and Medway over a 10 year period with c. 270 pitches required over an initial five year period. GTAAs are focussed primarily on requirements over an initial five year period and the initial 5 year provision reflects the overall assessed need derived from the 4 GTAAs undertaken in the

Kent and Medway area. Provision beyond five years allows for continuing projected growth within the existing gypsy and traveller community.

14. The Option A distribution needs assessments reflects the need identified at district level by the GTAA partnership areas (East Kent, North Kent, West Kent and Sevenoaks). The Option B distribution, based on the same overall total (390 pitches), reflects the level and pattern of a number of planning considerations:
- national environmental designations and constraints e.g. areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty , areas of flood risk
 - the Metropolitan Green Belt
 - the number and scale of existing urban areas
 - the supply of housing land involving brownfield sites
 - the scale of overall housing provision planned for each district
 - the geographical area offering good accessibility to community facilities and services (based on Local Transport Plan indicators)

This additional provision compares with current provision for c.740 caravans (approx 440 pitches) on authorised gypsy and traveller sites across Kent and Medway ¹.

15. The Advice also includes a provisional assessment of future requirements for transit pitches. Further work continues on the assessment of need for additional accommodation for Travelling Showpeople as this was not generally covered in the original GTAA work. A further submission to the Assembly will be made on this in due course.
16. Agreement of the advice for the RSS Review on gypsy and traveller accommodation , on behalf of the County Council is a Key Decision for the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence in the Council's current Forward Plan. The advice is provided 'without prejudice' to the County Council's future consideration of proposals and options for the RSS partial review to be published for consultation by the Regional Assembly in 2008.

Local Development Frameworks

17. Each of the Kent and Medway planning authorities has its own timetable for LDFs, and they need to include allocations of land for caravan sites to meet projected needs.
18. KCC has been approached by one or two authorities over discussing approaches to the subject, and is willing to engage in such discussions.
19. Clearly, the responsibility for both LDFs and Housing Strategies rests on the authorities concerned, but it is important that authorities are acting both in concert and strategically.
20. SEERA is consulting on its pitch allocation proposals between 6 May and 29 July 2008, and has asked Councils in the South East to assist with the consultation.

¹ On the basis of an average occupancy of c 1.7 caravans per pitch

SEERA's 2008 Consultation

21. KCC has been approached by one or two authorities, asking if it could take on this role.
22. If the Board are content, the Gypsy and Traveller Unit are willing to assist with the consultation process, to maximise both public involvement and the involvement of Gypsies and Travellers in the process, but working alongside other local authorities, and with suitable regard for the resource implications.

Conclusions

23. The planning advice to SEERA's Partial Review of the South East Plan has been submitted without prejudice to the right of authorities to submit whatever comments they wish on SEERA's proposals for consultation in summer 2008.
24. It will be farsighted for Kent authorities to address their pressing accommodation needs for site accommodation in advance of either the South East Plan or their own Local Development Frameworks being finalised.
25. It is appropriate for KCC to assist other Kent and Medway authorities in tackling these issues on a strategic and co-operative basis, but not to take over the responsibility for policies or implementation which are squarely based on another authority.
26. It is also appropriate for KCC to assist with SEERA's public consultation next summer, working with all Kent and Medway authorities on ensuring the maximum possible public consultation, with suitable funding and other resources from SEERA to meet the costs.

Recommendations

27. Members are asked to:
 - a) Note the advice given to SEERA by the Kent and Medway planning authorities
 - b) Endorse the other conclusions within this report
 - c) Endorse the cautious but co-operative approach suggested for KCC in assisting other Kent authorities in assembling site locations for inclusion within their Local Development Frameworks
 - d) Endorse support for SEERA in their public consultation in summer 2008, but with the necessity for such support to be matched with resources from SEERA for assistance with such a consultation

Background Papers:

SEERA: Partial Review of South East Plan: Provision of Caravan sites For Gypsies and Travellers: Brief for Submission of Advice by Local Authorities: December 2006 (and as amended February 2007)

East Kent: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Report (2007-2012): Final Report July 2007: De Montfort University

North Kent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Report 2006: Draft Final Report: 2007: DCA [THIS HAS NOW BEEN FINALISED AND WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A FEEDBACK SESSION ON 12 DECEMBER IN NORTH KENT]

Ashford, Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Report 2005/6: Final Report: 2007: DCA

Sevenoaks: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Report 2006: Final Report: 2007: DCA

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APPENDIX 1

<i>District/ GTAA area</i>	Existing Caravans on authorised sites	% of Existing Provision	Option A Additional Pitch Provision Years 1-5	Option A Additional Pitch Provision Years 6-10	Option A Total Additional Pitch Provision Years 1 -10	% of Option A	Option B Additional Pitch Provision Years 1-5	Option B Additional Pitch Provision Years 6-10	Option B Total Additional Pitch Provision Years 1 -10	% of Option B
Ashford	111	14.9	14	8	22	5.7	31	11	42	10.9
Maidstone	169	22.7	32	19	51	13.2	26	18	44	11.4
Ton& Malling	33	4.2	10	5	15	3.9	24	7	31	8.0
Tunbridge Wells	40	5.4	8	4	12	3.1	13	4	17	4.4
West Kent GTAA area	353	47.4	64	36	100	25.9	94	40	134	35.0
Sevenoaks	118	15.9	64	25	89	23.1	8	17	25	6.5
Sevenoaks GTAA area	118	15.9	64	25	89	23.1	8	17	25	6.5
Dartford	74	9.9	27	11	38	9.8	21	11	32	8.3
Gravesham	22	3.0	15	4	19	4.9	9	4	13	3.4
Medway	22	3.0	10	4	14	3.6	33	7	40	10.4
Swale	64	8.6	62	18	80	20.7	25	12	37	9.6
North Kent GTAA area	161	24.5	114	37	151	39.1	88	34	122	31.3
Canterbury	67	9.0	22	10	32	8.3	28	11	39	10.1
Dover	24	3.2	3	3	6	1.6	23	7	30	7.8
Shepway	0	0	2	0	2	0.5	14	2	16	4.1
Thanet	0	0	4	1	5	1.3	18	3	21	5.4
East Kent GTAA area	91	12.2	31	14	45	11.7	83	23	106	27.5
Kent and Medway	744	100.0	273	113	386	100.0	273	114	387	100.0