

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT

Cabinet - 20 April 2017

Report of	Chief Planning Officer
Status	For Consideration
Also considered by	Planning Advisory Committee - 19 April 2017
Key Decision	Yes

Executive Summary:

The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA, 2017) has been prepared as part of the evidence base to support the emerging Local Plan.

The GTAA identifies a need for 51 pitches to provide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation across the District between 2017-2035.

The previous GTAA was undertaken in 2012 and identified a need for 72 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches from 2012-2026. Since the previous GTAA, central government has made changes to the national 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' (PPTS, 2015), which includes changes to the definition of Gypsy and Traveller.

The need for 51 Gypsy and Traveller pitches can be met on existing sites and no new sites will be needed. Table 1 below sets out how these pitches could be accommodated, for example through the conversion of existing temporary permissions to permanent permissions and through small-scale extensions to existing sites.

In addition, the GTAA has not identified any need for Travelling Show People or Transit Camps during the Local Plan period to 2035.

Table 1: Potential Supply of Gypsy and Traveller pitches on existing sites

	No. of pitches
Sites currently/previously with Temporary Planning Permission	22
Additional pitches on existing sites identified in the previous Gypsy and Traveller Plan	36
Unauthorised Sites that have never had planning permission	18
TOTAL POTENTIAL PITCHES	76

This report supports the Key Aim of Protecting the Green Belt

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Robert Piper

Contact Officer Helen French, Ext. 7357

Recommendation to Planning Advisory Committee:

To consider the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) attached at Appendix A, and to recommend to Cabinet that the study be endorsed as a robust evidence base from which the Local Plan strategy will be developed.

Recommendation to Cabinet

To endorse the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) as a robust evidence base from which the Local Plan strategy will be developed.

Reason for recommendation: In order to plan for the accommodation needs of our Gypsy and Traveller residents and to prepare a Local Plan that is based on sound and robust evidence.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is an important aspect of the Local Plan evidence base. The study identifies the current and future needs of the traveller communities within the District.
- 2 The previous GTAA was undertaken in 2012 and identified a need for 72 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches from 2012-2026.
- 3 The 2012 GTAA cannot be included in the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan as the data is 5 years old, the projections did not extend to the end of the new plan period (2035) and the Government made changes to the national policy Planning policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) in 2015.
- 4 The new GTAA updates and replaces the previous 2012 GTAA and provides the evidence base to support the consideration of planning applications and the emerging Local Plan.
- 5 The Assessment:
 - updates the baseline data on the number, type and occupancy of plots, taking into account any changes in site capacity, vacancy and turnover of residents;
 - considers the implications of the new definition of Gypsies and Travellers introduced in the 2015 Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS);
 - presents a clear and robust analysis of current and future accommodation needs;

- provides a clear and robust understanding of the permanent, transit and other accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople;
- provides general guidance on the local housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople; and
- provides appropriate recommendations on any subsequent site identification and delivery.

6 The main outcomes for the study include:

- The objectively assessed need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches across the District up to 2035
- The need for Traveller Showpeople Accommodation across the District up to 2035
- The need for transit pitches across the District up to 2035

The current Gypsy and Traveller position in Sevenoaks District

7 Table 2 sets out the current status of gypsy and traveller accommodation within the District. There are 140 existing pitches over 27 sites including authorised sites, those with temporary planning permission and unauthorised sites.

Table 2: Current Gypsy and Traveller position as at 17/3/2017

	No. of pitches
Authorised Public Sites	59
Authorised Private Sites	41
Sites with Temporary Planning Permission	5
Unauthorised Sites that have previously had temporary planning permission	17
Unauthorised Sites that have never had planning permission	18
Total Existing Pitches	140

8 The council have a number of planning applications which are currently pending consideration or subject to appeal. These are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Current Planning Applications and Appeals

	No. of pitches	Status
Land at Fountain Farm, Firmingers lane, Well Hill 13/01388	1	Subject to High Court Challenge
Hilltop Farm, Farningham, 14/00681	5	Pending Consideration
Knatts Valley Caravan Park, Knatts Valley, 14/03569	8	Applicant has appealed refusal
Hollywood Gardens, West Kingsdown, 16/01109	3	Pending Consideration
St George's Stables/ Land NE Westwood Farm, Well Hill, 16/02308	1	Pending Consideration

- 9 Since March 2012 (the date of the previous GTAA) 13 pitches have been granted permanent permission and are now authorised. These are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Sites which have become authorised since 2012

	No. of pitches	Date permission granted
Bournewood Brickworks, Stones Cross Road, Crockenhill	1	Oct 2012 (appeal)
Holly Mobile Home Park, Hockenden Lane, Swanley	4	July 2015
Land East of Knockholt Station (Station Court), London Road, Halstead	7	Dec 2016 (appeal)
Robertson's Nursery, Crockenhill	1	Jan 2017

Methodology for the new GTAA

- 10 In 2015 the government altered the planning definition of Gypsy and Travellers within the National Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS) to exclude Gypsy and Travellers who have permanently ceased travelling.
- 11 The council have a responsibility to provide suitable accommodation for **all its residents** and therefore the GTAA takes account of **all Gypsy and Traveller residents** in the District before applying the revised PPTS need. This is referred to as the District's **Cultural Need**.
- 12 To identify the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community a team of interviewers visited all known Gypsy and Traveller sites within the District. Residents were asked to complete a comprehensive questionnaire to identify their current households and potential future requirements.
- 13 A response rate of approximately 65% was achieved from 87 households. This is considered to be a very good response rate.
- 14 62% of Gypsy and Traveller households within the District meet the PPTS definition. The remaining 38% are culturally Gypsy and Travellers but are not currently travelling. This is often due to health, age or education.
- 15 Data from the questionnaires, alongside information about existing sites both authorised and unauthorised and other culturally significant information, has been used to identify the need for new pitches across the District.

Findings of the GTAA

Gypsy and Traveller Need

- 16 The GTAA identified the need for new Gypsy and Traveller pitches across the District between **2017-2035**. It has identified the "Cultural Need" (i.e. need for all those who are Gypsy and Travellers according to the equalities legislation) and the "PPTS Need" (i.e. the need for Gypsy and Traveller households that are travelling).
- 17 Table 4 sets out the total pitch requirement and the Net Plan Period Need for both the Cultural and PPTS Need.

Table 4: Gypsy and Traveller need in Sevenoaks District up to 2035

	Cultural Need	PPTS Need
Total pitch requirement to 2035	105	65*
5% expected turnover on public sites	54	54
NET PLAN PERIOD NEED	51	11

*62% of the existing Gypsy and Traveller Community meet the PPTS definition.

- 18 Historically, the District has seen a turnover of 5% on the Public sites at Barnfield Park, Polhill and Hever Road. This turnover is expected to continue and is supported by the findings of the questionnaires. Therefore it is expected that approximately 54 pitches will become available within the public sites up to 2035. It is likely that this will go towards meeting a significant portion of the District's need.
- 19 This leaves a **net cultural need of 51 pitches up to 2035** including 11 pitches specifically for gypsy and travellers who are travelling (PPTS Need). **The Council should aim to meet this need in order not to potentially breach equalities legislation. An Equality Assessment is set out below.**

Potential Pitch Supply

- 20 This District has **22 existing pitches that currently have or previously had temporary planning permission.**
- 21 There are an additional **18 existing pitches which are unauthorised and have never had temporary planning permission.**
- 22 The previous Gypsy and Traveller Plan (May and Nov 2014) consultations included a **potential of 36 additional pitches on existing sites** (excluding those sites which have now been granted permanent permission).
- 23 **Therefore it is likely that the Council will be able to meet the District's Gypsy and Traveller need to the end of the Plan Period by focusing on existing sites and provision.**
- 24 A Duty to Co-operate Workshop with adjoining neighbours, Kent County Council and wider Kent authorities was held on 15th March. The purpose of this workshop was to seek agreement on the GTAA methodology and to discuss future provision. The council will continue with its Duty to Co-operate partners to consider Gypsy and Traveller provision across Kent and the wider area.

Provision for Travelling Show People

- 25 The GTAA has not identified any need for Travelling Show People within the District up to 2035.

Transit Provision

- 26 The GTAA has not identified any need for a new Transit Camp within the District up to 2035. It suggests that any future provision could be met through pitches on existing Local Authority (SDC or KCC) sites.

What Happens Next

- 27 The issues and options consultation will include a renewed call for all development sites including provision for Gypsy and Travellers to identify potential development land across the District in addition to sites already submitted. Any potential sites or additional pitches will then be assessed for suitability using the same methodology as for housing land.

28 Under the Duty to Co-operate we will work with our neighbouring authorities and the wider Kent authorities to identify potential options.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

The Committee could choose not to endorse the GTAA, however this is not recommended. The previous 2012 GTAA is now out of date and there has been a change in National Policy since its completion. An up to date GTAA is needed to support the emerging Local Plan otherwise it would lead to the Local Plan being found unsound at examination. However, the new GTAA has identified a lower pitch requirement for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation which can be met through efficient use of existing sites.

Key Implications

Financial

The GTAA is funded through the LDF budget.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Preparation of a Local Plan is a statutory requirement. There are defined legal requirements that must be met in plan making which are considered when the plan is examined by a Government Planning Inspector. Risks associated with Local Plan making are set out in the Local Development Scheme.

Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impacts will be analysed via an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) to be prepared alongside each key stage of plan making.

Conclusions

The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. The District has a potential supply of 76 pitches on existing sites and the GTAA has identified a need for 51 new pitches to provide suitable accommodation for the Gypsy and Traveller community up to 2035. **Therefore the need for 51 Gypsy and Traveller pitches can be met on existing sites and no new sites will be needed.**

Appendices

Appendix A - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation
Assessment 2017

Background Papers

None

Richard Morris
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