

## GYPSY, TRAVELLER AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ADVISORY GROUP – 7 June 2012

Report of the: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Community and Planning Services

Status: For consideration

Key Decision: No

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### Executive Summary:

Following the Government's decision to terminate the Partial Review of the South East Plan and its publication of new draft national policy, it was decided that a new local needs assessment should be undertaken for the District. The accommodation assessment, undertaken by Salford University, has now been completed.

In addition to the following existing pitches (at March 2011):

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Local Authority permanent pitches       | 58         |
| Private permanent pitches               | 30         |
| Temporary pitches                       | 23         |
| Unauthorised pitches                    | 12         |
| <b>Total number of existing pitches</b> | <b>123</b> |

The study finds a need for the following pitches over the period 2012-2016, 2017-2021 and 2022-2026:

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>2012 – 2016 Total</b>   | <b>40</b> |
| <i>2012 – 2016 (to provide for existing households on temporary and unauthorised sites)</i>                                | <i>31</i> |
| <i>2012 – 2016 (additional pitches to provide for currently concealed households and household growth over the period)</i> | <i>9</i>  |
| <b>2017 – 2021 Total</b>   | <b>15</b> |
| <b>2022 – 2026 Total</b>   | <b>17</b> |

No need for Travelling Showpeople accommodation is identified through the study. No need for a dedicated transit site is identified. However, it is recommended that this needs to be considered on a regional or county-wide basis. The study does not make recommendations of where provision should be made. This will be an issue for the Council to consider in developing its Gypsies and Travellers DPD.

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This report supports the Key Aims of 'Housing to meet residents' needs' and 'Development and the Environment' from the Community Action Plan 2010-2013

Portfolio Holder            Cllr. Mrs Davison

Head of Service            Group Manager Planning – Mr Alan Dyer

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**Recommendation:**

That the Council's Gypsy and Traveller DPD be prepared on the basis of the findings of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment.

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**Reason for recommendation:**

The report is considered to be a sound evidence base for the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller DPD.

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**Introduction**

- 1        A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment was previously prepared for the Council in 2006 to inform local planning decisions and the Partial Review of the South East Plan on accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Following the Government's decision to terminate the Partial Review before policies progressed to adoption and its publication of new draft national policy (in 'Planning for Traveller Sites', April 2011), it was decided that a new local needs assessment should be undertaken for the District. The Salford Housing and Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford was commissioned, jointly with Maidstone Borough Council, to prepare this report (appendix A). Joint commissioning enabled a reduction to be achieved in the cost to the Council. It is proposed that the report be used to inform the Council's preparation of a Gypsy and Traveller DPD.

**Planning for Traveller Sites**

- 2        Following consultation in April 2011, 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' was published in March 2012 and sits alongside the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3        'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' states that local authorities should 'set pitch targets for gypsies and travellers and plot targets for travelling showpeople which address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of travellers in their area, working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities'. Gypsy and Traveller development is inappropriate in the Green Belt. Minor Green Belt reviews should be undertaken and sites allocated specifically for Gypsies and Travellers where necessary to meet an identified need. Rural exception sites can also be considered as a way of making provision.

**Existing Provision in the District**

- 4        At March 2011, there were 123 existing pitches in the District. These were:

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Local Authority permanent pitches | 58 |
| Private permanent pitches         | 30 |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Temporary pitches                       | 23         |
| Unauthorised pitches                    | 12         |
| <b>Total number of existing pitches</b> | <b>123</b> |

- 5 Appendix B shows the distribution of permanent, temporary and unauthorised gypsy and traveller pitches at March 2011.
- 6 Over the course of the year 2011/12, temporary permissions for 9 pitches (over 2 sites) expired and were then re-granted. This occurred at the time of the study and is identified as the reason why the balance between temporary and unauthorised sites set out in the study is different to the current position and that at March 2011. This does not impact on the overall need figure in any way. Other than the expiry and then re-granting of temporary permissions, the number and balance between the different types of tenure has remained stable over the year. However, some of the unauthorised developments have been removed and the families moved off the sites since the completion of the study.

### Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment: Methodology

- 7 The accommodation assessment uses a combination of information from key stakeholders (KCC, SDC and Kent Police, for example) and a survey of 86 Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople households currently residing in Sevenoaks District to identify the need for additional pitches over the period 2012-2016. This includes 66 household interviews on Gypsy and Traveller sites (54% of the estimated total number of households) and 20 with Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar.
- 8 In considering the need for Gypsies and Traveller on temporary and unauthorised sites for pitches, the assessment applies the planning definition of a Gypsy and Traveller. This requires that an individual or household continues to travel unless they are no longer doing so as a result of 'their own or their family's or dependent's educational or health needs or old age' if they are to be considered as requiring site-based accommodation. This information was collected through the survey.
- 9 A household formation rate of 3% per annum is applied to the total number of households at 2016 to calculate the need to 2021 and 2026. This is a standard approach that has been taken in other assessments across the country and has been selected after consideration of the number of children currently living in households in the District (see appendix 2 of the accommodation assessment).
- 10 The assessment is considered to provide a robust evidence base on which to prepare the Council's Gypsy and Traveller DPD and is considered to accord with existing and emerging national policy.

### Key Findings and Recommendations

- 11 The study finds a need for **40** pitches over the period 2012-2016 (when applying the planning definition tests of travelling) and an indicative need for a further **32** pitches over the period 2017 to 2026 (a total of 72 over the period 2012-2026). These figures compare to the 2006 GTAA findings that 64 pitches would be

required in the period 2006-2011 and 184 pitches would be required over the period 2006-2026.

- 12 The study notes that many of the pitches required in the District in the period 2012-2016 are required to provide permanent pitches for those households currently on temporary and unauthorised sites, where these meet the planning definition tests. As a result, the net increase in the number of pitches in the District over this period is likely to be much lower than 40. The assessment notes that if all temporary and unauthorised pitches were to be granted permanent planning permission then the remaining need in the period 2012-2016 would be 9 pitches. An assessment of the existing temporary and unauthorised sites will need to be carried out, as part of preparing the Gypsy and Traveller DPD, to identify whether existing temporary and unauthorised sites are appropriate locations for permanent pitches. It is unlikely that granting permanent permission will be appropriate in all circumstances.
- 13 Of those 40 pitches required in 2012-2016 that are not needed to provide permanent accommodation for households on temporary or unauthorised sites (9 pitches), these are all to provide for concealed (doubled up) households currently residing in the District or new households forecast to form in the period from children of existing households in the District. No need has been identified from households moving into the District.
- 14 The survey work that forms a key input into the assessment included 20 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar housing. Of these, only 1 household was found to have firm intentions to move to a site. This was balanced by 1 household on a site that had firm intentions to move into bricks and mortar. The net assumed movement from housing to sites was, therefore, 0. The study recommends that future studies reconsider the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar housing, when the results from the Census 2011, which include Gypsy / Traveller as an ethnicity for the first time, are published.
- 15 The study suggests that there is a need to overcome overcrowding issues on existing pitches at Barnfield Park (KCC site). A need for an additional 5 pitches to provide for concealed (doubled up) households on the site is also identified on the basis of the views of KCC officers managing the site. These 5 pitches are included in the 40 required in the period 2012-2016. The recommendation does not mean that the additional 5 pitches would need to be provided on the site or through an extension of it. This will be a decision that will need to be taken through the Gypsy and Traveller DPD.
- 16 No need for a dedicated transit site is identified. However, it is recommended that the need for transit sites should be considered on a regional or county-wide basis. It is also suggested that some of the need for transit sites is being met through travelling households staying with friends or family members on existing sites in the District. Consideration could be given to regularising this arrangement where existing planning permissions do not allow for this through the Gypsy and Traveller DPD.
- 17 No need for Travelling Showpeople accommodation is identified through the assessment.

## Next Steps

- 18 A Members' Seminar was held on 9 May 2012 with consultants from Salford University to brief Members on the study and give them the opportunity to ask questions of the authors.
- 19 The Planning Policy team will be bringing forward an initial consultation draft of the Gypsy and Traveller DPD in late 2012 / early 2013. This DPD will need to set out Gypsy and Traveller sites for allocation.
- 20 The Council will have a Duty to Cooperate with other local authorities in preparing its Gypsy and Traveller DPD. Officers from the planning policy team have been invited to a meeting at Swale Borough Council on 20 June 2012 to share ideas and best practice on planning for Gypsies and Travellers.

## Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 21 The Council could choose not to publish a new Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment. However, the previous GTAA was published in 2006 and is not considered a sufficiently up-to-date study to inform a DPD, which will not be adopted until 2014. The 2006 GTAA also found that a significantly higher number of pitches were required than the recent study.
- 22 The Council could choose not to prepare a Gypsy and Traveller DPD. However, the ability to resit permanent permission being granted at appeal for Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Green Belt is dependent on the Council being able to show that it is making progress with allocating sites for new Gypsy and Traveller development.

## Key Implications

### Financial

- 23 Budgetary provision has been made for the cost involved in preparing the Gypsy and Traveller DPD, including the study, through the LDF budget.

### Community Impact and Outcomes

- 24 Allocating Gypsy and Traveller sites is likely to prove controversial with the settled community. However, it is hoped that this will reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments which are likely to have more of a disruptive impact on the settled community. Development of new permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites may help to improve access to education and health services for this section of the local community.

### Equality Impacts

- 25 An Equality Impact Assessment of the Gypsy and Traveller DPD will be carried out prior to submission for examination.

### Sustainability Checklist

- 26 A Sustainability Appraisal will be carried out of the Gypsy and Traveller DPD.

## Conclusions

- 27 The accommodation assessment is considered to provide a robust evidence base on which to prepare the Gypsy and Traveller DPD. The assessment recommends that the number of permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches required over the period 2012-2026 is 72.

## Risk Assessment Statement

- 28 It is considered that the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment provides a sound basis for preparing the Gypsy and Traveller DPD. However, other parties will be able to challenge this assumption at Examination.

## Appendices

Appendix A – Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (March 2012)

Appendix B – Map showing the distribution of permanent, temporary and unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller pitches at March 2011

## Contact Officer(s):

Steve Craddock (x7315)

Hannah Gooden (x7178)

Alan Dyer (x7440)

Kristen Paterson

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Community and Planning Services