

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 25 June 2007

Subject: **East of England Gypsy and Traveller Partial Review Issues and Options Consultation**

Report of: Director of Planning

**Recommendation:**

That the Committee notes the consultation and agrees the following comments:

1. Support the use of the Communities and Local Government (CLG) methodology in relation to benchmarking and filling inconsistencies and data gaps within Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs).
2. Support the view that in the present round of Gypsy and Traveller Partial Reviews transit accommodation should be addressed through a regional statement of need as further research is required to understand this type of accommodation and need.
3. Support the use of applying a growth rate of 3% annual compound for Gypsy and Traveller households for the Partial Review period beyond that covered by the GTAAAs; and the inclusion of a reference within the Partial Review document of the need to monitor and review this forecast.
4. Support the need to understand implementation and delivery issues affecting the Partial Review document.
5. Support East of England Regional Assembly's (EERAs) continued close working with local authorities, the Showman's Guild of Great Britain and the Travelling Showpeople community to fully identify Showpeople's accommodation needs within the Preferred Options document.
6. Support the need for close working with colleagues in the South East to understand any inter-regional issues within/ relating to our respective Partial Review documents.

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide an overview of the East of England's Gypsy and Traveller Partial Review Issues and Options consultation document; and to recommend the Assembly's response.

**Key Issues:**

- In accordance with Government guidance EERA is taking forward an early Partial Review of the East of England Plan in respect of accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. EERA have published their Issues and Options consultation document which includes two pitch distribution options.
- EERA have developed the Issues and Options document using a CLG methodology developed to assist Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) develop partial reviews in this respect. This CLG methodology has been rolled out nationally as such we will be using the same methodology in developing the Partial Review document for the South East
- We will need to work closely with EERA during the development of our respective Partial Reviews to ensure that inter-regional issues are appropriately identified and addressed. At the present point in time these issues are not known as the evidence base for the South East is currently being developed and finalised.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The East of England has the highest number of caravans of any English region. According to the CLG January 2007 Caravan Count data the East of England contained 4,163 Gypsy and Traveller caravans, 25% of all Gypsy and Traveller caravans in England. In comparison, the South East has the second greatest concentration with 2,895 Gypsy and Traveller caravans (17% of all Gypsy and Traveller caravans in England). A breakdown for all regions is included in Annex I. A direct comparison can not be made between number of caravans and number of pitches as more than one caravan can be sited on one pitch.
- 1.2 Circular 01/2006 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites' requires Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) to identify within their Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the number of pitches required (but not their location) for each local planning authority in the light of local authority GTAA's and a strategic view of needs across the region.
- 1.3 The emerging East of England Plan fails to meet the Circular's requirements as the draft East of England Plan was submitted to Government in November 2004 well in advance of the Circular's final publication in February 2006. EERA is therefore undertaking a single issue Partial Review of the East of England Plan to bring the RSS into line with Government policy.
- 1.4 In May 2007 the EERA published 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the East of England: Issues and Options consultation' document. The consultation closes on 31 July 2007. The Issues and Options document focuses on four key areas:
- i) Appropriate scale of pitch provision
  - ii) Distribution of pitch provision
  - iii) Delivery and Implementation
  - iv) Travelling Showpeople

- 1.5 The timetable for the key stages of the Partial Review are:

<b>Key Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
Submission to Government	February 2008
Examination in Public	October 2008
Adoption	September 2009

## **2. Issues and Options**

Appropriate scale of pitch provision A

- 2.1 The Issues and Options document has been drafted in accordance with Circular 01/2006 using the East of England GTAA's as the initial evidence base. The GTAA's have been benchmarked for robustness and consistency using the CLG methodology<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Preparing Regional Spatial Strategy reviews on Gypsies and Travellers by regional planning bodies, March 2007, University of Birmingham et al, CLG, [www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1508208](http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1508208)

Inconsistencies and data gaps have been remedied and filled using the CLG methodology. This approach is supported as it is the approach recommended by CLG and is the approach we will take when developing the Partial Review of the South East Plan in this respect. The CLG methodology has been rolled out nationally to ensure all Partial Reviews in this respect are taken forward using a consistent methodology.

- 2.2 The Issues and Options document states that across the East of England there is a requirement for 1,220 net additional residential pitches over the five years from 2006 until 2011. The illustrative options for the distribution of additional pitches within the East of England are included in Annex 2.
- 2.3 In relation to transit accommodation the document includes an overall regional statement of need and proposes need for approximately 300 additional pitches over the partial review period. This regional picture of need has been derived through GTAA evidence. The document acknowledges that at the present point in time transit accommodation can not be accurately assessed below the regional level as greater research and understanding about this type of accommodation need is required. We support this approach and it is the same approach we are proposing to take when developing the Partial Review of the South East Plan in this respect.
- 2.4 The Issues and Options document acknowledges that the GTAAs can provide a robust forecast of accommodation need between 2006 and 2011 as this is the period the assessments cover. However, longer term assessments of Gypsy and Traveller needs are difficult as there is currently no past trend information. The Issues and Options document acknowledges that if the Partial Review only covers the period up to 2011 there is a risk Local Development Documents (LDDs) will be out of date by the time they are adopted.
- 2.5 The Issues and Options document refers to several studies that have used a 3% annual compound growth rate for Gypsy and Traveller households. This is also the growth rate suggested within the CLG methodology. We support the option proposed that the Partial Review should apply the 3% growth rate to cover the period 2011 and 2016 and inclusion, within the Partial Review document, of reference to the potential uncertainty surrounding the forecasts for this period and need for further monitoring and review. This is the approach that is proposed to be taken within the Partial Review of the South East Plan in this respect.

#### Distribution of pitch provision

- 2.6 RPBs are required to generate options for pitch allocations in order to satisfy Sustainability Appraisal regulations. The CLG methodology sets out a number of factors that RPBs might consider when developing pitch allocation options, these include issues such as sustainability, environmental protection and equity and choose.
- 2.7 The Issues and Options documents highlights that the regions GTAAs have identified that 45% of the regions needs arises from just four local authorities.

In light of this the Issues and Options document states that there is concern that accommodating large numbers of pitches within particular areas will give rise to significant environmental, policy and delivery challenges.

- 2.8 As such the Issues and Options document proposes two distribution options. The first being a distribution based solely where need arises, informed by the GTAAs. The second option seeks to amend the GTAA option to increase the minimum level of pitch provision within each local authority area to 15 pitches. The additional provision made by increasing each local authority area is off set by a proportionate reduction in the four local council areas that have the highest level of need arising. The methodology behind the 15 pitch minimum is that 15 pitches are considered, within site size best practice, to be the number of pitches that can be delivered on one site.
- 2.9 We have noted this approach and propose to discuss further with EERA the methodology underpinning this approach as part of our work taking forward the Partial Review of the South East Plan in this respect.

#### Delivery and Implementation

- 2.10 The Issues and Options document acknowledges that although DPDs must be prepared by local authorities to translate the pitch requirements set out within the Partial Review document into site specific allocations, this will not itself secure the delivery of sites on the ground. The Issues and Options document highlights the importance of understanding how implementation and delivery is likely to be achieved, particularly in relation to Gypsy and Traveller wishes and aspirations as research suggests that many Gypsies and Travellers prefer family-owned private sites and a preference for small (15 pitch) sites.
- 2.11 We support the recognition within the Issues and Options document of the importance of needing to fully identify and understand the implementation and delivery issues affecting the Partial Review document. Likewise we have sought advice from all local authorities, within the 15 October advice, on the implementation and delivery issues that need to be taken into account in the development of the South East Plan Partial Review in this respect.

#### Travelling Showpeople

- 2.12 The Issues and Options report acknowledges the publication of the Travelling Showpeople draft Circular (January 2007) which requires RPBs to identify within RSS reviews the number of pitches required (but not their location) for each planning authority in light of the GTAAs and a strategic view of needs across the region. In January 2007 Government also amended the definition of Gypsies and Travellers in respect of GTAAs to include Travelling Showpeople. Local authorities therefore now have a duty under the Housing Act 2004 to assess accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople.
- 2.13 The East of England's GTAAs were completed prior to the publication of the draft Showpeople Circular and the revised GTAA definition of Gypsies and Travellers.

As the evidence base does not therefore currently exist the Issues and Options document does not include a regional statement of Travelling Showpeople's needs or pitch numbers for each local planning authority. The Issues and Options document seeks consideration of how this issue should be taken forward and what robust evidence is available to inform the Partial Review.

- 2.14 We support EERAs continued working arrangements with local authorities in the East of England to take forward supplementary Showpeople accommodation assessments as an annex to their main GTAAs and continued close working with the Showman's Guild of Great Britain and the Showpeople community. This approach will ensure that the needs of Travelling Showpeople are fully accounted for and included within the partial Review document at the Preferred Options stage.

#### Inter-regional Issues

- 2.15 The East of England Partial Review is running approximately 10 months ahead of the South East Plan's Partial Review in this respect. Although a large proportion of the South East GTAAs have now been completed or are in the very final stages of completion there are still significant gaps in the regional evidence base. Until our GTAA evidence base has been completed and the local authority advice has been drafted and formally submitted on 15 October 2007 to inform the South East Plan's Partial Review it is not possible to understand or fully consider inter-regional issues. We propose to continue to work closely with EERA to discuss and work through any arising inter-regional issues in the period leading up to the publication of the EERA's Preferred Options document in February 2008 and the publication of our Preferred Options document of the South East Plan Partial Review in May 2008.

### **3. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Assembly's response to the Issues and Options consultation includes the following points:
1. Support the use of the CLG methodology in relation to benchmarking and filling inconsistencies and data gaps within GTAAs.
  2. Support the view that in the present round of Gypsy and Traveller Partial Reviews transit accommodation should be addressed through a regional statement of need as further research is required to understand this type of accommodation and need.
  3. Support the use of applying a growth rate of 3% annual compound for Gypsy and Traveller households for the Partial Review period beyond that covered by the GTAAs; and the inclusion of a reference within the Partial Review document of the need to monitor and review this forecast.

4. Support the need to understand implementation and delivery issues affecting the Partial Review document.
5. Support EERAs continued close working with local authorities, the Showman's Guild of Great Britain and the Travelling Showpeople community to fully identify Showpeople's accommodation needs within the Preferred Options document.
6. Support the need for close working with colleagues in the South East to understand any inter-regional issues within/ relating to our respective Partial Review documents.

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9 July 2007

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**CLG Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count Data - January 2007**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Total All Caravans</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
East	4,163	25%
South East	2,895	17%
South West	2,247	14%
West Midlands	1,714	10%
Yorkshire and Humber	1,482	9%
North West	1,441	9%
East Midlands	1,317	8%
London	803	5%
North East	549	3%
England	16,611	100%

**East of England Gypsy and Traveller Partial Review illustrative options for distribution of net additional residential pitches**

Local Council	Option 1	Option 2
Bedford	12	15
Mid Bedfordshire	22	22
South Bedfordshire	39	39
Luton	13	15
Cambridge	15	15
East Cambridgeshire	35	35
Fenland	180	108
Huntingdonshire	20	20
South Cambridgeshire	120	72
Peterborough	13	15
Broxbourne	13	15
Dacorum	13	15
East Hertfordshire	5	15
Hertsmere	17	17
North Hertfordshire	3	15
St Albans	34	34
Stevenage	7	15
Three Rivers	2	15
Watford	4	15
Welwyn Hatfield	17	17
Basildon	157	95
Braintree	15	15
Brentwood	15	15
Castle Point	2	15
Chelmsford	87	52
Colchester	6	15
Epping Forest	52	52
Harlow	12	15
Maldon	13	15
Rochford	9	15
Tendring	2	15
Uttlesford	12	15
Southend	0	15
Thurrock	56	56
Breckland	13	15
Broadland	1	15
Great Yarmouth	1	15
King's Lynn & West Norfolk	53	53
North Norfolk	0	15
Norwich	5	15
South Norfolk	21	21
Babergh	0	15
Forest Heath	18	18
Ipswich	20	20

Local Council	Option 1	Option 2
Mid Suffolk	39	39
St Edmundsbury	15	15
Suffolk Coastal	0	15
Waveney	8	15
East of England	1216	1220