

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 3 September 2008

Subject: **Items for Information:**

- 1. Gypsies and Travellers Consultation: Update**
- 2. Taylor Review of Rural Affordable Housing and the Economy**
- 3. Housing and Planning Delivery Grant**

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board note the contents of this report

I. Gypsies and Travellers Consultation: Update

- I.1 At Plenary on 16 July 2008 the Assembly agreed as recommended to consult on four distribution options for the provision to 2016 of 1,064 additional pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, and up to 274 additional plots for Travelling Showpeople.
- I.2 Consultation will run for 12 weeks, 1 September to 21 November 2008. The Assembly is organising regional level consultation as follows:
 - Opinion polling
 - 3-4 expert/stakeholder workshops
 - Direct work with Gypsies and Travellers (details being finalised with Friends, Families and Travellers and the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, in association with Planning Aid)
 - 1:1 sessions with local authorities on GTAA/advice issues where appropriate

And

- Events at a more local level led by or in association with local authorities, offering the public an opportunity to engage directly (local event details are still being finalised. On current progress there will be 12-20 public meetings or, more typically, staffed exhibitions).
- I.3 Housing Board meets on 20 November, providing an opportunity to contribute to the consultation. Representations could be based on the Board's experience with the 2006-2008 Site Grant, and the first tranche of

2008-2011 grant bids. Key issues could include the level, type and cost of provision, how it relates to incidence of need identified through GTAA's, and the likely gap if any between grant for 2008-11 and the cost of provision to emerging SE Plan level.

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2. Taylor Review of Rural Affordable Housing and Economy

2.1 The final report of the Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing was published in July 2008. A number of the report's 44 recommendations reflect the views expressed by the RHB submission to the review:

- The importance of community engagement in securing rural affordable housing should be given greater prominence
- The national target for rural affordable housing should be reviewed in terms of the numbers required and whether the target is set at the right spatial level to address rural need
- In rural areas where sites are not allocated for development in LDFs, Community Led Affordable Housing on Exception Sites should be treated as a much more positive tool to meet need (see 1.2)
- It should be made clear that local need and viability should be the drivers in deciding development site size thresholds, not the indicative minimum set out in PPS3.

2.2 The traditional approach to rural exceptions sites permits affordable housing to meet local needs on sites where housing development would not normally be allowed (an "exception" to planning policy). Guidance states that such sites should only be used for affordable housing in perpetuity. The review recommends replacing this approach with one that is criteria-based to enable local communities to receive support and encouragement in bringing forward schemes for affordable housing. By proposing that exception site policy is renamed Community Led Affordable Housing the review emphasises that it should form part of a plan led approach to affordable housing provision.

2.3 The review also recommended that:

- Planning Policy Statements should be reviewed to reduce apparent conflicts between interpretations of sustainability and should more clearly set out the requirement to take account of economic, social and environmental sustainability in a balanced way
- The unintended consequences of policy directing development to brownfield land should be reviewed

- Affordable housing should be exempt from Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 2.4 A formal Government response to the Taylor Review is expected later in the year. The Board may wish to review its approach to rural affordable housing in light of the Government's response.

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3. Housing and Planning Delivery Grant

- 3.1 In July 2008 the Government announced the allocation of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant to Local Authorities for the next three years. The Grant, which replaces Planning Delivery Grant, has been designed by Government to 'incentivise local authorities to improve delivery of housing and other planning outcomes.' The HPDG currently comprises two elements: the first relates to housing delivery, the second relates to the planning framework.
- 3.2 The allocation of HPDG is, in part, influenced by an authority's performance in the preceding three year period. The implications of the down turn in housing delivery, which is outside of Local Authorities' control, for the allocation of HPDG needs to be looked at in greater detail.
- 3.3 In addition, the Government has announced that it proposes to consult later this year on a third 'element' to the HPDG specifically to incentivise the delivery of affordable housing.
- 3.4 Both issues have an impact on delivery within the region. A substantive report on both matters will be brought back to a future meeting of the Board.

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