

**GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT:
INITIAL ISSUES CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES**

(Joint Report by the Head of Planning Services and the Head of Housing Services)

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the consultation document addressing the issues arising for the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Sites DPD. The consultation document will be presented to Cabinet on 20 November.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's Local Development Scheme 2007 proposes a DPD to allocate sites for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 2.2 A Steering Group has been set up to oversee the DPD's preparation. It includes representatives from Planning Services (Planning Policy, Development Control and Enforcement), Environmental Health, Housing Services, the County Council and Luminus and can also take advice from other organisations such as Go-East and the Police. The Executive Member for Planning Strategy and Transport is informed of the matters considered by the Steering Group.
- 2.3 The DPD will need to conform to the policy in the East of England Plan. The Examination into the draft policy took place in the week beginning 20th October 2008. Cabinet agreed the Council's response to the draft policy at its meeting on 24th April 2007. The Council has submitted additional written statements and has participated in the Examination to safeguard Huntingdonshire's interests.
- 2.4 The Draft RSS policy requires Huntingdonshire to provide an additional 20 pitches by 2011, and using the suggested growth rate of 3% pa, it would mean a further 18 pitches for the period 2012 - 2021. The inspector's report followed by the Secretary of State's proposed changes is expected in 2009.

3 THE ISSUES REPORT

- 3.1 This consultation document is the first public step in discussing the issues which arise and seeking views on them which will help to guide the preparation for the DPD. It is proposed to publish the document in January 2009 for a six week period. A copy of the Issues Report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The results of the consultation will inform the next stage which will be to identify the various site options which could be allocated to make provision for the additional pitches required. It is envisaged that the document with site options would be the subject of further consultation in the summer of 2009. The Council would then need to assess the results of that consultation in order to come to a view as to which sites are the most suitable to be allocated in the DPD. The Council will then need to agree a draft plan will be subject to participation ahead of being submitted in mid 2010 to the Secretary of State for Examination.
- 3.3 The Issues report is in two parts – ‘Background’ about the various framework documents and assessments which are being used to inform the policies; and ‘The Issues’ which lists the issues and asks questions.
- 3.4 A vision and objectives are drafted for comment to make it clear what the aims of the DPD are (Issues 1 and 2). These will also help in the testing required for sustainability appraisal and for monitoring.
- 3.5 The criteria for the location of Gypsy and Traveller sites as set out in the Core Strategy are listed, together with questions about whether there is a need to add further criteria or identify particular geographical areas as having more need than others (Issue 3).
- 3.6 The proposed timeframe of up to 2021 is noted at Issue 4 with questions about whether this is the appropriate date and whether criteria can be used for part of the period rather than identifying sites for the full period.
- 3.7 The size of site, both in terms of numbers of pitches and the size of each pitch, is discussed at Issue 5.
- 3.8 Officers are undertaking analysis of public land and other land that is currently used by gypsies and travellers for the next ‘Site Options’ document. Issue 6 asks whether consultees know of any other land that should be considered.
- 3.9 Issue 7 asks about who might own gypsy and traveller sites in order that they be brought forward according to the timeframes in RSS.
- 3.10 Site specifics are thought to be largely covered in the recently released government Good Practice Guide. Issue 8 asks about these specific design issues.
- 3.11 The future of the site owned by the County Council and managed by Luminus at St Neots is raised at Issue 9.

- 3.12 The needs of Travelling Showpeople and the need for transit sites and emergency stopping places complete the report (Issues 10, 11 and 12).

4 CONSULTATION STRATEGY

- 4.1 The DPD will be prepared in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. However, this is a specialised planning document and it will be important to engage effectively with the local Gypsy and Traveller community, including the existing residents of the St Neots site. An initial discussion with the local Gypsy and Traveller community has taken place to ensure that the approach being taken in drafting the Issues consultation document is appropriate.
- 4.2 Discussions have taken place with the Diversity Officer in order to progress a consultation strategy to enable effective participation by all stakeholders.

5 INTERIM SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL (SA)

- 5.1 Given the specific nature of the DPD, the Scoping Report which forms the basis of SA may need to be augmented to ensure that is appropriate for the purpose of assessing this particular DPD. Officers are therefore considering an addendum to the Scoping Report which will be pertinent to the assessment of this DPD. This will be subject to consultation with the key environmental bodies, and bodies with a particular interest in Gypsy and Traveller issues.
- 5.2 The Interim SA will need to be published for consultation as a supporting document to the Issues report in January. Cabinet will therefore be asked to agree that the Interim SA be finalised by the Head of Planning Services and the Head of Housing Services in conjunction with the Executive Member for Planning Strategy and Transport.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Cabinet will be recommended to:
1. Agree the Issues report for the Gypsy and Traveller sites DPD for the purposes of consultation;
 2. Agree that the Interim SA be finalised by the Head of Planning Services and Head of Housing Services after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport; and
 3. Agree that illustration and any minor additional editing and updating which may be needed prior to publication be undertaken by the Head of Planning Services and Head of Housing Services after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ODPM Circular 01/2006 Planning for Gypsy & Traveller Caravan Sites (February 2006)

CLG Circular 04/2007 Planning for Travelling Showpeople (August 2007)

RSS Single Issue Review: Planning for Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation in the East of England, Draft Policy (February 2008) and submissions to the Examination into that policy

CLG Designing Gypsy & Traveller Sites – Good Practice Guide (May 2008).

Cambridge Sub-Region Traveller Needs Assessment (May 2006)

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