

# Planning for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the East of England: Issues and Options

## Environment, item 6

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> June 2007</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Planning for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the East of England: Issues and Options</b>	
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### Summary

1. A public consultation on the number and distribution of additional caravan pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in the region was launched on 8<sup>th</sup> May by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA).
2. It follows independent research published by the Department for Communities and Local Government and EERA in March which found that the East of England needed 1,220 more caravan pitches for Gypsies and Travellers by 2011 and that the shortage of sites had contributed to the problem of unauthorised caravan pitches
3. The consultation is part of a review being undertaken by the Assembly as a result of new planning policy issued by Government in 2006. It is the first stage of what is known as a "single issue review" of the East of England Plan. While the East of England Plan looks to 2021, the single issue review looks only to 2011.
4. Views are being sought on two particular options:
  - **Option 1:** - pitches distributed in local council areas where research has identified need - 1216 additional caravan pitches in the East of England
  - **Option 2:** - based on option 1 but with a minimum of 15 pitches in every local council area across the region to provide a wider distribution and choice of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers - 1220 additional caravan pitches in the East of England
5. Uttlesford would be required to provide an additional 12 pitches under option 1, and 15 pitches under option 2. The single issue review will be carried forward in the Local Development Framework.
6. In 2005 the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) commissioned a survey of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs from the same consultancy (Salford University) that has carried out the work for EERA. This study came up with a significantly lower figure of need in Essex than the EERA review, and EPOA and pursuing this with Salford University.

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7. The closing date for representations is 31<sup>st</sup> July. It is expected that there will be a Member meeting of all Essex Authorities to try and agree a response prior to that date.

### Recommendations

- 1 That the issues identified in this report be conveyed to EERA, together with any other issues identified by Members.

### Background Papers

Planning for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the East of England – issues and options

East of England Plan

### Impact

Communication/Consultation	The Council is a Consultee
Community Safety	None
Equalities	The exercise is targeted towards a traditionally hard to reach group
Finance	None at this stage, although there may be implications if the Council decides to provide its own site
Human Rights	The exercise addresses Human Rights issues
Legal implications	The RSS revision is required to address the provision of Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• address the pressing need (accepted at the RSS Examination in Public) for regional policy to assist local authorities in the East of England in identifying the appropriate number and location of Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites through their LDDs;</li><li>• conform with the new policy framework</li></ul>

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	<p>on Gypsies and Travellers, in particular Circular 01/2006 <i>Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites</i>; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflect <i>The Housing Act 2004</i> and <i>The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004</i>.</li> </ul> <p>The purpose of the revision is to bring the RSS for the East of England into line with Government policy regarding the provision of Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites. The emerging RSS is currently out of line insofar as Government Circular 01/2006 (in para 23) states that “The RSS revision should identify the number of pitches required (but not their location) for each local planning authority in the light of local authority Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) and a strategic view of needs across the region”. The emerging RSS clearly fails to meet this requirement.</p>
Ward-specific impacts	All at this stage, although this will become more specific as the exercise evolves
Workforce/Workplace	None

**Situation**

- 8 This document is an important step in the process of producing a single issue revision to the RSS to address the provision of Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites.
- 9 It has been produced by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) which is a body that exists to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the region. EERA is a strategic partnership of elected representatives from the 54 local authorities in the East of England and appointed representatives from social, economic and environmental interests.
- 10 EERA is the Regional Planning Body (RPB) for the East of England. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the RPB keep under review the RSS for its region and to prepare a draft revision of it when necessary or when directed to do so by the Secretary of State. EERA has previously accepted that the RSS is deficient with regard to its policies concerning the provision of Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites and has

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formally given notice to the Secretary of State of its intention to prepare a revision to the RSS.

- 11 The East of England Planning Region covers all of the areas of the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk including the Unitary Authority areas of Luton, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.
- 12 The current RSS for the East of England consists of Regional Planning Guidance Note 6 (East Anglia, November 2000) and relevant parts of Regional Planning Guidance Note 9 (South East, March 2001) as amended by the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Strategy of March 2005. However, the current RSS is in the process of being superseded by an emerging RSS covering all of the region (excluding those parts of the region covered by the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy).
- 13 This emerging RSS is known as the East of England Plan and is likely to be published by mid to late 2007. As the single issue revision is due to be submitted to the Secretary of State following the publication of the emerging East of England Plan, it has been assumed that the emerging policies will be the ones in place at the time of submission. Therefore it considers the revisions necessary to the emerging rather than the existing policies
- 14 Once published the revision will provide the regional policy framework within which Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) will develop LDDs. It will also influence other regional policy documents that may impact on the Gypsy and Traveller community such as the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy. Additionally, the RPB may use the submission of the RSS revision to set out its views on the need for any changes in national policies that would be helpful in delivering the RSS in future.
- 15 Consultants appointed by the Government to undertake research entitled "Preparing Regional Spatial Strategy Reviews on Gypsies and Travellers by Regional Planning Bodies" were engaged by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) as part of the same process to review existing Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) in the East of England. In the light of the assessment and methodological tool developed as part of the national research, they were asked to quantify the level of need across the region for additional pitch provision. The consultants concluded 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
- 16 In addition to the need for additional residential pitch provision the consultants have also considered transit/transient accommodation needs. Although they note that a great deal more research is needed to fully understand these needs, they suggest there might be a need for about 300 additional pitches in the region to fully accommodate transit needs.
- 17 The emerging RSS, also referred to as the East of England Plan, looks to 2021. The consultants provide a firm forecast of need until 2011. Consultants

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advising EERA consider that there is too much uncertainty to confidently forecast needs up to 2021.

- 18 In order to inform debate two options have been developed illustrating how 1,220 net additional pitches could be distributed. The purpose of these is to promote debate and allow the impact of a more dispersed pattern of distribution to be considered. The two options should not be seen as establishing limits within which the eventual chosen level will fall within. Both options deliver a regional total of approximately 1,220 net additional pitches.

OPTION 1 – Is the distribution based solely on the consultants’ advice about where need arises.

OPTION 2 – Is the distribution based on option 1 amended (in light of paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9) to increase the minimum level of pitch provision within each local council area to 15 pitches (that which may be delivered on one site in keeping with best practice advice about the size of sites). The additional provision made by increasing each local council area is off set by a proportionate reduction in the four local council areas that have the highest level of need arising. [217 additional pitches are provided by increasing each council area to a minimum of 15 pitches, this allows about a 40% reduction in the totals for Basildon, Chelmsford, Fenland and South Cambridgeshire while still delivering 1,220 across the region].

- 19 This is illustrated in the table below

### 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

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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
<b>Uttlesford</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>
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
Mid Suffolk	39	39
St Edmundsbury	15	15

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Suffolk Coastal	0	15
Waveney	8	15
East of England	1216	1220

\* A pitch is an area of land where a Gypsy or Traveller household can reside; typically this may contain a building, parking space, and one or more Caravans. The average number of caravans per pitch is currently estimated as 1.7

20 It is made clear that there will be limited Government funding for the provision of Traveller sites. Three options for delivery and implementation are put forward:

- site provision by local councils or Registered Social Landlords (either for rent/lease of pitches or for sale of sites);
- provision by Gypsies and Travellers or private landlords (either as owner occupiers or for renting to others); and
- provision by the development industry (secured by planning agreements pursuant to major residential development).

21 Finally evidence is sought of the need to provide for Travelling Showpeople as part of this single issue review

### Officer Comment

21 Views are sought by EERA under a range of headings: scale of provision, distribution of provision, delivery and implementation and travelling showpeople. Taking each of these in turn:

22 Scale of Provision – The Essex Planning Officers Association has considerable concerns about the assumptions and methodology of the study, and as explained in the summary is seeking further clarification. Notwithstanding this considerable reservation, if the methodology in the single issue review is correct then it is considered that the difference of finding either 12 or 15 pitches in Uttlesford is negligible. Clearly, the issue assumes much greater significance in Districts such as Basildon, Chelmsford, Epping Forest and South Cambridgeshire.

23 Of equal concern is the timescale of the single issue review, lasting only to 2011. The East of England Plan looks to 2021, and the LDF will also have to look to 2021 – and beyond in terms of long term housing provision. It seems incongruous to undertake a single issue review that will be redundant in less than four years, and EERA is strongly urged to achieve conformity with its Plan at this stage.

24 Distribution of Provision – The needs assessment undertaken by EERA’s consultants suggests that 45% of the region’s needs comes from just 4 Districts – Chelmsford, Basildon, Fenland and South Cambs. Clearly this may be considered inequitable, hence the consultants proposal of Option 2 to show an amended distribution, as shown in the table above. The issue is whether or

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not the need should be met where it arises. It is considered that significant regard must be had to the location of need. By their nature Gypsies and Travellers are mobile, and if the provision of accommodation is not where it is needed they may move onto unauthorised sites, irrespective of the availability of sites elsewhere. Moreover, there must be extensive consultation with the Travelling community by EERA before District allocations are finalised, to ensure that provision is made in the right places.

- 25 In making these decisions EERA will have to have regard to statutory environmental protection criteria – for example much of Basildon and Chelmsford is Green Belt.
- 26 Delivery and Implementation – The statutory duty for Councils to provide sites for Gypsies was removed in 1994. Until recently Development Plans had to acknowledge the needs of travellers, and policies would include criteria against which proposals for private sites would be judged (it should be noted that the Uttlesford Local Plan is silent on the matter). The LDF will need to allocate sites however, and consideration must be given to their delivery. There will be very limited public funding and provision will rely on either the private efforts of Travellers themselves or provision by the development industry in the same way and affordable housing is provided. The Council will need to make a decision on whether public provision, either alone or in partnership with other Councils or stakeholders, will be the only assured means of ensuring delivery.
- 27 Provision for Travelling Showpeople – there is a small number of travelling showpeople based in the District and it is considered sensible to incorporate their needs into this review.

**Risk Analysis**

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The Council is late with its response	Low	Medium	Share in joint response with Essex Districts and the County Council as well as responding in our own right