



Gypsy and Traveller Sites DPD Issues Consultation

Huntingdonshire LDF | Gypsy and Traveller Sites DPD Issues Consultation



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Foreword

Huntingdonshire District Council has a duty to ensure that appropriate accommodation is made available for its Gypsy and Traveller community in accordance with the East of England Regional Plan. It is important that we remember that travelling and living in a caravan is the cultural heritage of that community. Gypsies and Travellers are often more disadvantaged than other ethnic minority groups in opportunities for access to health care and education.

There are advantages in making adequate provision on sites which are well designed with appropriate facilities. There should be fewer unauthorised encampments and developments, less conflict between the travelling and settled communities and less social exclusion, leading to a greater understanding and respect between communities.

This document is the first in a series of documents which will result in a plan identifying sites to provide residential accommodation for the Gypsy and Traveller community in Huntingdonshire. It will be followed by a further consultation document which will set out a number of potential sites which could be identified as possible allocation sites. In turn, this will be followed by a document which sets out the sites which the Council think best meet the identified need in Huntingdonshire.

As this is a Development Plan Document, the Draft Plan will be subject to an Examination by an independent planning inspector before it is finally adopted in 2010.

The District Council wants all stakeholders, from both the settled community and the Gypsy and Traveller community, to take an active part in this process and so your responses at each stage are important.

Councillor Peter Bucknell
Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport



Foreword

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Background

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1 Background

The Local Development Framework

1.1 The District Council is preparing a number of planning policy local development documents which will make up the Local Development Framework (LDF). Such documents are either Development Plan Documents (DPDs), which form the statutory Development Plan and have been subject to public Examination by an independent Inspector, or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which although they have been subject to public participation do not need to go through the Examination process.

1.2 As part of this process, the Council is preparing a DPD to provide additional permanent residential sites for Gypsies and Travellers and address related needs. It is required to be a DPD because it allocates land for development. It will need to be consistent with the Council's Submission Draft Core Strategy which was submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2008.

1.3 In parallel, the Council is preparing a Planning Proposals DPD which will identify housing sites for the settled population. The documents which the Council proposes to prepare, together with a timetable for preparation, are set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Council's formal LDS dates from March 2007. This has been informally revised to take account of changes in circumstances, particularly changes in the timetables. The Council has published an update and will revise the LDS formally when new legislation from the Government is in place.

Government Guidance

1.4 Government policy is set out in Planning Policy Statements (which are replacing Planning Policy Guidance Notes), Circulars and other advice such as Ministerial statements. Highly relevant is "Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites" ODPM Circular 01/2006, which requires local authorities to allocate sufficient sites for Gypsies and Travellers in site allocation DPDs and sets out a broad set of criteria to be taken into account when allocating sites.

1.5 Specifically the Circular says: *"The number of pitches set out in the RSS must be translated into specific site allocations in one of the local authority's DPDs."... "Criteria must not be used as an alternative to site allocations in DPDs where there is an identified need for pitches. Local planning authorities will need to demonstrate that sites are suitable, and that there is a realistic likelihood that specific sites allocated in DPDs will be made available for that purpose. DPDs will need to explain how the land will be made available for a Gypsy and Traveller site, and timescales for provision."*

1.6 The Circular also sets out a clear definition for Gypsies and Travellers: *"Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such."*

1.7 Circular 04/2007 "Planning for Travelling Showpeople" deals with the needs of travelling showpeople which is also relevant for this DPD. Travelling Showpeople are defined as: *"Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined in ODPM Circular 1/2006."*



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East of England Plan

1.8 The East of England Plan (the RSS) was approved in May 2008, but the key policy for Gypsies and Travellers is subject to a single policy review. The East of England Regional Assembly submitted a draft policy to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 25 February 2008 which was the subject of an Examination by a Panel of Planning Inspectors in October 2008.

1.9 The draft policy required at least 1,187 net additional permanent residential pitches to be provided over the period 2006 to 2011. This number of authorised pitches in the Region would consequently rise from 1,836 in 2006 to 3,023 in 2011. For Huntingdonshire the figures would be the existing 20 pitches as at 2006 rising to 40 pitches by 2011 i.e. an increase of 20 pitches.

1.10 For the longer period, based on general research, the draft policy proposed that provision should be made on the basis of an annual 3% increase on the overall planned provision in 2011. Huntingdonshire's share based on the increase required between 2006-2011, would translate into a further 18 pitches being required for the period 2011-21 with the total additional pitches therefore being 38 pitches for the period 2006-2021.

1.11 The Panel's report was received in December 2008. The report recommends that Huntingdonshire's additional pitch requirement for the period 2006-2011 be increased from 20 to 25. This would also mean an increase in the requirement for the longer period. For the period 2011-2021 the further requirement would be 21 pitches, so that the total additional pitch requirement for 2006-2021 would be 46. The Panel also recommends that 40 new transit pitches and 18 new plots for Travelling Showpeople be provided across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 2006-2011.

1.12 EERA will consult in the spring of 2009 on Proposed Changes to the draft policy based on the Panel's recommendations.

Cambridge Sub-Region GTAA

1.13 The Housing Act 2004 requires local housing authorities to carry out a "Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment" (Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment or GTAA), in line with the duty to carry out a general Housing Market Assessment every three years.

1.14 The housing authorities, with Cambridgeshire County Council, agreed to carry out a joint study across the Cambridge Sub-region - the Cambridgeshire districts plus Forest Heath, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, and St. Edmundsbury. This allowed a larger survey to be carried out than would otherwise have been possible and provided the opportunity to explore education and health issues.

1.15 The study, which has been cited by Government as an example of best practice, was carried out by Anglia Ruskin University and Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. It found that between 405 and 535 pitches were needed in the County by 2010, of which between 15 and 25 additional pitches were required in Huntingdonshire.

In Huntingdonshire at the time of the GTAA survey (2005) there were 20 pitches (with some 36 caravans) on the County Council owned site at St. Neots, while the average number of unauthorised caravans, excluding those on unauthorised roadside encampments, for 2002-2004 was 14 caravans.



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Strategic Housing Market Assessment

1.16 Sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) are now required by Government (Planning Policy Statement 3). Their purpose is to set out the evidence of need and demand for market and affordable housing. They will replace local Housing Needs Assessments as they relate to affordable housing and provide evidence as to the likely profile of household types requiring market housing.

1.17 A SHMA was published in April 2008 for the Cambridge Sub-Region which includes the five Cambridgeshire and two of the Suffolk authorities.

1.18 The section dealing with Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation draws strongly on the GTAA prepared for the Cambridge Sub-Region in 2006. As well as reflecting the GTAA's assessment of need, it draws attention to the survey which found that:

- Types of work have changed in recent years, with a decline in traditional farm work, and increased competition from cheaper immigrant labour, contributing to severe economic disadvantage and social exclusion.
- Family networks and informal reciprocal arrangements are important for encouraging and sustaining economic activity
- Seasonal social security benefits are important income sources, especially for those on council sites.

1.19 Since the survey, the SHMA notes that further research has shown family networks to be influential in accommodation arrangements and preferences. This is the case for both movement on to privately developed sites on purchased land, and for movement between Local Authority sites.

1.20 The SHMA indicates that Local Development Plan Documents will determine the criteria to be used within each district, and work is ongoing to inform this process.

1.21 The northern part of Huntingdonshire is included in the SHMA for the Peterborough sub-region dating from March 2008. This also refers to the Cambridge Sub-Region Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment which covered Peterborough as well as Cambridgeshire.

Sustainable Community Strategy

1.22 Huntingdonshire's Draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 (SCS) has been prepared by the District Council and its partners. The Gypsy and Traveller Sites DPD must be consistent with it.

1.23 The SCS recognises the need to provide accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers as required by the emerging policy in the RSS as part of the objective of providing sufficient housing to meet future needs.

1.24 The SCS also recognises the needs of migrant workers and non settled communities including Gypsies and Travellers as part of the objective of achieving inclusive safe and cohesive communities.

Sustainability Appraisal

1.25 The DPD is required to consider how it can help achieve sustainable development. The Government's principles for sustainable development (from 'Securing the Future' 2005) are:

- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy



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- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

1.26 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required by European Directive 2001/42/EC, while the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to be undertaken to look at the full range of environmental, social and economic impacts. These processes, which are very similar and have been combined, are required for all stages of plan preparation. A Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report has been prepared for the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework which covers the main economic, social and environmental issues to be considered.

1.27 The European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an Appropriate Assessment to consider the potential significant impacts of the Plan on natural habitats of European importance. As this consultation document does not identify sites for development at this stage, it is considered that no significant impacts can be identified, but this will need to be reviewed at the next stage when site options are considered.



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2 The Issues

A Vision for the Future

Issue: What should be our vision for the future?

2.1 The DPD should consider an overall vision to consider how its proposals will affect the lives of both the Gypsy and Traveller community and those living in our settlements. The following draft Vision has been prepared: *By the end of the Plan period in 2021, Huntingdonshire will provide sufficient well located, sustainable and high quality sites to meet the needs of the local Gypsy and Traveller communities. There will be a reduced incidence of unauthorised encampments and developments and increased respect and understanding between the Gypsy and Traveller community and the settled community leading to greater integration and social inclusion.*

Issue 1 - Draft Vision

Question 1

Do you agree that this is the appropriate vision to guide the development of a DPD which will identify sites for permanent residential accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers? Or is there a reasonable alternative vision which has not been put forward?

Objectives

Issue: What are the objectives which should guide the preparation of the DPD?

2.2 The following draft objectives have been drawn up to support the vision and to guide the development of appropriate policies and the identification of sites:

1. *To provide sufficient permanent residential pitches to meet the numbers required by the East of England Plan*
2. *To provide pitches on sites which meet the criteria set out in the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy*
3. *To ensure that the design of all sites is considered against the standards set out in the Government's design guidance (Designing Gypsy & Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide, May 2008.)*
4. *To engender social inclusion and reduce the social exclusion and disadvantage suffered by the Gypsy and Traveller community as an ethnic minority*
5. *To promote greater respect and understanding between the settled and Travelling communities*
6. *To safeguard the local environment, the operations of adjoining activities and the amenity of residents in settled communities*
7. *To reduce the incidence of illegal and unplanned Gypsy and Traveller encampments and development*

Issue 2 - Draft Objectives

Question 2

Do you agree that these draft objectives are appropriate? Or are there reasonable alternatives which have not been identified?



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Criteria for Selecting Sites

Issue: What criteria should be used to select and assess sites?

2.3 The Core Strategy which was submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2008 includes a policy on Gypsy and Traveller sites as required by Government guidance. Circular 1/2006 states that: “The core strategy should set out criteria for the location of gypsy and traveller sites which will be used to guide the allocation of sites in the relevant DPD. These criteria will also be used to meet unexpected demand.”

2.4 The submitted Core Strategy policy states:

“Policy CS 6 - Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Account will be taken of the need to ensure that Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are accommodated in sustainable locations where essential services such as water and sewerage are provided and with good access by foot, cycle or public transport to services such as education and health. Account will also be taken of the rural nature of Huntingdonshire where the availability of public transport is limited.

Providing sites in appropriate locations will help prevent the social exclusion of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and conflict with settled communities. Consideration will be taken of the preference of many Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople for a rural location with a degree of separation from the settled community.

The number of pitches should be appropriate to the size of the site and the availability of infrastructure and services and facilities in accordance with the general principles set out in the settlement hierarchy. The following criteria will guide the provision of sites:

- *there would be no significant adverse effect on the amenity of nearby residents or operations of adjoining land uses; the development should not adversely impact on the character of the landscape and appropriate landscaping and boundaries should be provided;*
- *adequate schools, shops and other community facilities are within reasonable travelling distance, and can be reached by foot, cycle or public transport;*
- *the site is served (or can be served) by an adequate water supply and appropriate means of sewage disposal which meets national standards;*
- *the health and safety of occupants are not put at risk including through unsafe access to sites, poor air quality and unacceptable noise (as for example close to trunk roads) or unacceptable flood risk so that the quality of the environment is at the same acceptable standard as for the settled community;*
- *there should be adequate space for operational needs including the parking, turning and servicing of vehicles.”*

Issue 3 - Criteria

Question 3A

Are the criteria in the Core Strategy sufficient to enable the DPD to assess sites which could be allocated for permanent residential Gypsy and Traveller pitches, or is there a need for an additional level of more detailed criteria in this DPD?



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Question 3B

If you consider there is a need for more detail, what additional detail do you suggest?

2.5 The East of England Plan and the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy consider the District as a whole and make no reference to the distribution of provision within its boundaries. Comments from the Cambridgeshire Sub-Region GTAA suggest a need for more pitches anywhere in the sub-region. However, there may be a spatial pattern of need in Huntingdonshire. The St Neots site is oversubscribed which may indicate a desire for additional provision in that area. There might also be a greater demand in the east of the District within and close to the tradition of seasonal agricultural work on fenland farms. Where Gypsy and Traveller families currently live in “bricks and mortar” housing but seek to relocate to caravan sites close to their existing networks, there could also be a particular geographical need. Alternatively, the view could be taken that what is needed is more sites and that the opportunities for sites are limited and therefore anywhere in the District should be considered as long as it has a reasonable fit with the criteria.

Question 3C

Is it appropriate to consider whether there are particular parts of the District where the need for additional sites is greater than other areas?

Numbers and Timing

2.6 The LDS proposes that the DPD looks to make provision up to the year 2021. However, the RSS Draft Policy only gives specific guidance to 2011 as GTAAAs have difficulty in identifying need over a longer term.

2.7 For the longer period, the RSS Draft Policy and the Panel Report proposes that provision should be made on the basis of an annual 3% increase on the overall planned provision in 2011, with each district continuing to have the same proportion of additional provision as they were required to have between 2006 and 2011.

2.8 Based on the RSS draft policy and the Panel Report, the requirements for additional pitches are as follows:

Table 1 Draft RSS and Panel Report Provision Requirements

| 20 existing pitches 2006 | 2006 – 2011 (total in brackets) | 2011-2016 (total in brackets) | 2016 – 2021 (total in brackets) |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Draft Policy | +20 (40) | +8 (48) | +10 (58) |
| Panel Report | +25 (45) | +10 (55) | +11 (66) |

2.9 The government has yet to release proposed changes based on the Panel Report which will be the subject of public consultation.



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2.10 It should be noted that there is greater uncertainty over need for the periods beyond 2011 as it is not covered by a needs survey. There is little firm evidence to support the assumption in the draft RSS policy of an annual 3% increase which attempts to take into account projected changes in household size, birth rates etc within the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

2.11 Given that there is some uncertainty surrounding the longer term need, it may be possible to allocate sites for a shorter timeframe than 2021 and use a different approach to make up the numbers to 2021.

Issue 4 – Numbers and Timing

Question 4

Should the DPD allocate sites fully for the period to 2021 based on the 3% pa increase overall across the Region as set out in the East of England Plan draft policy, or allocate to a shorter date and give a general indication of how criteria would be applied to bring forward sites in the longer term future?

Site Size and Pitch Size

Issue: *Is there an optimum size for sites and pitches?*

2.12 The current provision in Huntingdonshire includes one site, at St Neots, owned by the Cambridgeshire County Council and managed by Luminus for rent (following stock transfer from Huntingdonshire District Council in 2000) which has 20 pitches. Since 2006 some additional provision has been made by way of planning permissions on four sites. These four private family sites are of various sizes from 1 to 10 pitches altogether providing for some additional 17 pitches, although all except for one of these is a temporary permission. Details are set out in Appendix 1.

2.13 The Department of Communities and Local Government published a Good Practice Guide for Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites in May 2008. It states at paragraph 1.12 that: *“Local authorities and registered social landlords will need to take decisions on design on a case by case basis, taking into account local circumstances such as the size, geographical and other characteristics of the site or prospective site and the particular needs of the prospective residents and their families.”*

2.14 This suggests that the DPD should consider the appropriate size or ranges of sizes of sites which might be appropriate for Huntingdonshire.

2.15 At paragraph 3.7, the Guidance notes that: *“...small scale sites of three to four pitches.... are known to work well for single extended families.”*

2.16 The DPD will need to convert the number of pitches into land allocations and so there has to be an understanding of how much land a pitch will occupy. There is little guidance on this matter, which would vary depending on servicing and whether additional land is required for grazing animals or for business activities. A pitch should be able to accommodate two caravans, and an amenity building and parking and turning space. The exact size of pitches may vary depending upon local circumstances and the applicant’s stated personal needs. On private sites, a large area of land may be bought simply to provide for separation from neighbours.



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Question 5A

What is the optimum size of site to address the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Huntingdonshire?

Question 5B

Should there be a maximum size of any new site?

Question 5C

What is the appropriate size for pitches?

How to Identify Sites

Issue: What opportunities are there to identify sites?

2.17 Circular 1/2006 at paragraph 35 identifies the various ways in which sites can be identified and be made available:

- a. *"Local authorities have discretion to dispose of land for less than best consideration where it will help to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area, as set out in ODPM Circular 06/03.*
- b. *Authorities should also consider making full use of the registers of unused and under-used land owned by public bodies as an aid to identifying suitable locations. Vacant land or under-used local authority land may be appropriate.*
- c. *Authorities should also consider whether it might be appropriate to exercise their compulsory purchase powers to acquire an appropriate site.*
- d. *Cooperation between neighbouring authorities, possibly involving joint DPDs, can provide more flexibility in identifying sites. Such cooperation is particularly important where an authority has strict planning constraints across its area."*

2.18 The District Council has engaged with the County Council and the other Cambridgeshire Districts in the preparation of a study of County Council owned land which could be used to provide sites. The project has been undertaken by consultants and funded by Cambridgeshire Horizons. The project established a set of criteria which has been tested against County Council owned land. Further discussions with the County Council are expected with a view to including some County Council owned land in the site options document in 2009.

2.19 The registers of other publicly owned land may also provide opportunities. The District Council has very limited land holdings and most of them are provided for other uses such as sports pitches, play areas and amenity land, but there may be other opportunities presented by the land holdings of other organisations. Contact has been made with public land owners in order to include land not needed for other uses in this study, so that any suitable land can be included in the site options document.



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2.20 The Circular points to the potential use of Compulsory Purchase Orders, but this is generally used only as a last resort, as wherever possible, willing landowners are sought and compulsory purchase is a very lengthy process.

2.21 Suitable sites which are privately owned could also be allocated for Gypsy and Traveller sites where the landowner has indicated a willingness to release the site for this purpose. One of the aims of the participation process is to identify such opportunities. In some cases the sites may already be owned by members of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Issue 6 - How to Identify Sites

Question 6A

Are you aware of any land owned by a public body which could be allocated for a Gypsy and Traveller site?

Question 6B

Do you agree that Compulsory Purchase Powers should only be used as a last resort in bringing forward sites for Gypsy and Travellers?

Question 6C

Are you aware of any privately owned land which might be appropriate to be allocated for a Gypsy and Traveller site?

Providers

Issue: What are the best ways of bringing forward the selected sites for development?

2.22 Sites can be allocated in the Plan but it will be important that they are available and can be developed for the required purpose. Sites can be in public or private ownership. If privately owned, the willingness of the site owner to sell is important to ensure that the site does come forward for development in the Plan period rather than being sold or retained in order to achieve an alternative type of development. The Plan will need to make it clear that an allocated site only has the development potential for the allocated use.

2.23 The consultation process has an important part to play in ensuring that landowners are aware of the search for sites and are encouraged to consider whether they hold land which could be suitable and which they are willing to release for this purpose.

2.24 In terms of tenure residential sites for Gypsies and Travellers can be:

- Privately owned for owner-occupation by a single or extended family



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- Privately owned and managed to be rented by Gypsies and Travellers
- Publicly owned and managed by a Registered Social Landlord.

2.25 Whilst some members of the Gypsy and Traveller community may be able to buy and develop sites, others will be reliant on renting. The District Council might be able to assist this process through the purchase of sites and then selling to individuals or a Registered Social Landlord to develop. Registered Social Landlords can also purchase sites themselves. There is currently an opportunity to bid for Government funds to facilitate this. Funding could be used as a “rolling fund” for the Council to own, lease or sell on.

2.26 Housing developers can contribute to the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites. Such provision might occur where there is a particular need in the area and the contribution is needed along with other contributions agreed under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

Issue 7 - Providers

Question 7A

Are you aware of particular advantages or disadvantages for any of the forms of tenure?

Question 7B

Is a mix of tenures appropriate to meet the needs of different Gypsy and Travellers?

Question 7C

Should the District Council take a proactive role, perhaps with Registered Social Landlords or housing developers, to ensure that land comes forward for the required purpose?

Site Specifics

Issue: What should the DPD say about design?

2.27 Government guidance “Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide” was published in May 2008. It is intended to provide potential developers and existing site owners with an understanding of the design features needed to help ensure a site is successful, easy to manage and maintain, including site location, layout, size and the services and facilities needed to make it operate effectively. As Government guidance the District Council can take it into account as a material planning consideration when determining planning applications. As it is a comprehensive document it may not be necessary for the DPD to include policies on the matters covered.

2.28 It is noted that paragraph 7.21 of the Good Practice Guide states that any opportunities for using energy from renewable sources should be considered in respect of amenity buildings. It may be that there are opportunities for on-site renewable energy to cater for all uses on the site and a further design policy could be considered to meet regional obligations for increasing the amount of renewable energy used in new developments.



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Issue 8 - Site Specifics

Question 8A

Do you consider that there is no need to include design guidance in the DPD as this is adequately covered by Government guidance? Or:

Question 8B

Would you like to see additional design policies, for example about renewable energy, included in the DPD?

The St Neots Site

Issue: *What is the most appropriate future for provision in the St. Neots area?*

2.29 The largest and longest established Gypsy and Traveller site in Huntingdonshire lies south of Cambridge Road on the eastern outskirts of St Neots close to the Main East Coast Railway. There are 20 pitches on the site, currently occupied by some 38 caravans. There is a waiting list should pitches become available. The site is owned by Cambridgeshire County Council and managed by Luminus as a Registered Social Landlord. It lies in a larger tract of land bounded by the A428 to the east and the railway to the west. It therefore has immediate access to open countryside. The location has the advantage of being close to the services and facilities in St Neots.

2.30 A new housing neighbourhood is currently under construction at Love's Farm, immediately to the north of Cambridge Road and opposite the Gypsy and Traveller site. The outline planning permission covering this site is for 1,250 dwellings.

2.31 The Core Strategy envisages a potential major urban extension to St. Neots on land east of the Railway. Although its exact extent and location will need to be determined through a Planning Proposals DPD, it is likely that the Gypsy and Traveller site's surroundings will dramatically change. Instead of being on the edge of the urban area, the site would be embedded within a large scale urban extension.

2.32 Consideration needs therefore to be given to the future of provision for Gypsy and Travellers in this general location. During this residential development process there is an opportunity to potentially relocate within the vicinity. With careful planning, it should be possible to create both a good residential environment for the settled community and improved premises for Gypsy and Travellers.

Issue 9 – The St Neots Site

Question 9A

Who needs to be involved in the process of deciding the future of the St Neots site in addition to the local Gypsy and Traveller Community, the County Council as landowner, Luminus as landlord, the Huntingdonshire District Council and St Neots Town Council?



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Question 9B

Should additional or improved alternative provision be made in the vicinity of the existing St Neots site?

Travelling Showpeople

Issue: How should the DPD address the needs of Travelling Showpeople?

2.33 The needs of Travelling Showpeople were not included in the provision suggested by the East of England Plan draft policy, which covered Gypsies and Travellers only and indicated that the needs of Travelling Showpeople were the subject of ongoing research.

2.34 As with Circular 01/2006 on Gypsies and Travellers, Circular 04/2007 requires local planning authorities to take account of the needs of Travelling Showpeople. The Cambridgeshire Sub-Region GTAA provided very limited information on Travelling Showpeople. Accordingly, the Council's own Local Development Scheme did not extend the scope of the DPD to address these needs.

2.35 Circular 04/2007 refers to a "plot" as meaning a pitch for Travelling Showpeople to reflect the term traditionally used by them and to differentiate between residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, and plots for Travelling Showpeople which may need to incorporate space to allow for the storage and maintenance of equipment.

2.36 The Panel's report into the RSS policy recommends that 18 new plots should be provided across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for the period 2006-2011. There is no indication of the proportion of these which should be accommodated in Huntingdonshire, although there is reference to East Cambridgeshire where a number of Travelling Showpeople plots currently exist. There will need to be joint working between the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils to determine how this apportionment should be achieved. The Panel also suggests that for the longer term an annual 1.5% compound increase in the level of provision in each county area should be made.

Issue 10 - Travelling Showpeople

Question 10A

How do you think the DPD should address provision for Travelling Showpeople given that there is limited guidance on what that level of provision in Huntingdonshire should be? What criteria might be used?

Question 10B

Do you have evidence of need for sites in respect of Travelling Showpeople?

Transit Sites

Issue: How should the DPD make provision for Transit Sites?



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2.37 The draft East of England policy covered the need for permanent residential pitches but not either transit sites or emergency stopping places. The Cambridgeshire Sub-Regional GTAA found that there was an acute need for more pitches but that transit sites were not favoured by the Gypsy and Traveller community who expressed a preference for permanent residential sites.

2.38 Transit sites may be in continual use but are not designed to be used as permanent accommodation. The danger is that if there is a shortage of permanent sites they can become permanent sites despite the level of facilities being lower than for permanent residential sites. There can also be problems associated with the fact that their users have no vested interest in maintaining the site and therefore a high level of management is needed, with a resident manager.

2.39 One way of providing transit pitches is to locate them within or adjacent to a residential site, but this may be inconsistent with the needs of the residents on the permanent site.

2.40 The Panel's recommendations on the RSS policy suggest that 40 transit pitches should be provided across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for the period 2006-2011. No specific figure is suggested for Huntingdonshire and therefore there will need to be joint working with the other councils in the area.

Issue 11 - Transit Sites

Question 11

How do you think that the DPD should deal with transit sites given that there is no specific requirement for the District at this stage? What criteria might be used?

Emergency (or Temporary) Stopping Places

Issue: *Should the DPD make provision for Emergency/Temporary Stopping Places?*

2.41 Temporary stopping places can accommodate the occasional need for a pitch. They are not intended to be in continual use but are intended to deal with times of increased demand, such as fairs or cultural event. The level of facilities provided is minimal, and so are not at all suitable for long-term occupation. However, they should be located with safe road access, cause minimum disruption to surrounding communities and take account of any risk arising from adjoining land uses.

Issue 12 - Emergency (or Temporary) Stopping Places

Question 12A

How should the DPD address the provision of temporary stopping places?

Question 12B

Is the provision of temporary stopping places not necessary if transit sites are provided?



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Other Issues?

Issue: *Are there other issues which the Council should take into account when preparing the DPD?*

2.42 The Council believes that the issues put forward in this document are the main ones which will need to be addressed in order to prepare a sound DPD. However, the purpose of this document is to ensure that all relevant issues are taken into account and therefore this document allows the opportunity for other issues to be raised.

Issue 13 - Other Issues?

Question 13

Do you consider that there are any other issues which the Council should take into account in determining which sites should be allocated in the DPD?



Gypsy and Traveller Sites (November 2008)

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Appendix 1 Gypsy and Traveller Sites (November 2008)

Table 2 Gypsy and Traveller Sites as at November 2008

| |
|---|
| <u>Permanent residential pitches</u> |
| 20 pitches (currently some 38 caravans) at the St Neots site owned by Cambridgeshire County Council and managed by Luminus (St Neots Town Council area) |
| <u>Planning Permissions Granted</u> |
| Parkhall Road, Somersham. 0400062FUL. A full personal consent granted on appeal (02.02.2006). The number of caravans is not restricted, although it is assumed to be 1 pitch. (Somersham Parish Council area) |
| Corner of St Ives Road and Pidley Sheep Lane, Pidley. 0701841FUL. A temporary 3yr personal consent granted (21.11.2007) for the siting of 2 caravans until 21.11.10. This is for one family and therefore assumed to be 1 pitch. (Somersham Parish Council area) |
| St. Ives Road, Woodhurst 070959FUL. A temporary 3yr personal consent granted (22.05.2007) for the siting of 8 caravans until 22.05.10. This is for four families and therefore assumed to be 4 pitches. (Somersham Parish Council area) |
| Thrapston Road/Brington Road, Catworth 0702731FUL. A temporary 4yr consent granted on appeal (15.08.2008) for 10 pitches for the siting of 20 caravans until 15.08.12. (Catworth Parish Council area) |
| <u>Planning Applications Being Pursued</u> |
| Chatteris Road, Somersham 0702530FUL, 0704185FUL, 0801685FUL. Two applications, one for 6 pitches and one for 2 pitches were refused in 2008. In November 2008 a further application was pending (Somersham Parish Council area). |
| Paxton Road, Offord Darcy 0802744FUL. An application for 1 pitch was pending (Offord Darcy Parish Council area). |



Glossary

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Appendix 2 Glossary

Amenity Building

Presently there is no single definition of an amenity building. This aside, the overall size will depend on the size of the family, while draft government guidance states that at a minimum they should include: hot and cold water; electricity supply; separate toilet; a bath/shower room and a kitchen and dining area.

Caravan

A caravan is any structure designed or adapted for human habitation that is capable of being moved from one place to another. Twin unit caravans are included in the definition although they cannot be moved when assembled. Maximum dimensions are 20m x 6.8m x 3.05m.

Family Site

A private caravan site owned and occupied by an (extended) family. Broadly equivalent to owner-occupation in mainstream housing.

Gypsy (or English Gypsy)

Member of one of the main groups of Gypsies and Travellers in Britain. Romany Gypsies trace their ethnic origin back to migrations, probably from India, taking place at intervals since 1500. Gypsies were recognised as an ethnic group in 1989.

Gypsy and Traveller

In this document, the term used to include all ethnic Gypsies and Irish Travellers, plus other Travellers who adopt a nomadic way of life. It does not include Travelling Showpeople.

Irish Traveller

Member of one of the main groups of Gypsies and Travellers in Britain. Irish Travellers have a distinct indigenous origin in Ireland and were recognised as an ethnic group in England in 2000.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

A LDF sets out the planning framework for the local area. LDFs replace Local Plans.

Pitch

Area of a Gypsy/Traveller site where a single household live in their caravans, trailers, or mobile homes. An amenity building is also usually provided on a pitch.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

Sets out the long term strategic planning strategy for how a region should be developed. In the case of Huntingdonshire, the relevant document is the East of England Plan, May 2008 and the Single Issue Review Draft Policy February 2008, and any related documents.

Registered Social Landlords (RSL)

Not-for-profit organisations that can bid for regional funding to establish and run Gypsy and Traveller sites.



Glossary

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Site

An area of land laid out and used for Gypsy and Traveller caravans. Sites vary in type and size and can range from one caravan private family sites on a Gypsy and Traveller's own land to large local authority sites. Sites are made up of one or more pitches.

Transit site

An authorised Gypsy and Traveller site intended for short-term use by those in transit to other areas. The site is permanent, but people who stay on it may only do so for a temporary period (normally up to three months). Normally these sites have fewer facilities than permanent residential sites.

Unauthorised Development

A Gypsy and Traveller site established on Gypsy and Traveller owned land without appropriate planning permission or site licence.

Unauthorised Encampment

A piece of land where Gypsies and Travellers reside without planning permission. The land is not owned by those involved in the encampment and is often located on the edge of roads/carparks or in other unsafe or unsuitable environments.