

SUBJECT:	Accommodating the needs of the Travelling Community in South Bucks: Draft Issues and Options and Call for Sites for Public Consultation
REPORT OF:	Officer Management Team - Director of Services Prepared by - Head of Sustainable Development

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- outline the content of the Gypsy and Traveller Issues and Options and Call for Sites paper
- outline the future need for the travelling community in the district in light of the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment
- recommend that the draft Issues and Options and Call for Sites paper be published for public consultation towards the end of March 2014.

2. Links to Council Policy Objectives

2.1 The Issues and Options and Call for Sites paper on Gypsies and Travellers relates directly to the delivery of Core Strategy Policy 4 in the Core Strategy. In addition, the paper addresses each of the five broad themes in the South Bucks Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Thriving economy
- Sustainable environment
- Safe communities
- Health and well-being
- Cohesive and strong communities

3. Background

- 3.1 In accordance with national policy on 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' (March 2012), and the Housing Act 2004, there is a need to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites to provide for the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.
- 3.2 The Council is preparing a Gypsies and Travellers Plan which will determine what additional provision should be sought within South Bucks to provide accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 3.3 The Issues and Options and Call for Sites paper is the first stage in the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan. It sets out to provide an understanding of Gypsy and Traveller communities and the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the ten year period from 2013 to 2023. The paper explores a series of options of how the Council could accommodate the future growth of the Gypsy and Traveller population, and seeks comments on such options.

4. Discussion

Context

- 4.1 The paper sets out the policy context relating to accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, both from a national and local perspective. It summarises the content of

‘Planning Policy for Traveller Sites’ and of subsequent ministerial statements and sets out the content of the adopted Core Strategy on this matter.

- 4.2 The paper looks at some key facts about Gypsies and Travellers and the reasoning as to why the additional accommodation is required. It identifies the types of pitches that could be provided in South Bucks and looks at the recognised standard pitch sizes.

Gypsies and Travellers Needs Assessment (GTNA)

- 4.3 As part of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan, evidence of need has been gathered through a GTNA, undertaken by consultants on behalf of the four Buckinghamshire districts. The main objective was to provide Councils with robust, defensible, and up to date evidence about the existing and future accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople from 2013 to 2023.
- 4.4 This study identified a future need of 108 additional pitches over the next ten years from 2013 to 2023 in Bucks County, and identified a district need of 31 additional pitches in South Bucks to 2023.

Duty to Co-operate

- 4.5 In line with the Localism Act 2011, Duty to Co-operate was introduced. This places a legal duty on local authorities and public bodies to engage, constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise effectiveness of Local Plan preparation relating to cross boundary matters.
- 4.6 South Bucks has already worked alongside the four other Bucks authorities in the preparation of the Bucks GTANA as evidence base, and, at officer level, has been involved in Duty to Co-operate meetings with the London Borough of Hillingdon and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead on Gypsies and Travellers, as well as on wider issues. The Council has also been consulted on the Three Rivers Draft Gypsies, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Development Document (LDD), and has been in email correspondence with Slough Borough Council. Therefore, we have some understanding of the Gypsy and Traveller situation with all of our neighbouring authorities.
- 4.7 The Issues and Options and Call for Sites paper goes into more detail about situations in adjoining authorities regarding need and delivery on Gypsies and Travellers.

Meeting Future Need

- 4.8 The Issues and Options and Call for sites paper addresses a variety of options open to South Bucks as to how to meet the recognised need, set out in the GTNA. Options include:
- Extending existing sites where possible and appropriate
 - Allocating existing sites with temporary permission to make them permanent
 - Allocating new sites
 - Establishing whether neighbouring boroughs/districts would be able to meet some of the needs arising in South Bucks
- 4.9 Each of the options are presented in more detail in the paper, alongside the potential to protect, where suitable, existing sites across the district. All sites identified, whether by the council or through a representation, would be assessed against a site selection criterion which is also set out in the paper.

Future Policies

- 4.10 The paper also talks about possible policies which would aid assessments of applications received for temporary or permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Next Steps

- 4.11 The Issues and Options and Call for Sites paper is attached to this report. Following consultation on the attached paper, it is intended that a draft plan would be prepared for consideration by this PAG and by Cabinet in the autumn of 2014. This would set out proposals relating to the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers and the draft plan would then be subject to public consultation. Following consideration of comments received, this PAG, Cabinet and Council would be presented with a version of the plan for submission to the Secretary of State. There would then be an examination of the plan led by an independent Inspector and his/her views would be binding on the Council should it proceed with adopting the Gypsy and Traveller Plan.
- 4.12 A summary of views received on issues and options will be published after the public consultation.

5 Resources, Risk and Other Implications

- 5.1 There are no significant resource implications beyond officer time as a result of the proposed consultation. The results of this public consultation will be taken forward to inform the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan for the District. There could be considerable risk in not proceeding with the Gypsy and Traveller Plan as there would be more likelihood of applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites being allowed on appeal.

6 Summary

- 6.1 It is recommended that Members of the Sustainable Development PAG advise the Portfolio Holder to approve the publication of Issues and Options and Call for Sites paper on the accommodation needs of the travelling community for public consultation.

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Background Papers:	Accommodating the Needs of the Travelling Community in South Bucks: Consultation on Issues and Options and Call for Sites Paper