

## REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **PARTIAL REVIEW OF SOUTH EAST PLAN: GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS ACCOMMODATION NEEDS**

Date: 27 November 2008

Member Reporting: Councillor Dudley

Contact Officer(s): Chris Thomas, Head of Housing and Residential Development  
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Wards affected: None

### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The South East Regional Assembly is consulting on options for delivering accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The consultation runs from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 21<sup>st</sup> November 2008. Agreement has however been reached for the Royal Borough to submit comments following the meeting of Cabinet in November. The consultation documents are available at [http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/consultation/gt\\_update.html](http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/consultation/gt_update.html) and hard copies have been placed at council receptions at the Town Hall and York House.
- 1.2 The consultation documents proposed four options for the distribution of Gypsy, Traveller and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots. Distributions vary from meeting all needs as close as possible to existing facilities to meeting only half of the need with regard to existing facilities with the remaining half spread across the region.
- 1.3 In total 78 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers are proposed across Berkshire under each option. Provision for Travelling Showpeople ranges from 0 to 14 plots across the county.
- 1.4 The Berkshire authorities have agreed to jointly support Option B which requires an additional 9 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and no additional plots for Travelling Showpeople.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

**That Cabinet endorses the recommended response of Option B to be submitted to the Regional Assembly.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
There will be a small effect upon a limited number of existing residents, dependent upon the final numbers of pitches and plots to be delivered, and the location of these. The final location of the pitches and plots will be determined via the Local Development Framework. Ensuring that identified need for Gypsies and Travellers

is met locally, will assist the Council in the future with enforcement measures in respect of unauthorised pitches.

### 3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

#### 3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 The South East Plan is part of the statutory Development Plan against which local planning authorities prepare their Local Development Frameworks and make planning decisions.
- 3.1.2 The South East England Regional Assembly (the Regional Assembly) is holding a public consultation on the options for delivering accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople across the region. The consultation runs for 12-weeks from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 21<sup>st</sup> November. The Council has reached an agreement to submit comments following Cabinet's meeting in November.
- 3.1.3 The consultation seeks views on the proposed number of pitches and the distribution across the region. Based on technical assessments, 1064 Gypsy and Traveller pitches are proposed, and a further 276 plots for Travelling Showpeople are proposed across the region. Four options are presented on how these pitches and plots could be distributed.
- 3.1.4 When the consultation has closed, a decision will be reached about the most appropriate manner of distributing spaces across Council areas. This option may be one of the four identified in the consultation, or an alternative approach may emerge through the consultation. It is hoped that full Assembly approval will be obtained about the way forward in March 2009, and it will be submitted to Government in April 2009. There will then be further public consultation, managed by the Government for the South East (GOSE), probably followed by an Examination in Public in front of independent planning inspectors. It is anticipated that the new policy and allocations will be adopted by Government in 2010.

Option A	New spaces should <u>ALL be provided as close as possible</u> to where Gypsies and Travellers currently live. This may mean some council areas have no spaces.
Option B	New spaces should <u>ALL be in the same general areas</u> where Gypsies and Travellers currently live. Neighbouring councils would share the duty for providing new spaces but some council areas would have none.
Option C	<u>HALF the new spaces should be in the same general areas</u> where Gypsies and Travellers currently live. <u>The other half would be spread across the region</u> to make sure that all areas provide some spaces.

Option D	<u>MOST new spaces should be in the same general areas where Gypsies and Travellers currently live. A quarter would be spread across the region</u> to make sure that all areas provide some spaces.
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In total 78 pitches for Gypsy and Travellers are proposed across Berkshire under each option. Provision for Travelling Showpeople ranges from 0 to 14 plots across the county. Full details for Berkshire are provided in Appendix A.

### 3.2 Main Implications for the Royal Borough

- 3.2.1 The Gypsy and Traveller population is not evenly distributed across the region. Indeed, the current provision in Berkshire is unbalanced with significantly greater provision in east Berkshire than in central and western Berkshire. It is recognised that current provision may not reflect choice but availability. Options proposing a partial redistribution can be supported for this reason. Partial redistribution is further supported by the results of the Thames Valley Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and the results of community engagement.
- 3.2.2 National planning advice on flood risk is that caravans should not be located within areas at high risk of flooding. The Royal Borough has extensive areas at risk of flooding particularly around the Datchet, Horton, Wraysbury and Hythe End areas. This corresponds with the borough's largest Gypsy and Traveller community making meeting need as close as possible to existing communities at conflict with national policy.
- 3.2.3 Under the Housing Act 2004, the Council will be required to meet the identified needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community. These will have to be designated through the Local Development Framework.

## 4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	No response to consultation.	Given the variable figures for required pitch numbers, it is important that RBWM expresses a view on local needs.	Revenue: None at present  Capital: None at present
2.	Recommend Option B.	If accepted this would require an additional 9 pitches to be provided locally.	Revenue: There may be some revenue costs related to management of a site, depending on where it is located.  Capital: There will be a capital requirement for

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
			potentially acquiring land, laying out the site and putting in services.
3.	Recommend one of the other Options.	This may result in RBWM having to provide a larger number of pitches, especially if Option A is considered.	Revenue: There could be higher revenue costs than with Option B.  Capital: There would be higher capital costs if Option A is required.

## 4.2 Risk assessment

- 4.2.1 The risk of not responding to the consultation is that the Regional Assembly will have to come to a decision without a view being expressed by the Council about identified needs, and may impose an unrealistic requirement for new plots within RBWM.
- 4.2.2 Option B represents a balanced approach across the region, and reflects needs in RBWM as outlined in the accommodation assessment. The risks associated with this option surround the availability of a suitable site being found, and the associated costs, which cannot be estimated properly at this time.
- 4.2.3 Recommending other options, particularly Option A, could leave the Council in the position of having to deliver a larger number of plots with much larger associated costs. It could also prove much more difficult to find a site large enough for 25 pitches, and it is quite likely that at least 2 sites would be necessary.

## 5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

- 5.1 No external consultation has been carried out in the preparation of this report.
- 5.2 Notification of the consultation has been sent to local groups including Parish / Town Councils, Registered Social Landlords (housing associations), key service providers (health trusts, education authority, police, fire and rescue), resident and interest groups, and representatives from the local Gypsy and Traveller community.

## 6. COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

That the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval subject to them noting that all the Berkshire Authorities would be opting for Option B, and therefore that would be the recommendation of the Panel.

## 7. IMPLICATIONS

The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality

✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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Background Papers:

Partial Review Of The South East Plan – Somewhere to Live: Planning for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the South East ( Public Consultation 1st September – 21st November 2008 ), and Sustainability Appraisal of the Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople Review.

Thames Valley Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and the results of community engagement.

**Gypsy and Traveller Residential Pitch Options 2006-2016**

<b><i>LPA</i></b>	<b><i>Option A</i></b>	<b><i>Option B</i></b>	<b><i>Option C</i></b>	<b><i>Option D</i></b>
Bracknell Forest	6	17	14	16
RBWM	25	9	9	9
Reading	7	6	9	7
Slough	17	6	7	7
West Berkshire	9	18	19	18
Wokingham	14	22	20	21
TOTAL	78	78	78	78

**Travelling Showpeople Residential Plot Options 2006-2016**

<b><i>LPA</i></b>	<b><i>Option A</i></b>	<b><i>Option B</i></b>	<b><i>Option C</i></b>	<b><i>Option D</i></b>
Bracknell Forest	1	0	2	2
RBWM	1	0	3	2
Reading	1	0	2	2
Slough	0	1	1	1
West Berkshire	1	1	4	3
Wokingham	0	1	2	1
TOTAL	4	3	14	11