

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of Mark Kiddle-Morris, Executive Member for Assets and Strategic Development

To: Cabinet – 7 January 2014

(Author: Richard Bland, Senior Enabling & Projects Officer)

Subject: Breckland Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment, 2013

Purpose: To advise Members of the outcomes from the 2013 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

Recommendation(s):

That Members' consider the contents of the report and accept option 1 to allow the GTAA to go forward and be used in the formation of future policy.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members may recall that a Norfolk-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) was undertaken by the Norfolk Gypsy & Traveller liaison group in 2006. The document established the accommodation and travelling needs for Gypsies and Travellers across the County and fed into the East of England Plan revision regarding the provision of permanent and transit sites. Following consultation, the regional figures were redistributed using a formula approach which resulted in a requirement for 15 new permanent pitches in Breckland. This requirement was translated into the Breckland Council Core Strategy (2009) Policy CP 2, and identified the A11 corridor as the most suitable location for a permanent site.
- 1.2 The East of England Plan was formally revoked on 3rd January, 2013.

2. Context

- 2.1 Section 225 of The Housing Act 2004 places a duty on Local Authorities to prepare accommodation needs assessments, whilst also taking a strategic approach to providing adequate housing options for this group.
- 2.2 The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and accompanying Statement on Gypsy & Travellers (2012) confirms a requirement on Local Authorities to objectively assess the housing needs in their areas.
- 2.3 The Government seeks to ensure that Authorities make their own assessment of need based on analysis of various data sources. Further information on wider policy context can be found in chapter 2 of the attached document..
- 2.4 Further, the Caravan Sites Bill 2013-13 includes a duty on Local Authorities to provide or plan for the provision of adequate caravan site accommodation for Gypsy and Travellers, residing or resorting in their area.
- 2.5 Members will recall that an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was adopted in September, 2013. Taking into account the time that passed from the last

detailed study, it was deemed necessary to carry out a full GTAA for the District in order to inform the future development of planning policies through the emerging Local Plan.

- 2.6 The National Planning policy Framework (NPPF) now places a statutory responsibility on local authorities to objectively assess the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller Community and to plan to meet those needs, whilst providing evidence of a 5-year supply of deliverable sites. The GTAA is an essential evidence base for both establishing the level of provision that is needed in the District, and establishing the most appropriate location for such provision.
- 2.7 In May 2013, the Council appointed Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) together with Cambridgeshire Research Group (CRG) to produce a Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment, of which the final assessment is included as appendix A of this report.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Guidance (2007), the document 'Planning policy for traveller sites, 2012' plus experience gained and benchmarking of previous GTAA's form the basis of our approach.. Both primary and secondary sources of evidence have been used to inform the findings.
- 3.2 The primary evidence is in the form of a survey of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople comprising of 92 households, including those living in both trailers and bricks-and-mortar. The full survey can be found in Appendix 3 of the attached document.
- 3.3 The secondary evidence was sourced from a collection of historical and current data sources including the bi-annual caravan count, local authority information and the 2011 census data. Further secondary information can be found in Chapter 3
- 3.4 Appendix 1 of the attached document sets out the methodological approach to the study and further baseline information can be found in chapter 3 of the document.

4. Findings

- 4.1 The GTAA report provides a projected need for both permanent and transit pitches over the periods 2013/14-2017/18, 2018/19-2023/24 and 2023/24-2027-28. The report is also required to identify broad locations where the need would be best met, whilst providing criteria for the Council to use when determining specific locations for sites.
- 4.2 Section 15 states that the Gypsy & Traveller Population of the District is relatively stable and that any movement into the District is currently adequately met by a combination of the short-stay stopping site in Thetford and the various private sites across Breckland.
- 4.3 The majority of anticipated growth is anticipated to come from the existing Gypsy and Traveller Community currently residing in the District.

5. Demographics

- 5.1 Appendix 2 of the study sets out the demographics of the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- 5.2 The existing Gypsy and Traveller community in Breckland is estimated to include 113 households made up of 425no. individuals. 174no. (41.4%) of these are recorded to be within the 0-16 age group, of which 72 (41%) are within the 11-16yrs range.

- 5.3 The study indicates that future need from the existing community will come from new household formation from this group over the next 5 years.
- 5.4 82.2% of the community identify themselves as Romany/English Gypsy, with the remainder a mix of Irish traveller, Welsh Traveller and Travelling Showpeople (a full breakdown can be found in Table A2.4 of Appendix 2).
- 5.5 Affordability of the community to meet their housing needs is important in planning for future needs. The study has found that the majority of the existing community can afford their current accommodation, although projected household growth could well test this affordability and see a need for cheaper accommodation options (Chapter 8).
- 5.6 Further information can be found in section 8 of the attached document.

6. Future Pitch Need

- 6.1 Detail as to how the need figures have been calculated can be found in chapter 10, *An Assessment of Accommodation Need*.
- 6.2 The study has concluded that, over the next 15 years there shall be a need for an additional 33no. permanent pitches across the District, of which 22no (67%). are needed in the next 5 years. The table below shows this in more detail:

6.3

	Gypsy and Traveller residential need (pitches)	Gypsy and Traveller transit need (pitches)	Travelling Showpeople need (plots)
Current authorised residential provision	51	8	5
Gross Anticipated Need 2013/14–2017/18	22	3-5	0
Further Need 2018/19–2023/24	8	0	0
Additional Need 2023/24–2027/28	9	8	0
Total NET Additional Need 2013–2028	33	11-13	0

(nb: 2013/14-18 figs show gross need. Total 2013-2028 shows net need.)

- 6.4 In terms of transit provision, Breckland already benefits from a short-stay stopping site in Thetford. The District has a small number of unauthorised encampments each year, the time and size of which can vary. The study suggests that 3no.-5no. additional transit pitches are provided over the next 5 year period, with a total of between 11no.-13no. being provided between now and 2028. Chapter 12 covers transit accommodation in more detail.

7. Tenure

- 7.1 In relation to the tenure of the pitches to be required, the study suggests that the Splashes socially rented site in Swaffham is currently meeting the need for socially rented pitches in the District. However, this need will need to be closely assessed with subsequent reviews to the GTAA.

8 Travelling Showpeople

- 8.1 Travelling Showpeople are deemed to be separate from the Gypsy and Traveller group, and therefore separate figures for this group have been provided. There are currently 5no. authorised yards/plots, and through interviews and secondary data the study suggests that there is no additional need over the next 15 years.

9 Broad Locations

- 9.1 Chapter 14 of the attached document, "*Understanding the nature of accommodation need*", details locations of demand and provides a criterion for assessing the locations of future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.
- 9.2 The currently adopted Core Strategy stresses that the main area of need was along the A11 corridor. The study found no direct evidence of an interest in living along this corridor compared with that of the A47.
- 9.3 The evidence within the report indicates that there is a preference towards Swaffham and Watton and the areas surrounding, predominantly due to the location of family members.
- 9.4 The study provides a criteria that can be used for assessing the location of the additional pitches.(Chapter 14, Table 14.1,). This provides 3no. options; Land availability, proximity to existing services, and locations of existing demand. The study suggests that a combination of all three of the options should be used in assessing locations for sites.

10 OPTIONS

- 10.1 There are two options available to Members:

10.2 Option 1

10.3 Members consider the contents of the report and accept to allow the findings to be used to inform future policy.

10.4 Option 2 (Do nothing)

- 10.5 Not publishing an up-to-date assessment of the need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the District and using it to develop numbers in the local plan will place the Plan at risk of being found unsound. Delays in publishing an up-to-date GTAA could have implications upon the Local Plan timetable.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Cabinet accept the report put forward as part of the evidence base for the local plan. The evidence within the report shall allow the Council to plan for future provision for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and shall provide robust evidence in order to assess future planning applications for such accommodation. It is the duty of Local Housing Authorities to include assessment of the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community under the Housing Act 2004. Failure to have an up-to-date assessment of these needs may lead to the Local Plan being found unsound. Due to the implications of the report findings and their wider impact beyond the Local Plan the GTAA recommendation to Cabinet supersedes a separate consideration by the Local Plan Working Group.

12. EXPECTED BENEFITS

The benefits are highlighted in the report. Robust housing needs data for the Gypsy and traveller Community is required to support the planning function and shall provide evidence in order to effectively assess planning applications for accommodation of this type.

13. IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 **Legal** the proposed recommendations minimise the legislative of the Local Plan being found unsound.
- 13.2 **Risks** The proposed recommendations minimise the legal, financial and process risks associated with doing nothing.
- 13.3 **Financial** There are no direct financial risks a result of this report. However, a lack of robust up-to-date evidence shall expose the Council to an increased risk of planning appeals and the costs associated with this.
- 13.4 **Timescales** To be included as part of the evidence base for the local plan, the GTAA is required to be adopted by March, 2014.
- 13.5 **Equality and Diversity** Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are recognised as a minority group. The GTAA seeks to provide advice on the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community in the District. All known groups within the community have been included within the study.
- 13.6 **Stakeholders / Consultation** The GTAA methodology includes questionnaires and interviews with a large proportion of the current Gypsy and Traveller community. Further consultation with both the County Council and neighbouring District Council's has been carried out in order to extrapolate secondary information and to meet the requirements of duty to cooperate. Consultation will also be carried out as part of preparation of the Local Plan, in accordance with the developed timeframes.
- 13.7 **Contracts** There are no contractual implications.
- 13.8 **Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998**

There are no direct crime and disorder related issues as a result of considering this piece of evidence.

14. WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

All Wards.

Background papers:-

The Housing Act, 2013

Planning policy for traveller sites, (CLG, 2012)

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments Guidance (CLG, 2007)

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Key Decision – Yes

Appendices attached to this report:

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment, November 2013.

Glossary of Terms

GTAA – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

CLG – Department of Communities and Local Government