
2 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 The Housing Act 2004, requires local authorities to consider gypsy and traveller sites as part of their housing needs assessments and for the preparation of strategies to meet these needs. This requirement was later supported by the Communities and Local Government (CLG) guidance 'Planning for gypsy and traveller caravan sites - ODPM Circular 01/2006', paragraph 33, which sets out that local authorities must allocate sufficient sites for gypsies and travellers in their Development Plan Documents and specifies that criteria based policies must not be used as an alternative to this where a need for accommodation has been identified.

2.1.2 For the purposes of this study the definition of gypsies and travellers given in the Circular 01/2006, paragraph 15 has been adopted and is as follows:

"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 traveling show people or circus people traveling together as such." (CLG, 2007a, p50)

2.1.3 It is acknowledged that, while some gypsies and travellers have an actively itinerant lifestyle with a need for transit sites that meet their social and working patterns, these traditional patterns are changing and the community is generally becoming more settled. This is beneficial in

terms of access to employment, health, and education services. However, it is still important to the gypsy and traveller culture that the ability to travel is maintained. This report does not include the accommodation needs of travelling showpeople, who have needs distinct from the gypsy and traveller community.

2.1.4 This 'Northern and Eastern Hertfordshire: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment', was produced by Opinion Research Services (ORS) in June 2006. The report concluded that the estimated extra site provision required for the next five years in Northern and Eastern Hertfordshire is forty-five pitches. Of these pitches thirty-five would be on residential sites and ten on transit sites.

2.1.5 In the Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan (March 2007), Policy H4 provides an interim position on gypsy and traveller housing needs. It outlines that *"local authorities should make provision for sites/pitches to meet the identified needs of gypsies and travellers living within or resorting to their areas. EERA will work with local authorities and other stakeholders to bring forward an early review to this RSS setting out the strategic framework for such provision, and identifying the requirement in terms of pitch numbers at a district level. Until that review is in place provision in Local Development Documents should be based on the latest available local information on need within the area."*

2.1.6 The draft gypsy and traveller single issue review "Planning for gypsy and traveller accommodation in the East of England: issues and options" was published for

consultation from May 8th 2007 to 31st July 2007. The consultation draft identified the need to accommodate 1,220 net additional pitches from 2006 to 2011. It offers a series of options for the delivery of these pitches. The suggested options for a local authority breakdown of gypsy and traveller pitch provision are as follows:

- 2.1.7 Option 1: Broxbourne 13 pitches, Stevenage 7 pitches, Welwyn Hatfield 17 pitches, East Hertfordshire 5 pitches, North Hertfordshire 3 pitches.
- 2.1.8 Option 2: Broxbourne 15 pitches, Stevenage 15 pitches, Welwyn Hatfield 17 pitches, East Hertfordshire 15 pitches, North Hertfordshire 15 pitches.
- 2.1.9 CLG's 'Preparing Regional Spatial Strategy Reviews on gypsies and travellers by Regional Planning Bodies' (March 2007), undertaken by the Center of Urban Regional Studies, uses the East of England as a case study for the development of guidance on gypsy and traveller accommodation. It sets out that the average site should accommodate 10-15 pitches.
- 2.1.10 "Many gypsies and travellers favour small rather than large sites. This means sites of up to about 15 pitches, although some successful family sites are much smaller and some successful local authority and private sites are larger. Community is important on sites, and it seems harder to build cohesive communities on larger sites, which are likely to house a wider range of unrelated families. Very small sites can leave residents feeling isolated and vulnerable. Assuming a 10 and 15 pitch average site size would

provide a range for the number of sites from a given regional pitch requirement. In the imaginary example, the 705 pitch requirement" (CLG, 2007a, p50)

- 2.1.11 The study also estimates that the average pitch size is about 200m²
- 2.1.12 "A very rough calculation might assume an average pitch size of 200m². This is a relatively generous average pitch size, which would accommodate site roads and any incidental open space. It would allow flexible pitch use and meet rising need/aspirations for more space. Such an average pitch size means an assumed 50 pitches per hectare. In the imaginary region which has provided examples throughout the previous sections, the 705 pitch requirement equates to around 14 hectares". (CLG, 2007, p50)
- 2.1.13 Scott Wilson is providing independent advice using guidance from government publications. However, the contents of this report represent the views of the consultants, which might not necessarily be supported by the local authorities. In order to implement the proposals for gypsy and traveller accommodation areas and other related planning policies, partner authorities will need to take them through the statutory development plan process. This must include a public consultation and a sustainability appraisal on any likely social, environmental or economic effects. Whilst this report provides a robust evidence base to support the development plan process it does not reflect the final selection of areas, which will be brought forward in the future.

Map 1: Study Area