

## 4.0 **Gypsies and Travellers**

### **Background**

- 4.1 North Hertfordshire is traditionally an area in which few Gypsies and Travellers have lived. There is currently one Gypsy and Traveller site at Pulmer Water, St Albans Road, Codicote. It is a well established, private, residential site.
- 4.2 Published by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now Communities & Local Government - CLG), Circular 01/2006 sets out the Government's planning policy for Gypsies and Travellers. Local authorities such as North Hertfordshire must have regard to the advice in this Circular.
- 4.3 One part of the circular states that Local authorities must allocate sufficient sites for Gypsies and Travellers in terms of the number of pitches<sup>1</sup> required in the Regional Plan.

### **How many Gypsy and traveller pitches do we have to provide?**

- 4.4 In order to meet the requirements of the Government, regional planning bodies such as EERA have to identify (in their regional plans) District level allocations for Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision. The regional body which covers Hertfordshire is the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA).
- 4.5 EERA is carrying out a single issue review of its regional plan (RSS) in order to comply with the Government requirements. The review deals solely with the provision of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 4.6 EERA published an Issues and Options document in May 2007 for consultation. This document set out two options for pitch provision for each District in the region. The two options for North Hertfordshire were an additional 3 pitches and an additional 15 pitches.
- 4.7 At the time of writing it is still not know what the preferred option will be for North Hertfordshire. The Council is working on the assumption that they will have to provide 15 pitches, until such time as the requirement becomes clearer from EERA.

### **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment**

- 4.8 The Council appointed consultants to carry out a study looking at potential areas for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. This study was done in partnership with Broxbourne, East Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield and Hertfordshire County Councils. The study looked at potential areas which

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<sup>1</sup> A pitch is the space required to accommodate one household and their caravans. A study which was done for the Council and its partners in 2006, found that the average household size for Gypsies across the areas was 3.4. The regional average for the number of caravans per pitch is 1.7. Therefore, on average, a site which included 15 pitches would involve 26 caravans and 51 people. A 15 pitch site is on average approximately 0.3 of a hectare in size.

may be suitable for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The report was published in October 2007.

### **Meeting the need**

- 4.9 The consultants' report identified nine 'areas of search' which it was considered had potential to accommodate Gypsy pitches. Three of these were discarded by the Council's Cabinet, leaving the following six:
- NH72: London Road, Barkway
  - NH73: Buckland Road, Barkway
  - NH95: Holwell Road, Pirton
  - NH109: North of Payne End, Sandon
  - NH112: Land South of Notley Green, Sandon
  - NH16: Lilley Bottom Road, Whitwell (St Paul's Walden parish)
- 4.10 All these areas are currently outside the green belt. Circular 01/2006 states that local authorities must consider non-green belt areas before considering the green belt. In its planning policy documents the Council is promoting changes to the green belt boundary. In its Core Strategy, the Council is proposing that an area of land between Hitchin and the A1(M) in the east, the A505 in the north and the metropolitan green belt in the south, is changed to green belt. If this were to happen it would mean that the areas of search at Preston Hills, Kings Walden and Lilley Bottom Road, Whitwell would be in the green belt.
- Question 6:**  
**Do you consider that any of the areas listed above would be unsuitable for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, and/or unlikely to come forward within the LDF period? Please indicate which areas and your reasons.**
- 4.11 There are a number of areas which have been identified by the consultants as having potential for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, but are unacceptable as they are currently in the green belt. These areas are listed in an appendix to the consultant's report. Two of those areas are located to the north of Stevenage.
- 4.12 In addition to the Land Allocations DPD, the Council has also produced a document, in conjunction with Stevenage Borough Council, called the Stevenage North Herts Action Plan (SNAP). This document will consider the allocation of land around Stevenage for different uses. It will also consider amending the green belt boundary around Stevenage. The two areas of search in the appendix to the consultant's report, which are to the north of Stevenage, are included in the SNAP document, and are in areas proposed to be removed from the Green Belt.
- 4.13 The Council has not come to any view on the suitability of any of the areas yet. The Council would like to obtain people's views on what they should do if none of the six areas of search are suitable and/or available.
- 4.14 Of those six areas above, the Council has been contacted by owners of three and part of a fourth of the areas to say that they are unwilling to allow their land to be used as a Gypsy and Traveller site.

**Question 7:**

**If none of the six areas in this document, or the two areas north of Stevenage which have been identified in the SNAP consultation document, are suitable/available, should the Council:**

- a. **Consider using its compulsory purchase powers;**
- b. **Look again at areas of search which were previously considered by Scott Wilson, but were not felt to merit inclusion in the final report;**
- c. **Consider those areas of search which are in the Green Belt, but which are not being proposed to be removed from the Green Belt (listed in Appendix 1 of the Scott Wilson report)**
- d. **Other (please specify)**

4.15 As was mentioned previously, there is one existing, private Gypsy and Traveller site in the District at Pulmer Water, St Albans Road, Codicote. The site has planning permission for six pitches. The Council would like to gain people's views on providing more pitches on this site, to go towards meeting the District's requirement.

**Question 8:**

**Do you consider that there is any scope to provide more pitches on the existing site at Pulmer Water, St Albans Road, Codicote?**

4.16 This Issues and Options Paper is an opportunity for the Council to gain information on other potential sites. Landowners and others are encouraged to submit details of sites which they consider to be suitable and available for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. Details of all sites follow.

**Question 9:**

**Do you know of any other areas in North Hertfordshire, not included in the section above, which might be appropriate for Gypsy and Traveller use? Please specify the site, the owners (if known), and why you consider it is a suitable site.**