

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

Date of meeting: 22 February 2017

Subject: Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document Update

**Cabinet member: Cllr Toby Sturgis
Strategic Planning, Development Management,
Strategic Housing, Property and Waste**

Purpose of Report

1. To update Environment Select Committee on the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (DPD).

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. This report is relevant to a number of outcomes and actions identified in the Business Plan 2013-2017. Outcome 3 (Everyone in Wiltshire lives in a high quality environment) specifically mentions that everyone should be able to live in a decent, safe home.
3. Addressing the accommodation needs of travellers through site allocations in a DPD can provide the basis for creating better and healthier living conditions and access to education, employment and health care. Provision of emergency stop-over sites can reduce vulnerability of travellers and the potential for harassment and conflict.

Background

4. The Council's Local Development Scheme was updated in December 2016. The preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller DPD remains a key component of the revised Local Development Scheme, with a programmed adoption date of March 2019. A consultation on a pre-submission plan is envisaged for December 2017. This timetable is different to that reported to the last Environment Select Committee meeting on 7 June 2016, and has changed to reflect issues around identifying sufficient sites for inclusion within the draft Plan, which are set out below under main considerations.
5. The Gypsy and Traveller DPD will:
 - (i) provide a review of the overall permanent pitch requirements by Housing Market Area (to update the Wiltshire Core Strategy pitch requirements set out in Core Policy 47 'Meeting the Needs of Gypsies and Travellers');

- (ii) identify sites for allocation as new traveller sites;
 - (iii) allocate a network of sites for emergency stop-over, and
 - (iv) include supporting development management policies.
6. The Council committed to an early review of the pitch requirements within the Wiltshire Core Strategy through a new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. This is set out in paragraph 6.62 of the adopted Core Strategy.
 7. The Council's Traveller Strategy was refreshed in late 2016 and approved by this committee on 13 September 2016. Provision of sites is a key objective the Strategy; and Action 1 in the document states that "all new public and private sites should be in the locations which meet the particular needs of Traveller communities. People from across communities (travelling and settled) will be consulted to help identify and allocate future sites in the most effective locations in accordance with national policy."
 8. The Strategy further recognises boaters as part of the traveller community so the objectives and actions identified in the document apply to the boater community also.

Main Considerations for the Council

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)

7. As set out in the report to Environment Select Committee dated 6 June 2016, there remains a residual pitch requirement against the GTAA requirement for 2014-2029. The below tables provide an update based on the latest monitoring data from January 2017.
8. Table 1 and 2 below show the GTAA requirements and permissions since 2014 (updated to January 2017) for the North and West Wiltshire Housing Market Area (NW HMA) and Southern Wiltshire Housing Market Area (S HMA) to inform progress towards meeting these requirements. There is no requirement in the East HMA. Historically, supply has been relatively strong in the north and west of the county compared to the other areas.
9. In order to meet the residual requirements officers have already looked at sources of supply from existing temporary permissions, unauthorised encampments, the intensification of existing sites and sites promoted through a 'call for sites' exercise. The outcome of this review is also included in Tables 1 and 2. Since the last report, 2 pitches have been permitted in the North and West Housing Market Area on sites which previously constituted a source of supply; so overall, the residual requirements have not changed.

10. Overall, while requirements for 2014-19 have been met there remains an unmet need for new pitches between 2019-24 and 2024-29. In addition, 7 showpeople plots are required for 2014-19; 2 in the North and West HMA and 5 in the South HMA. The residual requirement will be kept under review and pending applications will be monitored.

TABLE 1 (January 2017)			
NORTH & WEST HMA		GTAA requirement	
Housing Market Area/Pitch supply	No. of Pitches (2014-19)	No. of Pitches (2019-24)	No. of Pitches (2024-29)
GTAA requirement	21	22	25
North and West HMA residual requirement	-9 (30 pitches permitted since July 2014)	22-17 = 5 (17 pitches oversupply from the first 5 years)	25
Supply from review of temporary permissions, unauthorized sites and intensification of existing privately owned traveller sites	-8	0	0
Private land supply through 'call for sites' exercise	0	0	0
Residual requirement to be met	None	5	25
Residual requirement	-17	5	25

TABLE 2 (January 2017)			
SOUTH HMA		GTAA requirement	
Housing Market Area/Pitch supply	No. of Pitches (2014-19)	No. of Pitches (2019-24)	No. of Pitches (2024-29)
GTAA requirement	1	10	11
South HMA residual requirement	-1 (2 pitches permitted since July 2014)	10-2 = 8 (2 pitches oversupply from previous 5 years)	11
Supply from review of temporary permissions, unauthorised sites and intensification of existing privately owned traveller sites	-1	0	0
Private land supply through 'call for sites' exercise		0	0
Residual requirement to be met	None	8	11
Residual requirement	-2	8	11

Identification of sites

11. In order to identify sufficient sites to meet residual requirements for consideration through the DPD officers have assessed sites in both private and Council ownership. This is explained in the report to this committee dated 7 June 2016.
12. The main obstacles in identifying available and suitable sites remain. As outlined before, private land supply has been consistently poor despite a Call for Sites which remains open to date. The predominant number of private sites which were considered already benefited from planning permission for traveller pitches. These sites qualify for intensification due to an identified housing need on site; or they benefit from temporary permissions and could be allocated in the DPD with the aim to make them permanent traveller sites.
13. Officers undertook an assessment to consider Council-owned land and reported back to Cabinet Capital Assets Committee (CCAC) on 22 July 2014 and subsequently, 10 November 2015. Sites that may have been suitable from a planning perspective were generally not available. As a result there were insufficient available and suitable sites. However, officers are in the process of identifying land forming part of the rural estates stock which could potentially be made available. While the work is still in progress officers are confident that there are rural estates which in principle could provide a source of supply to meet the identified need in the North and West HMA; but additional work on land suitability and availability will need to be undertaken. However, despite this the land supply situation in the South Housing Market Area remains difficult as outlined in the previous report to this committee and the CCAC report dated 10 November 2015.
14. Purchasing land on the open market is becoming the only remaining option for the delivery of traveller sites in the south of the County. Officers are investigating alternative sources of funding to achieve this which do not rely completely on the Council's own resources. This would complement CCAC endorsement to purchase land on the property market.

Legislative and policy changes

15. As reported to this committee before, since August 2015 there have been legislative and policy changes at national level. The Government changed the definition of 'gypsies and travellers' in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS). A description of the implications is provided in the previous report at para 15-18.
16. As a consequence, officers have identified the key planks for a GTAA review. This is still being finalised and will carefully consider the status of travellers in Wiltshire to ensure that the review is proportionate and fair. It is furthermore planned to consult a selected number of external

professionals such as traveller representatives and planning agents with relevant experience to garner support for the review methodology.

17. The review will be undertaken in parallel with the site allocations work. At this stage it is difficult to anticipate the outcome of this review but it may not result in a drastic reduction of additional pitches/plots required between 2014 and 2029 to meet need.

Housing and Planning Bill

18. Officers have previously confirmed that the new Housing and Planning Act 2016 and corresponding guidance¹ are unlikely to have implications for the evidence base underpinning the emerging DPD. This remains the case.
19. The Act further requires local authorities to assess the accommodation need of people residing in houseboats. The Traveller Strategy recognises that there were a significant number of boats being used residentially on the Kennet and Avon Canal within Wiltshire. Between 2015 and 2016. Initial data from the Canal and River Trust (the licensing Authority) indicates that over 700 'continuous cruising boats with further residential boats on permanent moorings. Boaters are further recognised as nomadic people and the actions identified in the Strategy equally apply to them. Para 23 in the previous report to this committee stated that officers would work with neighbouring authorities to address the requirement of the Act. Since then, spatial planning officers and the county's Countryside Officer have met several times with the Canal and River Trust (CRT) and representatives from Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) Council, and West Berkshire Council, to discuss the scope for a cross-boundary survey amongst the boating community on the Kennet and Avon Canal. It is hoped to also involve Bristol and Reading Councils to provide a complete assessment of the Kennet & Avon Canal and it has been agreed that this work could take place in the summer of 2017 and build on the surveys undertaken by the CRT in London; and a survey undertaken by BANES last year. Technical details are still being clarified but it is assumed that the work will be at minimal cost to the Council. Likely cost will include online survey set-up and officer time to analyse the data.
20. Following survey completion the data will be presented in a short report and conclusions will be made as to the accommodation need of boaters for each local authority situated on the Kennet & Avon Canal. This would satisfy the basic requirement of the Act and associated guidance.

Next steps

21. Officers will continue to work with the Asset Management Team and undertake site assessments of rural estates which could potentially be made available.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-housing-needs-for-caravans-and-houseboats-draft-guidance>

22. Officers will continue to appraise the market for potential sites with the view to identifying suitable sites for acquisition.
23. Officers will report back to Environment Select Committee on a clear and inclusive consultation strategy for the programmed DPD consultation in December 2017.
24. The cross-boundary officer group will now organise the boater survey with the Canal and River Trust, which is targeted for the summer.

Alistair Cunningham
Associate Director for Economic Development and Planning

14 February 2017