

PROVISION OF SITES FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS IN BRAINTREE DISTRICT FOR THE PERIOD TO 2021

Portfolio Area:	Enterprise and Culture
Report Presented by:	Paul Munson – Head of District Development

Background Papers:	Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the East of England - A Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England – GO East – July 2009 BDC Cabinet Report and Minutes – 7 th July 2008
Corporate Implications:	Please refer to table at end of report
Options:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree the proposals for meeting the requirement for provision for gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople for the period to 2021 2. To suggest alternative ways of meeting the requirement for provision for gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople for the period to 2021
Risks:	Failure to make appropriate provision for gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople will lead to the risk of sites being allowed on appeal.

Executive Summary

The Government has now finalised the Revision to the Regional Strategy for the East of England which sets out the required provision of sites for gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople by local authority area. For Braintree District the Strategy requires 50 authorised pitches (a pitch normally accommodates 2 caravans) for the period to 2011 and a further provision of 3% p.a. for the period to 2021, which equates to an additional 8 pitches by 2016 and a further 9 pitches by 2021. There are already 25 authorised pitches in the District (at Sandiacres, Cressing and at Ridgewell). Cabinet agreed on 7th July 2008 to take steps to authorise the site at Twin Oaks Stisted which would provide 21 pitches. There is scope to provide an additional 2 pitches at Sandiacres. This will leave a balance of 19 pitches to be provided in the period 2011 – 2021. It is proposed that this requirement will be met either by identifying a site or sites through the local development framework process or through the development control process where appropriate sites come forward. Provision for travelling showpeople will need to be determined in conjunction with other Essex authorities, local travelling showpeople and the Showmen’s Guild.

Decision

To endorse the approach to meeting the requirements for the provision of sites for gypsies and travellers in Braintree District as follows:

- 21 pitches to be provided at Twin Oaks, Stisted
- 2 pitches to be provided at Sandiacres, Cressing
- 19 pitches to be identified through the local development framework or development control process
- provision for travelling showpeople to be identified in conjunction with other Essex authorities, local travelling showpeople and the Showmen's Guild

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1. The Housing Act 2004 and Planning Circular 01/2006 has put in place a framework which means that every local authority has to identify land for the gypsy and traveller sites that are needed in its area. It is for the Regional Planning Body to determine how many pitches should be provided across the region and to specify in the Regional Spatial Strategy how many pitches should be provided in each District. Local planning authorities are then obliged to identify sites in their Development Plan Documents in line with the Regional Spatial Strategy.
2. In July 2009 the Secretary of State published the final policies on Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople in the East of England which resulted from the single issue review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, which was initiated by the East of England Regional Assembly. Policy H3 sets out the provision required for each District for the period to 2011. For Braintree District the policy requires a minimum of 25 additional pitches to be provided between 2006 and 2011 in addition to the 25 authorised pitches that exist already making a total of 50 authorised pitches by 2011. The policy states that local authorities should achieve the levels of provision required by 2011 as soon as possible through development control decisions and Development Plan Documents. Beyond 2011 provision should be made for an annual 3% compound increase in residential pitch provision which for Braintree equates to a further 8 pitches by 2016 and a further 9 pitches by 2021. The policy states that Development Plan Documents should consider the need for rural exception sites, where necessary, to meet the required provision. A schedule setting out the requirements for all Essex Districts and neighbouring authorities is attached at Appendix 1.
3. For transit sites the policy states that local authorities should work together to establish a network of transit pitches with 30 additional transit pitches required for Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock between 2006 and 2011.
4. Policy H4 of the review deals with provision for travelling showpeople and sets out a requirement for an additional 103 plots in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock between 2006 and 2011. It will be necessary to work with the other Essex authorities, with local travelling showpeople and with the Showmen's Guild to identify the sites required to meet these needs for inclusion in Development Plan Documents.

5. The Council therefore now has to decide how to meet the required provision for the District for gypsies and travellers of a minimum of an additional 25 pitches before 2011 and a further 17 pitches for the period 2011 – 2021.
6. The existing authorised sites in the District are at Yeldham Road, Ridgewell and Sandiacres, Cressing. The Sandiacres site is in the ownership of Essex County Council and planning permission was granted earlier this year for an additional 2 pitches on this site. The largest unauthorised site in the District is at Twin Oaks, Coggeshall Road, Stisted. This site was considered at Cabinet on 7th July 2008 and it was agreed (minute 31):
 - 1) That the principle of bringing the site at Twin Oaks, Stisted forward as an authorised site be agreed and discussions are held with the landowners on the submission of a planning application and the delivery of the site
 - 2) That options for additional sites to meet the District's needs beyond 2011 be investigated when the requirements for the District have been confirmed by the Regional Spatial Strategy review
7. Since July 2008 officers have been seeking to progress a planning application for the Twin Oaks site. There have been a number of difficulties with this as a result of Twin Oaks 1 and 2 being in separate ownerships, with each having a different planning agent. In view of the lack of progress the owners have now agreed to appoint the same planning agent to act for them jointly. This agent is now in discussion with officers on the content of a planning application and positive progress is now being made. It is intended that this will be discussed with the local Parish Councils prior to the application being submitted.
8. Subject to planning permission being granted for the Twin Oaks site, this will leave a remaining balance of 2 pitches to be identified for the period to 2011, a further 8 pitches by 2016 and a further 9 pitches by 2021. It is proposed that these sites will be identified through the local development framework process as part of the Allocations Document or through the development control process if planning applications on appropriate sites come forward.

Corporate Implications			
Financial:	There are unlikely to be any direct costs arising from this decision but there are costs associated with the preparation of the local development framework which are being met from base budgets and housing and planning delivery grant		
Legal:	The Council has a statutory duty to assess the need for gypsy and traveller accommodation in the District and to develop a strategy for meeting that need		
Equalities & Diversity:	Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised ethnic groups. The Council has a duty to promote good race relations, equality of opportunity and community cohesion in all of their policies and practices.		
Customer Impact:	There may some impact on local residents		
Environment & Climate Change:	Sustainability issues will be addressed as part of any planning application		
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Local Committees		Partners – Local Parish Councils
	Public		Staff
Key Decision:	No		
Public/Private Report:	Public		
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Appendix 1

<i>District</i>	<i>Authorised Pitches in January 2006</i>	<i>Minimum Additional Pitches 2006-2011</i>	<i>Minimum Pitches 2011</i>
Basildon	112	62	174
Braintree	25	25	50
Brentwood	10	15	25
Castle Point	0	15	15
Chelmsford	35	46	81
Colchester	5	25	30
Epping Forest	94	34	128
Harlow	34	15	49
Maldon	39	15	54
Rochford	3	15	18
Tendring	2	15	17
Uttlesford	37	25	62
Southend	0	15	15
Thurrock	80	44	124
Babergh	0	15	15
St Edmundsbury	2	20	22
South Cambridgeshire	203	69	272