

Questions for the Options for Consultation on the Regional Spatial Strategy – Gypsy & Travellers

Introduction

This questionnaire has been made available in this format to enable you to think about or discuss your responses off line. Your comments can be recorded by completing SECTION 3 of this document. Please return to the consultation web site to up-load your final answers or post your responses to:

North West Plan Partial Review

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Section 1: Issues to be addressed

What are the key issues that need to be considered for the Partial Review?

The Government has made clear that it views this issue as an integral part of the wider housing agenda to tackle affordability and homelessness issues. The Housing Act 2004 coupled with ODPM Planning Circular 01/2006 "Planning For Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites", put in place a framework for identifying and providing sites to meet the accommodation needs of the Gypsy & Traveller community. In light of this the Partial Review will set out separate figures for Gypsies & Traveller for each district, on the required provision (number of pitches).

What is the difference between a site and a pitch? A site is an authorised area of land on which Gypsies and Travellers are accommodated in trailers / chalets / vehicles / caravans on a number of pitches. A site will be subdivided into a number of pitches (or plots). Each pitch will generally be home to one licensee household. A pitch can be varying sizes and have varying caravan occupancy levels. There is no agreed definition as to the size of a pitch.

The Partial Review of RSS will be informed by the results of a series of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) undertaken in the region.

In July 2007, the Assembly and partners published the results of GTAA's for the North West¹, Lancashire and Cheshire. Currently (as at May 2008) sub regional

¹ "North West Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment" SHUSU, July 2007.

GTAA's are being prepared for Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. At the time of the regional survey, in the North West, there were:

- 299 pitches on local authority owned land (located on 14 residential sites and 1 transit site - 2 of which are managed by the Gypsy Council, the remainder are managed by the local authorities concerned)
- approximately 779 pitches on 57 'known' private authorised sites;
- a minimum of 11 unauthorised developments containing approximately 29 pitches;
- a minimum of 36 families on unauthorised encampments; and
- at least 109 households in bricks and mortar housing (a likely underestimate).

In all there was a very minimum of 1252 Gypsy/Traveller families on sites, in houses or encamped at the time of the survey. The survey itself accounts for 926 members of the Gypsy and Travelling community. The average household size was 3.8 persons, larger than the average in the settled community. Based on this information it is estimated that the total Gypsy and Traveller population of the North West region is around 4,758 people.

According to data held by the local authorities there was a total of just under 650 incidents of unauthorised encampments over the period 2005/06. However, only 59% of authorities held comprehensive records on the number of encampments occurring within their districts. According to the regional survey of Gypsies and Travellers, around six out of ten households on unauthorised encampments were actively looking for somewhere more stable and secure to live within the North West. Half of all those Gypsies and Travellers who were encamped at the time of the survey considered the place where they pulled on as inappropriate for their needs, largely due to feelings of insecurity and environmental considerations (i.e. industrial areas, near roads, near waste grounds). Those households on unauthorised encampments had very poor living conditions, lacking access to water, toilets, showers or waste disposal; under one in two unauthorised encampments had access to electricity.

As a consequence results from the North West GTAA, identified the following need.

| Sub-region | Current authorised provision | Total additional residential need | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | 2006-2011 | 2011-2016 | 2006- 2016 |
| Cheshire | 300 | 79 – 112 | 61 - 66 | 140 – 177 |
| Cumbria | 224 | 12 | 30 | 42 |
| Greater Manchester | 610 | 87 | 54 | 141 |
| Lancashire | 403 | 126 – 147 | 79 - 84 | 205 – 231 |
| Merseyside | 30 | 28 | 9 | 37 |
| North West Total | 1,567 | 332-386 | 209-213 | 565-628 |

In addition there is a need for the development of between at least **55-139 transit pitches** to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers in transit, in order to cater for the variety of needs, especially reflecting the seasonal increases in travelling (i.e. travelling in late spring, summer and early autumn).

However these figures should not be interpreted directly into the policy provision of pitches across the region. The methodology used in the GTAA's was based on CLG guidance and best practice). This has been done on a 'need where it is seen to arise' basis. Thus findings reflect the historical inequalities in pitch provision, Gypsies & Travellers have constrained choices as to where and how they would choose to live if they had real choice, compared to choices for the non-Travelling community which are generally much wider. Over time, this has inevitably meant that Gypsies & Travellers have generally moved to areas they see offering the best life chances; for example, an area which is perceived as having more authorised sites than others; or, an area that is attractive in some other way (slower enforcement, transport links, friend and family resident, etc.).

Therefore, there is a tendency when the need for additional accommodation is assessed, for the needs assessment to further compound these inequalities in site provision. For example, authorities which already provide Gypsy and Traveller accommodation (publicly or privately) are assessed as having greater need for additional pitch provision than authorities with little or no pitch provision. This is compounded further the longer-term the assessment is made (i.e. to 2016)

Raising Wider Awareness of Gypsy & Traveller Issues via the "Somewhere to Live" DVD

Given the controversial nature of the topic and the diverse communities involved, it is important to engage a wide range of stakeholders and public in this aspect of the Partial Reviews. However there are many diverse and sometimes extreme views, myths and misconceptions surrounding the Gypsy & Traveller communities. The Assembly has commissioned a short film entitled "*Somewhere to Live*", which it is hoped will play an important part in raising awareness of key issues in a positive, engaging and educational way including:

- How legal sites offer a better physical environment for Gypsies & Travellers (eg water, power etc) and access to services such as schools, doctors etc
- Benefits of closer integration with settled community, reducing isolation and marginalisation for Gypsies & Travellers
- Benefits of access to services such as schools, doctors resulting in improvement of health, life expectancy for Gypsies & Travellers
- Reduction in illegal camping improves the quality of life of every community
- Resource and costs savings for local authorities/ police in enforcing and cleaning up illegal encampments.

You can watch the short film on the Assembly website at:
http://www.nwra.gov.uk/whatsnew/?page_id=417

Section 2: What has been decided

The RSS will specify pitch numbers required (but not their location) for each local planning authority (LPA), in light of the GTAA's conducted and a strategic view of need, supply and demand across the region is taken. The local planning authority's relevant Development Planning Document (DPD) – part of the Local Development Framework, will then need to identify specific sites to match pitch numbers from the RSS.

In order to adapt to current working and living patterns of Gypsies & Travellers, the RSS policy will seek to promote the establishment of a mix of permanent and transit provision.

Section 3: Options for Consultation

What are the options that need to be consulted upon in the Partial Review?

Option 1

Use the results from the studies to distribute new provision based on the existing identified '*need where it arises*' basis.

[However this approach does have some drawbacks as noted above as it tends to reinforce current provision patterns, since the existing distribution of the communities – often patchy across a region\ sub region – determines where future need arises (ie provision is only made in some not every district across the region)].

Question 1

1.1. Do you agree with the above option?

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| Yes | (go to 1.1a) |
| In part | (go to 1.1c) |
| No | (go to 1.1b) |
| Don't know | (go to 1.1c) |

1.1a. If so why?

1.1b. If not, why not?

1.1c. Please explain your answer to Question 1.1?

1.2. What other policy changes are required to RSS to deliver this option and why?

1.3. In taking forward this option, what are the implications for:

A) Delivery?

B) Infrastructure provision?

C) Community and social issues?

D) Environment?

E) Economy?

Option 2

Use the results from the studies to distribute new provision based on the existing identified '*need where it arises*' basis and then modify the figures (upwards or downwards as appropriate) to ensure a minimum level of pitch provision in every district.

Question 2

2.1. Do you agree with the above option?

- Yes (go to 2.1a)
- In part (go to 2.1c)
- No (go to 2.1b)
- Don't know (go to 2.1c)

2.1a. If so why?

2.1b. If not, why not?

2.1c. Please explain your answer to Question 2.1?

2.2. What other policy changes are required to RSS to deliver this option and why?

2.3. In taking forward this option, what are the implications for:

A) Delivery?

B) Infrastructure provision?

C) Community and social issues?

D) Environment?

E) Economy?

Option 3

Working with sub-regional partnerships and the Gypsy & Traveller Community agree a more balanced share of meeting need across districts, reflecting a wider range of factors other than solely the *'need where it arises'* basis. This would see pitch provision distributed to meet the requirements for Gypsies & Travellers, so that they had the same chance to enjoy equal (or comparable) access to services and facilities, social and economic opportunities, as the settled community, and thus contribute towards community cohesion and sustainable communities.

Question 3

3.1. Do you agree with the above option?

- Yes (go to 3.1a)
- In part (go to 3.1c)
- No (go to 3.1b)
- Don't know (go to 3.1c)

3.1a. If so why?

3.1b. If not, why not?

3.1c. Please explain your answer to Question 3.1?

3.2. What other policy changes are required to RSS to deliver this option and why?

3.3. In taking forward this option, what are the implications for:

A) Delivery?

B) Infrastructure provision?

C) Community and social issues?

D) Environment?

E) Economy?

Section 4: Sustainability Appraisal/ Habitats Regulations Assessment/ Equalities Impact Assessment/ Health Impact Assessment/ Rural Proofing considerations

The Government has made clear that it views this issue as an integral part of the wider housing agenda to tackle affordability and homelessness issues, particularly given the inappropriate living conditions on unauthorised encampments. Consideration needs to be made as to the best location of pitches, with a need to take into account provision of, and easy access to, key services such as health and education.

In doing so the Partial Review will need to take consider specific aspects of the following documents.

| | |
|---|--|
| Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites. ODPM Circular 01/2006 | Issues of sustainability for sites are important and so should be considered, including tranquillity, access to services and schools, provision of a settled base, locating sites away from floodplains. |
| Action for Equality Strategy (2005) | The RSS should seek to promote equality for all sections of the North West community. At a spatial level this can be supported through the provision of accessible services (including in housing), facilities and economic opportunities, ensuring that new development supports and where appropriate enhances existing facilities. The Plan should support delivery of joined up action for social inclusion in relation to the focus policies for the partial review |
| Northwest Equality and Diversity Strategy & Implementation Plan 2006-9 | The Plan should contribute towards achieving the objectives of : Promoting Diversity as a Regional Asset (NWRA |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>is lead agency)</p> <p>Economic Participation for All</p> |
| <p>North West Regional Assembly 'Single Equality Scheme' (2008)</p> | <p>The Partial Review should contribute towards meeting the rights to equality and non-discrimination in relation to housing and other services (such as those provided in key service centres) and employment</p> <p>The Partial Review should contribute towards achieving a more cohesive society, particularly in relation to housing and key service centres</p> |
| <p>The North West Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessments, 2007</p> | <p>Need to contribute to meeting the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers, with particular regard to duties under Race Equality legislation, but also in relation to other equality groups amongst the gypsy and traveller communities (women, children, disabled, older people)</p> |
| <p>Committed to Inclusion, Accepting the Challenge: The NW & Disability</p> | <p>Should ensure that the needs of disabled people are specifically considered in relation to housing, growth points and eco-towns regarding economic development and employment and transport and infrastructure.</p> |