

Questions for the Options for Consultation on the Regional Spatial Strategy – Travelling Showpeople

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 CLG Planning Circular 04/2007 “Planning for Travelling Showpeople”, put in place a framework for identifying and providing sites to meet the accommodation needs of the Travelling Showpeople community. In light of this the Partial Review will set out separate figures for Travelling Showpeople for each district, on the required provision (number of pitches).

What is the difference between a site and a pitch (also know by Showmen as yards)? A site is an authorised area of land on which Travelling Showpeople are accommodated in trailers / chalets / vehicles / caravans alongside their equipment / rides / stalls / vehicles on a number of pitches. A site will be subdivided into a number of pitches (or yards). Each pitch will generally be home to one household. A pitch can be differing in size and have varying caravan and equipment occupancy levels. There is no agreed definition as to the size of a pitch, though they are generally larger in requirement than pitches for Gypsies & Travellers. Historically in the region pitches sizes have been too small leading to overcrowding , doubling up and associated problems relating to: illegal parking on surrounding streets; fire hazard, health & safety. The Showman’s Guild of Great Britain advocate that new provision should be on the basis of 10 pitches (or yards) per acre to ensure that each household can accommodate all its residential accommodation plus vehicles and equipment on site.

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 (which include assessments Travelling Showpeople accommodation needs).

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 GTAA's are being prepared for Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

In order to provide more context and accuracy around the accommodation situation of Travelling Showpeople, the North West GTAA was informed by a study commissioned by the Lancashire section of the Showmen's Guild into the accommodation situation of the community across the North West region².

According to local authority records, sites for Travelling Showpeople are provided in thirteen authorities. One of these failed to provide any further information. There are 25 sites in the eleven authorities providing full details, together providing approximately 385 pitches. According to the Showman's Guild there are no sites for Travelling Showpeople in Merseyside. Of the twelve authorities, five have a single site, three have two sites, three have three sites and one has seven. The authorities with three or more sites are Bolton, Manchester, Salford and Wigan. The distribution of Showpeople sites is much more concentrated than that of Gypsy and Traveller sites, and much more focussed on the Greater Manchester conurbation. Sites range in size from one to 51 pitches. The average size is fifteen pitches. Based on the information provided by the Showmen's Guild, however, the total number of authorised sites equates to 27, providing in the region of 491 authorised pitches. Clearly there is some disparity between this information.

In an attempt to identify current suppressed household need and overcrowding the North West GTAA identified how many pitches included doubled-up households who would ideally like a separate pitch or home of their own. In total, there were 105 doubled-up households identified: Cheshire (5); Cumbria (8); Greater Manchester (90); and, Lancashire (2).

What makes Travelling Showpeople site different from Gypsy & Traveller sites is that Travelling Showpeople's equipment is often stored on the site where they live. This can produce problems, as sites quickly became overcrowded with equipment and living quarters. More general tools and machinery were also often stored on site. Most Travelling Showpeople on sites in the region, have identified a need for more space in order to store all their belongings more securely and safely. This onsite equipment and vehicle overcrowding is a major issue for Travelling Showpeople, as this has an impact on the number of pitches which are available to accommodate households (as vehicles are stored on non-occupied pitches instead) and vehicles may also spill over on to the area outside of the

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

² "The Accommodation Situation of Showmen in the Northwest", The Showmen's Guild, Lancashire Section, April 2007. Although it must be noted that there will be a small number of Travelling Showpeople who operate fairs and shows, but are not members of the Showmen's Guild

site. Within the North West 31 pitches are lost due to vehicle overcrowding: Cheshire (6); Cumbria (1); Greater Manchester (22); and, Lancashire (2).

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

	Total additional residential need	
	2006-2011	2011-2016
North West Total	190	59
Sub-region		
	Total additional residential need 2006-2011	
Cheshire	17	
Cumbria	16	
Greater Manchester	149	
Lancashire	7	
Merseyside	0	
<i>Source: "North West Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment" SHUSU, July 2007.</i>		

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, Travelling Showpeople 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 Travelling Showpeople 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.

When developing new site provision for Travelling Showpeople it is important that RSS takes a strategic view of allocation of sites which accommodates logistical issues (i.e. travelling with large equipment) and the pattern of fun fairs across the area. To assist in this process the Assembly has been working with the Showman's Guild to collate information on the working \ travelling patterns of Showman's Guild members in the region over a calendar year³.

³ Such patterns will be heavily influenced by the location of Fairs within the region.

Raising Wider Awareness of Travelling Showpeople 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 Travelling Showpeople and 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 Travelling Showpeople (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 (including Travelling Showpeople)
- Benefits of access to services such as schools, doctors resulting in improvement of health, life expectancy for Gypsies & Travellers (including Travelling Showpeople)
- 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 Travelling Showpeople, the RSS policy will seek to promote the establishment of permanent provision rather than temporary accommodation.

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].

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) based on initial advice from the Showman's Guild on their members locational preferences resulting from their specific business operational activities.

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 Showman’s Guild 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 Travelling Showpeople, 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.

CLG Planning Circular 04/2007 “Planning for Travelling Showpeople”	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 is lead agency) Economic Participation for All
North West Regional Assembly ‘Single Equality Scheme’ (2008)	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 The Partial Review should contribute towards achieving a more cohesive society, particularly in relation to housing and key service centres
The North West Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessments, 2007	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)
Committed to Inclusion, Accepting the Challenge: The NW & Disability	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.