



Document Reference
PS.EVR7

East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Policy LP7 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites

November 2017

Contents

1.	Introduction and Policy Context.....	1
2.	East Cambridgeshire Context in Relation to Policy LP7.....	2
3.	Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft.....	2
4.	Local Plan Policy: Further Draft.....	3
5.	Alternative Reasonable Options.....	3
6.	Conclusion	3

1. Introduction and Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1 East Cambridgeshire District Council is reviewing its Local Plan, which was last adopted in April 2015. The new Local Plan, which is hoped to be adopted in 2018, will provide a framework for development in the district until 2036 and beyond.
- 1.2 This Evidence Report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for policy LP7 (of the Proposed Submission Local Plan, November 2017), which relates to Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

National policy

- 1.3 In March 2012 Government adopted the 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' (PPTS) which set out national policy for planning for traveller sites. This policy was superseded on 31 August 2015 by the publication of a revised policy document of the same title and in most respects the same content.
- 1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012) is also relevant and states that Local Plans should identify and meet objectively assessed housing needs (paras 14 and 17); be based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence (para 158); and that local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area and address the needs for all types of housing (para 159).
- 1.5 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was introduced in 2014 which offers 'live' government guidance: at the time of writing this report, the NPPG did not feature any specific guidance on Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. This issue is generally covered in providing housing for all sections of the community.
- 1.6 The PPTS consists of policies on using evidence, plan making and decision taking. The following paragraphs and policies in particular relate to allocating sites for travellers:
 - Paragraph 4 - Government's aims in respect of traveller sites are... to ensure that local planning authorities ... develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites; to encourage local planning authorities to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale; ... to promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites; to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply...
 - Policy B (para 10) - Local planning authorities should, in producing their Local Plan:
 - a) identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against their locally set targets
 - b) identify a supply of specific, developable sites, or broad locations for growth, for years 6 to 10 and, where possible, for years 11-15
 - c) consider production of joint development plans that set targets on a cross-authority basis, to provide more flexibility in identifying sites...
 - Policy B (para 11) - Criteria should be set to guide land supply allocations where there is identified need.
 - Policy D (para 15) - If there is a lack of affordable land to meet local traveller needs, local planning authorities in rural areas, where viable and practical, should consider allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable traveller sites. This may include using a rural exception site policy for traveller sites that should also be used to manage applications.

- Policy F (para 18) - Local planning authorities should consider, wherever possible, including traveller sites suitable for mixed residential and business uses, having regard to the safety and amenity of the occupants and neighbouring residents.

1.7 The above NPPF policy and NPPG guidance has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP7 in particular.

2 East Cambridgeshire Context in Relation to Policy LP7

2.1 The Gypsy and Traveller community in East Cambridgeshire is long established. As at October 2016, there are 3 public sites with 29 pitches; 40 private sites with permanent planning permission with 105 pitches; no sites with temporary planning permission; 10 sites that are tolerated for planning purposes with 18 pitches; no unauthorised sites; and 9 private Travelling Showpeople yards with 20 plots. There is no transit provision in East Cambridgeshire. Other families live in permanent 'bricks and mortar' dwellings.

2.2 The provision of additional permanent pitches can be achieved through the allocation of sites in the Local Plan or through the normal process of the submission of a planning application and the granting of planning permission. Any proposals must take into account the NPPF and the national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (August 2015).

2.3 A comprehensive Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was prepared over 2016, and published in October 2016. This report sets out a wealth of information on current provision and future needs for Gypsy and Travellers. In summary, the GTAA

- Engaged with a range of stakeholders (see GTAA chapter 5)
- Used a range of existing data sources (GTAA paragraph 3.6)
- Provided a specialist survey, and sought to survey all authorised and unauthorised sites (GTAA 3.9 to 3.13 and chapter 6)
- Identified households that were in current need either immediately or in the foreseeable future (see GTAA 3.33, and chapter 7)
- Considered future need (GTAA 3.34 to 3.36, and chapter 7).

See:

<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2016%2010%2005%20Cambridgshire%20GTAA%20Final%20Report.pdf>

3 Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft

3.1 The Preliminary Draft Local Plan (February 2016) contained a policy entitled "Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople". A number of representations were made on the policy, and in summary the key issues raised for the policy were:

- Support for the policy in its approach to protect and enhance the natural environment, including biodiversity, landscape and Best and Most Versatile land.
- Gypsies and Travellers site on First Drove in Burwell should not be re-opened. It was never seen as suitable by either residents in Burwell or Travellers because of its position.

3.2 We have not taken forward the suggestion to review the Gypsy and Travellers site in Burwell, because the Local Plan is not proposing to allocate the site for any other form of development.

3.3 The Council has worked with neighbouring districts in order to prepare the aforementioned new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) to support the East

Cambridgeshire Local Plan. The new GTAA study was published in autumn 2016 and identifies no need for additional pitches to be allocated, though the possibility of provision might be needed for those families which do not meet the definition of being a Gypsy and Traveller.

- 3.4 The Council's response to this up to date evidence is, therefore, to maintain the two small allocations as adopted in the current Local Plan (2015) together with a positive framework for considering other 'windfall' proposals on unallocated sites. This positive criteria based framework will ensure that any 'unknown' Gypsy and Traveller families in need of a new pitch can be accommodated on appropriate sites, should proposals come forward.
- 3.5 Similarly, for Travelling Showpeople, the GTAA identified only a very small need, and none until at least 2026. Again, therefore, the criteria based approach is appropriate.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 The wording of the policy and supporting text in the Further Draft version of the Local Plan was unchanged from the Preliminary Draft, as set out above. The Further Draft was published for consultation in January – February 2017.
- 4.2 Only one comment was received during the Further Draft consultation. In summary, the comment expressed broad support for the policy, in relation to the inclusion of protection of the natural environment and agricultural land quality.
- 4.3 No substantive amendments have been made to the policy or the supporting text following the Further Draft consultation. However, a new supporting text paragraph is added in relation to Travelling Showpeople, as this context was previously missing. That paragraph summarises the findings of the GTAA, and explains that whilst the GTAA identifies the possibility of a very low level of need beyond 2026 for Travelling Showpeople plots, and that no sites were suggested to the council, therefore a pragmatic and proportionate response is to provide a criteria based policy upon which any proposals which come forward can be assessed.
- 4.4 In addition, the policy has a new criteria, so as to make it clear that applicants (or future occupiers) wanting proposals to be considered under the policy, must meet the national planning definition of a Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showperson. This will avoid any confusion, and align with national policy.

5 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been considered for this policy. (Option 1 is the preferred policy approach which has been included in the Proposed Submission Local Plan.)
- 5.2 **Option 2: No policy, and rely on national policy for this subject.** Relying on national policy will provide some benefits as a detailed national policy framework exists, but greater clarity and certainty can be achieved by having a specific policy in the Local Plan. Criteria based policy will also help to assess any windfall sites for Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople that may come forward during the plan period (including meeting the needs of any 'unknown' Gypsy and Travellers).
- 5.3 **Option 3: Allocate further specific sites.** This is not deemed appropriate, as the evidence suggests there is no clear identified need for further Gypsy and Traveller pitches and only a very low need beyond 2026 for increased Travelling Showpeople provision. Instead, a criteria based approach (option 1) is the more appropriate.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the policy as contained in the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan (November 2017). It is hoped this helps

demonstrate how we have responded to comments received during the consultation stages, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.