

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

**FROM: Head of Community Development
and Head of the Natural and Built
Environment**

REPORT NUMBER: G213

TO: STRATEGY

DATE OF MEETING: 6 March 2008

**GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES - CONSULTATION ON NEW PLANNING
PROPOSALS FROM THE EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report informs Committee about proposals to increase the number of Gypsy and Traveller caravan pitches in the region by 2011 and the impact this will have for Babergh. These matters are subject to a 12- week period of consultation commencing in February 2008 and arrangements must be put in place to ensure that Babergh provides an appropriate response.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That delegated authority be given to the Head of the Natural and Built Environment in consultation with the Head of Community Development, and the Chairman of Strategy Committee, to respond to the recommendations within the consultation period under delegated powers.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation.

4. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Business Risk No. 8, the management of major programme or projects.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Seriousness or Impact	Mitigation Measures
That Babergh is unable to respond to the consultation and has no opportunity to shape the outcome	Almost impossible	Marginal	Officers are reporting to this Committee with a clear plan and assigned responsibilities to deal with this matter

5. **KEY INFORMATION**

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments

- 5.1 The government imposed a legal duty on local authorities to undertake a survey of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers within the Housing Act 2004. These Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTTA's) were designed to develop and implement strategies to respond to the needs of these communities.
- 5.2 Babergh's GTTA was commissioned with 4 other authorities within Suffolk (Waveney, Mid Suffolk, Ipswich and Suffolk Coastal) and the results published in May 2007.
- 5.3 The GTTA report makes 40 detailed recommendations covering a wide range of issues. However, there were two key housing recommendations. These are to:
 - Provide 1 permanent residential pitch within the District by 2010 or earlier. This assumes a rounding up of the 0.22 pitch calculation. A pitch is defined as an area of land where a number of caravans can be sited with a range of suitable amenities for those who live there and which include a water supply, shared toilets, washing facilities and waste disposal. The average number of caravans on each pitch is assumed to be 1.7
 - Provide between 8 and 12 temporary transit pitches. This is based on a common need for 60 pitches within the study area. These are temporary stopping places, which should reflect traditional travelling routes and which provide a range of amenities for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 5.4 The report concluded that we could meet the need for one pitch in Babergh by way of shared provision with a neighbouring authority. The report allocated a significant need to Ipswich and Mid Suffolk councils so these authorities are likely to be looking to provide new or revised sites within their boundaries, so are obvious candidates for a joint approach.
- 5.5 Committee were informed about these outcomes within the Housing Panel's 2007 report (**Paper G92**) and recommended that Babergh works with neighbouring local authorities to assess the best way of jointly meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers

The East of England Regional Assembly Mini Regional Spatial Strategy

- 5.6 At the same time our local GTTA study was being published, the government issued directions to the East of England Regional Assembly to review its regional planning policy on Gypsy's and Travellers.
- 5.7 This led to an Issues and Options Report which went out to public consultation in May 2007. The issues and options that EERA provided for consideration addressed 3 key matters:
 - The scale of pitch provision appropriate across the region
 - The overall distribution of pitch provision.
 - The delivery and Implementation Issues

5.8 EERA developed two different distribution and delivery options as follows:

Option 1:

5.9 This option suggested that the scale of provision should be based on the local GTTA study findings. In Babergh's case this would have meant that we would not need to develop any permanent pitches following the rounding down of the identified 0.22 pitch requirement.

Option 2:

5.10 This option suggested that all of the 54 local authorities in the eastern region should assume a collective responsibility for site provision based on the assumed need for 1,187 new pitches. This would mean that each authority would have to provide a minimum of 15 new pitches with more where there is a higher level of need.

5.11 The Council's Planning Policy Manager responded to the consultation in July 2007 by confirming Babergh's view that there was little needs based evidence that an increased supply of pitches could be justified, particularly given the recent GTTA recommendations that were based upon robust fieldwork and needs based methodology. The response therefore rejected option 2 in favour of option 1.

Consultation on the options

5.12 Following consideration of the responses to the consultation and updated information, the Regional Planning Panel at its meeting on 12th December 2007 endorsed option 2. This recommends a slightly revised figure of 1,190 as a robust estimate of the additional pitches required by 2011. The Regional Assembly met on 25th January 2008 and endorsed this decision.

5.13 EERA have confirmed that they will now enter a 12- week period of further consultation commencing in late February 2008. They will then be required to carry out a detailed examination in public by planning inspectors in late 2008.

5.14 Officers do not yet have further details of how this consultation will be conducted or the type of issues that would be taken into account. The consultation period does not fall conveniently within the Strategy committee meeting cycle and this therefore prevents officers from seeking the endorsement of Committee before Babergh's response is submitted. Hence it is recommended that authority is delegated to officers, in consultation with the Chairman of Strategy Committee, to respond to the consultation. Subject to the views of this committee, Babergh's response would be based on our existing approach to this matter, i.e. that the provision of gypsy and traveller accommodation should be based on the clear evidence of need within each district, i.e. Option 1 above.

6. **APPENDIX**

(a) Table showing the recommended number of additional pitches required within Suffolk.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

None

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Table showing a comparison between:

- Number of local authority and private owned authorised pitches existing in January 2006.
- Policy agreed by the East of England Regional Assembly on 25th January 2008.

County	Authorised pitches in 2006	Recommended number of additional caravan pitches by 2011
Suffolk	169	151
Babergh	0	15
Forest Heath	35	18
Ipswich	43	15
Mid Suffolk	69	42
St Edmundsbury	2	15
Suffolk Coastal	0	31
Waveney	20	15