

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Sub Committee 17 March 2009
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LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK GYPSY AND TRAVELLER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD) PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide details of progress made on production of the Gypsy and Traveller DPD.

Background

2. In response to Government guidance the Council has commenced production of a Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document. This will implement the emerging East of England Plan Gypsy and Traveller policy at district level and is intended to provide a vision for the future of Gypsies and Travellers in South Cambridgeshire. It will address the full range of land use and planning issues that need to be taken into account when considering proposals for Gypsy and Traveller sites. It will also identify a number of specific sites to be allocated for development as Traveller and Gypsy sites.
3. The plan making process began in October 2006 when the 'Issues and Options Report 1: General Approach' was subject to consultation. This sought feedback on the criteria the Council could use for identifying new sites. The Council considered all the representations, and developed a set of criteria to test potential new sites against. Since that time the plan programme has been subject to delay.

Timetable

4. When production of the DPD was originally commenced by the Council, it was intended that it would be prepared by independent consultants, as there was no capacity at that time in the Council's Planning Policy Team, who were committed on other LDF documents, and the Council wished to start work on this DPD as a corporate priority. The consultants appointed prepared the first Issues and Options Report on principles for the DPD which was subject to public participation.
5. The second stage of public participation on a further round of issues and options on site options was originally programmed for 2007. The consultants were to undertake this work. However, it became clear that the initial draft work was not of sufficient quality that it could be recommended by officers for publication by the Council. In response, the policy team attempted to provide a clearer steer and more assistance to the consultants. This was of a much greater level of officer involvement in guiding consultants that would normally have been expected. However, given the pressure of work for the policy team on other issues, in particular the series of 6 DPD examinations, this proved difficult.

6. In June 2008 the decision was taken to part company with the consultants, and undertake the work fully in-house. This was on the basis that work undertaken by that time was not of sufficient quality despite the considerable officer time to steer it and it became clear it would be more efficient and produce a better quality plan to bring the plan preparation process back in-house and use consultants for other projects to free up officer capacity. The remainder of the plan is now being prepared directly by the Council's Planning Policy Team.
7. The programme was further delayed when the policy team had to address unexpected work including the Site Specific Policies Housing shortfall and the Eco-Towns consultation. Resources have now been directed to the Gypsy and Traveller DPD, but it should also be noted that there are other competing demands on the policy team, including Site Specific Policies DPD Housing Shortfall, North West Cambridge AAP, East of England Plan, and responding to the A14 Improvement proposals.

The Next Steps

8. The next stage of the plan preparation process will be consultation on an 'Issues and Options 2: Site Options' document. This will include potential site options for allocation as Gypsy and Traveller sites, and to provide a further opportunity for site options to be suggested.
9. Tasks currently being undertaken to prepare the documents include:
 - Identification of site options for testing
 - Testing options against detailed assessment criteria and collating information, including detailed information from other teams including Environmental Health.
 - Consultation with Statutory Bodies, including for example the County Council, and the Primary Care Trust.
 - Drafting new planning policies.
 - Developing approaches to enable successful and inclusive public participation.
10. Once approved by Cabinet, the Issues and Options 2 document will be subject to a six-week period of public participation. It is the intention that this consultation is completed before the start of August. An exact date for the meeting to agree the document for consultation has yet to be identified. There are a number of issues currently being resolved which make it difficult to commit to a specific date at this stage.
11. A detailed programme for completion of the DPD will be included in the revised Local Development Scheme. The Scheme is being considered at the Planning and New Communities Portfolio Holders' meeting on 10 March 2009. The scheme reflects the early stages described above, and following further public consultation proposes submission of the DPD to the Secretary of State in October 2010, and adoption in September 2011.

Implications

12. Financial	Funding will be required to support the consultation and examination stages of the plan making process.
Legal	The DPD will include policies for consideration of planning applications.
Staffing	Staffing will be required to draft the DPD, undertake consultation and provide evidence at the subsequent examination.
Risk Management	
Equal Opportunities	Our Traveller population is our largest ethnic group

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

13.	Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future
	The Council is working to meet Traveller's needs while respecting those of the settled community The DPD will be prepared in consultation with a number of statutory bodies, and be subject to public participation.
	Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community
	The DPD will include policies and allocate sites for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, which will need to take account of accessibility of services and facilities.
	Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work
	The DPD will provide a framework of planning policies to guide Gypsy and Traveller development in South Cambridgeshire.

Recommendations

14. It is recommended that the Committee note the report.

Background Papers:

Planning and New Communities Portfolio Holders' meeting agenda 10 March 2009
<http://mg.scams.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.asp?MId=4249>

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