



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the East of England

A Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England



July 2009



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Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
in the East of England*

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July 2009

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Dear Cllr Reynolds

**EAST OF ENGLAND RSS GYPSY AND TRAVELLER REVIEW
PUBLICATION OF FINAL POLICIES**

The Secretary of State has today issued the final policies on Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation in the East of England, resulting from the single issue review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, which was initiated by the Regional Assembly.

We have considered carefully the responses that were made to the consultation on the Proposed Changes to the draft policy submitted by the Regional Assembly. This consideration has resulted in a small number of further changes to those consulted on in the Proposed Changes. These are mainly points of clarification and amendments around the operation of the policy and are published together with the Secretary of State's reasons for making them as part of today's announcement.

The final policies strongly reflect the draft policy produced by the Regional Assembly and I would like to thank the members and officials of the Regional Assembly for their commitment through the various stages of the Gypsy and Traveller review process.

Copies of the final policies are being sent to the local authorities, MPs and MEPs in the East of England. The documents will also be made available for public inspection in libraries across the region and can be downloaded from the Government Office website (www.go-east.gov.uk).

The policies, which now form part of the East of England Plan, provide strategic guidance for local authorities in identifying locations for additional pitches and plots through their Local Development Frameworks as well as through other means. It is essential that the policies are now implemented quickly and effectively and I understand the Regional Assembly is developing a delivery plan showing how this can be achieved. We look forward to seeing this plan as soon as possible and to working with you, the local authorities, the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities, the Homes and Communities Agency and other partners on its delivery.

Shahid Malik

Section 1

Introduction

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 strengthened the role and status of regional planning, introducing Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and making them the top tier of the statutory Development Plan in all regions except London.

This document is the final outcome of a review of the RSS for the East of England. It addresses the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in accordance with the requirements of Government policy in Circular 01/2006, Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites and Circular 04/2007, Planning for Travelling Showpeople. It forms part of the strategic planning framework for the East of England and reflects the Government's commitment to meet the housing needs of the whole community.

Changes to the East of England Plan

The East of England Plan was published by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in May 2008. It covers the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and the former Bedfordshire area. Together with the relevant sections of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, published in March 2005, it constitutes the RSS for the East of England.

The policies and supporting text which follow are now a part of the RSS for the East of England. They replace 'Policy H3 – Provision for Gypsies and Travellers' and paragraphs 5.11 and 5.12 in the East of England Plan.

The policies require local authorities to make provision for additional residential and transit pitches for Gypsy and Traveller caravans and plots for Travelling Showpeople. The policies provide a consistent regional framework to inform the preparation of Local Development Documents, which must be in general conformity with the RSS.

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) agreed in February 2006 to prepare a review of RSS on the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. EERA worked with the region's local authorities to identify the additional pitches required. In partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government it commissioned research¹ to review the local authority Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments and develop a methodology for translating those assessments into pitch requirements.

The results of that research together with advice from local authorities informed an Issues and Options report which EERA published for consultation in mid-2007. In the light of the responses to that consultation and further advice from the local authorities, EERA approved the draft policy 'Regional Spatial Strategy Single Issue Review: Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation in the East of England' which was submitted to the Secretary of State in February 2008 and published for 12 weeks public consultation.

The Secretary of State appointed an independent Panel which held an Examination in Public to test the soundness of the draft policy in Letchworth from 21–24 October 2008. The Panel submitted their Report to the Secretary of State in December 2008.

¹ Preparing Regional Spatial Strategy reviews on Gypsies and Travellers by Regional Planning Bodies, CLG, March 2007

The Secretary of State made decisions on the Panel's recommendations and published Proposed Changes to the draft policy in March 2009 for 8 weeks public consultation.

The process of developing this RSS review has been informed by Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment, and by assessment under the Habitats Regulations, which give effect to the European Habitats Directive.

Section 2

RSS policies on provision of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Policy H3: Provision for Gypsies and Travellers¹

Local authorities should make provision through Development Plan Documents for at least 1,237 net additional residential pitches for Gypsy and Traveller Caravans by 2011 distributed as follows:

<i>District</i>	<i>Authorised Pitches in January 2006</i>	<i>Minimum Additional Pitches 2006–2011</i>	<i>Minimum Pitches 2011</i>
Bedford	20	25	45
Central Bedfordshire	118	80	198
Luton	20	15	35
Cambridge	0	15	15
East Cambridgeshire	59	35	94
Fenland	183	89	272
Huntingdonshire	20	25	45
South Cambridgeshire	203	69	272
Peterborough	95	30	125
Basildon	112	62	174
Braintree	25	25	50
Brentwood	10	15	25
Castle Point	0	15	15
Chelmsford	35	46	81
Colchester	5	25	30
Epping Forest	94	34	128
Harlow	34	15	49
Maldon	39	15	54
Rochford	3	15	18
Tendring	2	15	17
Uttlesford	37	25	62
Southend	0	15	15
Thurrock	80	44	124
Broxbourne	22	18	40
Dacorum	36	20	56
East Hertfordshire	7	25	32

¹ Gypsies and Travellers as defined in ODPM Circular 01/2006, Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites, paragraph 15.

<i>District</i>	<i>Authorised Pitches in January 2006</i>	<i>Minimum Additional Pitches 2006–2011</i>	<i>Minimum Pitches 2011</i>
Hertsmere	35	18	53
North Hertfordshire	6	15	21
St Albans	52	28	80
Stevenage	14	10	24
Three Rivers	11	15	26
Watford	10	10	20
Welwyn Hatfield	51	17	68
Breckland	32	15	47
Broadland	2	15	17
Great Yarmouth	4	15	19
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	93	53	146
North Norfolk	1	15	16
Norwich	18	15	33
South Norfolk	25	28	53
Babergh	0	15	15
Forest Heath	35	18	53
Ipswich	43	15	58
Mid Suffolk	69	42	111
St Edmundsbury	2	20	22
Suffolk Coastal	0	31	31
Waveney	20	15	35
East of England	1,782	1,237	3,019

Local authorities should achieve the levels of provision required by 2011 as soon as possible through development control decisions and Development Plan Documents. The preparation of joint or co-ordinated Development Plan Documents is encouraged and where they are produced, provision can be redistributed across the areas concerned. Opportunities should be taken to secure provision through major developments.

Beyond 2011 provision should be made for an annual 3%² compound increase in residential pitch provision, equivalent to 1,038 additional pitches between 2011 and 2021, distributed on the basis of districts accommodating the same proportion of the regional requirement as in Policy H3 for 2006–11.

Development Plan Documents should consider the need for rural exception sites and the alteration of Green Belt boundaries, where necessary, to meet the required provision.

Local authorities should work together to establish a network of transit pitches. Provision should be made through Development Plan Documents for an additional 160 transit pitches by 2011, distributed as in the table below. The location and size of sites should be defined following local studies.

² The 3% annual compound increase in pitches after 2011 should be calculated based on the total number of pitches required by 2011, i.e. the figures in the third column of the table in Policy H3.

<i>County and unitary groupings</i>	<i>Existing Provision (pitches)</i>	<i>Additional Pitches 2006–11</i>	<i>Locational Guidance</i>
Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton	Nil	10	
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Nil	40	Cambridge area, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough.
Essex, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock	Nil	30	Distributed network aligned with transport routes and urban centres.
Hertfordshire	15	20	Provision in Southern and Western Hertfordshire, complementing the existing South Mimms site, and in Northern and Eastern Hertfordshire.
Norfolk	18	40	Across Norfolk, including Norwich fringe.
Suffolk	Nil	20	Provision should include the Ipswich/Felixstowe area.

- 5.11** There is an urgent need to address the shortage of permanent and transit accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, which creates problems for Gypsy and Traveller communities in terms of access to health, education, employment and other opportunities and can create tensions over the use of pitches without planning permission. This is a national issue, but particularly pressing in the East of England.
- 5.12** The level of provision in Policy H3 reflects the needs of those currently resident on sites without planning permission, natural growth and movements between pitches and other forms of accommodation. The provision of permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches contributes towards meeting local housing targets and pitches provided by local authorities or registered social landlords to affordable housing targets.
- 5.13** Accommodation is concentrated in certain parts of the region. Policy H3 balances providing most additional pitches in those parts of the region where most Gypsies and Travellers currently live with broadening the choice available to families by providing some pitches in all parts of the region which will assist delivery by ensuring all areas contribute to provision.
- 5.14** Delivery of the required pitches by 2011 will provide for the existing backlog. The 3% compound increase in provision will ensure that accommodation will be available to meet continuing needs after 2011.
- 5.15** Development Plan Documents should identify the location and capacity of sites to deliver the pitch requirements in Policy H3 in locations likely to be attractive to the local Gypsy and Traveller communities while avoiding areas at risk of flooding and adverse effects on areas of wildlife and landscape importance. Provision of transit pitches need not only be on sites exclusively for their use; for instance, provision could be delivered alongside or on existing or new permanent sites. Guidance on site location is provided in ODPM Circular 01/2006 and on site layout and design in *Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites*, CLG May 2008. Policies should recognise the diversity of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, for instance, provision of sites for New Travellers may require different forms of site development.
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Policy H4: Provision for Travelling Showpeople³

Local authorities should make provision through Development Plan Documents for 184 net additional plots for Travelling Showpeople by 2011, distributed as in the table below. Beyond 2011 provision should be made for an annual 1.5%⁴ compound increase in plots, equivalent to 94 additional plots between 2011 and 2021, distributed on the basis of counties and unitaries accommodating the same proportion of the regional requirement as in Policy H4 for 2006–11.

<i>County and unitary groupings</i>	<i>Existing Provision (families)</i>	<i>Additional Plots 2006–11</i>	<i>Locational Guidance</i>
Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton	27	13	Bedford and elsewhere
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	54	18	East Cambridgeshire and elsewhere
Essex, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock	166	103	Needs in Thurrock and also Chelmsford, Basildon and elsewhere. Locations should take account of the wider distribution philosophy in paragraph 5.13.
Hertfordshire	60	20	Needs in Broxbourne and also in East Hertfordshire
Norfolk	75	21	Norwich and elsewhere
Suffolk	20	9	Suffolk Coastal and elsewhere

Local authorities should work in county and former county groupings with local Travelling Showpeople and the Showmen's Guild to identify the sites required to meet the above needs for inclusion in Development Plan Documents. The preparation of joint or co-ordinated documents is encouraged.

Development Plan Documents should consider the need for rural exception sites and the alteration of Green Belt boundaries, where necessary, to meet the required provision.

- 5.16** The interim targets in Policy H4 will ensure that the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople in the East of England can be met, as required by CLG Circular 04/2007. The 1.5% compound increase in provision will ensure that accommodation will be available to meet continuing needs after 2011.
- 5.17** Development Plan Documents should identify the location and capacity of sites sufficient to deliver the plot requirements in Policy H4 in locations likely to be attractive to Travelling Showpeople while avoiding areas at risk of flooding and adverse effects on areas of wildlife and landscape importance. Guidance on site location is provided in CLG Circular 04/2007.

³ Travelling Showpeople as defined in CLG Circular 04/2007, Planning for Travelling Showpeople, paragraph 15.

⁴ The 1.5% annual compound increase in plots after 2011 should be calculated based on the total number of plots required by 2011: 40 for Bedfordshire and Luton, 72 for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 269 for Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, 80 for Hertfordshire, 96 for Norfolk and 29 for Suffolk.

Delivery, Monitoring and Review

- 5.18** Delivering 1,237 additional residential pitches, 160 transit pitches and 184 plots for Travelling Showpeople by 2011 poses challenges. The Regional Assembly, local authorities, the Homes and Communities Agency, Gypsy and Traveller communities, the Showmens Guild, registered social landlords and others should work together to ensure delivery. The Regional Assembly are developing a Delivery Plan, which will identify the range of delivery mechanisms and the role of the different agencies in securing delivery. Policy H3 stresses the importance of using opportunities presented by major developments to secure delivery. In this context major developments will vary relative to the range of developments in each district: the objective is to ensure there are opportunities to help secure the required provision in each area.
- 5.19** The Regional Assembly, working with partners, should monitor net changes in numbers of permanent and transit pitches, pitches with temporary permission and unauthorised developments and encampments for Gypsies and Travellers, together with net changes in plots for Travelling Showpeople, for inclusion in its annual monitoring reports.
- 5.20** The Regional Assembly (or its successors, the Regional Development Agency and Local Authority Leaders Board) working with the local authorities should ensure a co-ordinated review of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments across the region and of Policies H3 and H4 in, or as soon as possible after, 2011. The GTAAs should be carried out on a consistent basis and consider the needs of Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar housing, Travelling Showpeople, and New Travellers.
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