



Report to Cabinet

Subject: Consultation on revised planning guidance in relation to Travelling Showpeople

Date: 5 April 2007

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to seek approval for a response to the consultation on a revised planning Circular on sites for Travelling Showpeople.

Background

This document has been produced to replace Circular 22/91 Travelling Showpeople, which, the Government believes, has failed to deliver adequate sites for travelling showpeople. It has been released in the context of the Government's key objective for housing: to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home. The draft Circular defines travelling showpeople as:

Members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such). They include such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding gypsies and travellers.

The major change introduced by this draft Circular is a requirement on local authorities to identify suitable sites for travelling showpeople in their Local Development Documents. Only exceptionally will it be acceptable to meet needs by specifying criteria for the identification of sites without identifying any specific sites. There remains a presumption against sites in the Green Belt (although rural areas are not by definition unacceptable) and locations in or near existing settlements, with access to local services, should be considered first.

Typically a site is of mixed use, comprising areas set aside for the showpeople's accommodation (usually caravans and mobile homes) and areas where vehicles and fairground equipment can be stored, repaired

and tested. This means that the sites do not fit easily into existing land-use categories and are distinct from those of gypsies and travellers. The circular suggests that some of the difficulties showpeople have experienced with the planning system can be attributed to this.

Comments

5. The consultation letter poses a number of questions, which we propose to answer as follows:

6. *Will the Circular be of **benefit to Travelling Showpeople?***

We believe that the Circular will be of benefit to travelling showpeople in those areas where a lack of suitable sites have been identified. We also believe that the Circular provides useful guidance to both local authorities and travelling showpeople in the context of decisions about site allocation and obtaining planning permission. We would hope that the Circular is widely publicised within the travelling showpeople community.

7 *Will the Circular assist local authorities in **preparing** their Development Plan Documents?*

The Circular will assist local authorities in preparing Development Plan documents insofar as it asks new requirements of them. We believe, however, that the level at which the issue of criteria for site allocation is addressed within the Local **Development Framework process** should be reconsidered. The Core Strategy is a strategic document and should not be setting out detailed criteria-based policies such as that proposed in this context. It will be more appropriate for the **Development Control DPD** to take this forward.

We note that the draft Circular requires local authorities to assess accommodation needs as part of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. While this is right and logical we would note that many local authorities, ourselves included, have already completed Assessments based upon existing guidance, which do not take explicit account of the needs of travelling showpeople. We welcome, therefore, the lead to be provided by the Regional Planning Body in this context.

We appreciate guidance on Green Belt allocation and would note that we are unlikely to be alone in facing difficulties in **accommodating** sites, where a need is identified, in rural areas, given that the entire rural area of the borough is Green Belt.

*Is it right that Travelling Showpeople should **have** pitches allocated to them separately from those **allocated to Gypsies and Travellers** in the Regional Spatial Strategy?*

While it may be right that travelling showpeople should have pitches allocated to them separately from gypsies and travellers the Circular does not really provide any robust **explanation** of why this should be so,

particularly given the fact that identification of need is to be made alongside that for gypsies and travellers in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

Is the list of contacts given in Annex A useful?

The list of contacts in Annex A is helpful. *Any*

other comments?

With regard to the statement at paragraph 37 that *where there is an urgent need to make provision, local planning authorities should consider preparing site allocation DPDs in parallel with, or in advance of the core strategy*, we note that all advice we have received from the Planning Inspectorate and our Government Office has been to the contrary i.e. no other DPDs should be submitted for examination in advance of Core Strategy adoption.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet resolve to endorse the above report to form the basis of submission as the Borough Council's response to the Department for Communities and Local Government on its consultation on revised planning guidance on Travelling Showpeople. The deadline for comments is 27 April 2007.

Cllr Paul Feeney.....



Date.....

22nd March 07