

 Executive, 8th June	Agenda Item No. 11
Title	Response to 'Planning for travellers sites' consultation
For further information about this report please contact	Lorna Coldicott, Senior Planner (Policy, Projects & Conservation)
Wards of the District directly affected	All
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A
Background Papers	www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/travellerssitesconsultation

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	09/05/11	Chris Elliott/Bill Hunt
Head of Service	09/05/11	Paul Pinkney
CMT	10/05/11	
Section 151 Officer	09/05/11	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	09/05/11	Paul Pinkney
Finance	09/05/11	Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holder(s)	N/A	
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Final Decision?	Yes	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Government is consulting on the details of a proposed new, single Planning Policy Statement for traveller sites. They have invited comments on the document, particularly from local authorities. This report informs the Executive of the consultation, and considers the Council's response.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Executive notes the Government's 'Planning for traveller sites' consultation and approves the comments set out in bold below in paragraph 3.3 as the basis for the Council's formal response.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Government is consulting on the details of a proposed new, single Planning Policy Statement (PPS) for traveller sites. The proposed PPS will provide the framework for local authorities planning for traveller sites in their area, replacing Circulars 01/06 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites' and 04/2007 'Planning for Travelling Showpeople'. The changes to planning policy for traveller sites proposed in this consultation are designed to give local planning authorities powers to meet needs for site provision in their area, in consultation with local communities, to ensure greater fairness in the planning system, align policy for traveller sites more closely with that for other forms of housing and contribute to a more effective and more streamlined planning system with which local planning authorities and developers can more easily engage.
- 3.2 The PPS when adopted will clearly be an important document informing the Council's new Local Plan (which is required by law to have regard to national policy), and also being a material consideration in the determination of any planning applications for traveller sites. It is therefore important Executive notes and informs the ongoing preparation of this PPS as it will shape the District's future environment and potentially support the achievement of a number of the SCS objectives.
- 3.3 The consultation is seeking views on 13 questions. The following bullet points set out the key questions, with the text below in bold providing the basis for the response.
- Whether local planning authorities should be allowed to choose their own method for preparing robust evidence of the accommodation needs of travellers, based on 'local need in the context of historical demand'

Agree. Previous evidence in Warwick District using gypsy and traveller accommodation needs assessment has been weak due to the limited scope of the survey work. Gathering evidence and planning on the basis of meeting local need in the context of historical demand should ensure realistic levels of provision are made where it is needed.

- Where need has been identified, whether local planning authorities should set targets for the provision of sites in local planning policies, including planning for a five year land supply;

Agree. This should ensure that local authorities plan for realistic levels of provision having regard to need, the availability of land, the suitability of land available and the ability to achieve delivery of pitches within five years.

- Whether proposals for traveller sites in the Green Belt should be treated consistently with other forms of development within the Green Belt, and whether planning policy on traveller sites should be aligned more closely with that on other forms of housing;

Agree.

- Whether new emphasis on consultation with settled and traveller communities will reduce tensions between these communities;

Agree. Increasing efforts to consult, engage and listen are important, although consultation previously undertaken with settled and traveller communities on proposals has not always materialised into reduced tensions between communities.

- Whether local planning authorities should consider favourably planning applications for the grant of temporary permission where they cannot demonstrate an up-to-date five year supply, and whether local planning authorities should be given six months to put in place their five year land supply.

Agree, but only where local planning authorities have established through an up-to-date adopted local plan the level of need for the area and therefore the five year land supply requirement. Otherwise, local planning authorities across the country may face a flood of speculative planning applications from landowners seeking to exploit national policy in favour of their proposal in the absence of demonstrating any local need. It follows, therefore, that six months is an entirely inappropriate period for a local planning authority to be expected to gather and test evidence through the local plan process and, where necessary, identify sites. The Government must give local planning authorities a reasonable period of time within which to prepare and adopt their local plans, and thereby identify the five year requirement.

3.4 There are also a number of specific questions in relation to the impact assessments for which officers will provide a detailed response.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

4.1 **Policy Framework – N/A**

4.2 **Fit for the Future** – The proposed response to the consultation will help to protect the environment of the District whilst meeting its needs for traveller sites in accordance with the SCS which aims to protect the built and natural environment and meeting housing needs.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

5.1 There are no additional budgetary implications resulting from the preparation of this response as this has been undertaken using existing staff resources.

6. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

6.1 An alternative option would be to not respond to this consultation, however, this may be to the detriment of the future planning of the District. An alternative response could be submitted to the consultation, however, this may not achieve the objectives of the SCS.

7. **BACKGROUND**

7.1 The proposed new policy aims to:

- enable local planning authorities to make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning
- enable local planning authorities to use their assessment of need to set their own targets for pitch/plot provision
- encourage local planning authorities to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale
- protect Green Belt from development
- ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites
- promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites
- reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and make enforcement more effective if local planning authorities have had regard to this policy
- ensure that the development plan includes fair, realistic and inclusive policies
- increase the number of traveller sites, in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply
- reduce tensions between settled and traveller communities in plan making and planning decisions
- enable provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure

7.2 The Government wishes to seek views on the details of their new policy, and the consultation closes on 6th July 2011. The Government will take account of the responses received to this consultation before making decisions on possible changes to planning policy.