

## **NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: ESSEX GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT (GTAA) 2018**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Council is at an early stage of reviewing its adopted local development plan policies. To inform this review, the Council supported the preparation of a common evidence base with other Essex authorities to inform cross boundary co-operation. A Topic Paper highlighting the initial key findings of a draft of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was presented to the Planning Policy Sub-Committee at its meeting in November 2017. The final GTAA report for Essex has now been received. This report explains the evidence and key findings of the final Essex wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) 2018 as well as the implications for Rochford District's plan-making.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites<sup>1</sup> (PPTS) sets out national policy for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The PPTS requires Local Planning Authorities through the plan-making process to develop evidence which assesses the need for sites, including transit sites. Policy B sets out that, in the preparation of their Local Plans, Local Planning Authorities should:-
- a) identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against their locally set targets;
  - b) identify a supply of specific, developable sites, or broad locations for growth, for years 6 to 10 and, where possible, for years 11-15;
  - c) consider production of joint development plans that set targets on a cross authority basis, to provide more flexibility in identifying sites, particularly if a local planning authority has special or strict planning constraints across its area (local planning authorities have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries);
  - d) relate the number of pitches or plots to the circumstances of the specific size and location of the site and the surrounding population's size and density; and
  - e) protect local amenity and environment.
- 2.2 The PPTS was first published in 2012 alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and was subsequently updated in 2015. The update to

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[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/457420/Final\\_planning\\_and\\_travellers\\_policy.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457420/Final_planning_and_travellers_policy.pdf)

the PPTS included a change to the definition of Travellers for planning purposes, which included the removal of the term ‘persons... who have ceased to travel permanently’, meaning that those who have ceased to travel permanently now do not fall under the planning definition of a Traveller for the purposes of assessing their need within a GTAA.

**3 ESSEX GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT (GTAA) 2018**

- 3.1 The Essex authorities have a long history of working together to assess the needs for Gypsy and Traveller sites in the county. The most recent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) covering Essex was published in 2014. Following the change in definition within the PPTS, the Essex authorities identified a need to review the 2014 GTAA.
- 3.2 Consultants Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned by the Essex Planning Officers Association, on behalf of the Essex authorities, to undertake this revision to the GTAA to take account of the new national planning definition of Travellers. This joined up approach has proved to be beneficial in identifying the needs for Gypsy and Traveller sites across the county. Rochford District Council is also an active member of the Essex Countywide Gypsy and Traveller Unit.
- 3.3 The updated Essex GTAA (covering Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Southend, Tendring, Thurrock and Uttlesford Councils) was completed in January 2018. The GTAA sets out the overall need for additional Gypsy and Travellers pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots between 2016 and 2033.

**Essex County: Main Findings**

- 3.4 The GTAA identified a total of 911 Gypsy and Traveller pitches on 291 sites, and 73 Travelling Showpeople plots on 11 yards across Essex. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of provision, as of January 2018.

**Table 1:** Breakdown of available Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots by Local Authority in Essex

Location	Gypsy and Travellers		Travelling Showpeople	
	Sites	Pitches	Yards	Plots
Basildon	102	206	1	2
Braintree	10	59	2	6
Brentwood	20	55	0	0
Castle Point	2	7	0	0

Location	Gypsy and Travellers		Travelling Showpeople	
	Sites	Pitches	Yards	Plots
Chelmsford	22	81	3	42
Colchester	11	28	0	0
Epping Forest	54	148	1	9
Harlow	3	37	0	0
Maldon	17	61	1	5
Rochford	13	20	0	0
Southend	0	0	0	0
Tendring	6	17	0	0
Thurrock	18	131	2	8
Uttlesford	19	61	1	1
<b>Total – Whole of Essex</b>	297	911	11	73

3.5 Taking account of the PPTS definition, the GTAA identified that respectively there are a total of 82 Gypsy and Traveller households across Essex that meet the planning definition; 416 unknown Gypsy and Traveller households across Essex that may meet the planning definition; and 298 Gypsy and Traveller households across Essex that do not meet the planning definition.

3.6 It also identified respectively 17 Travelling Showpeople households across Essex that meet the planning definition; 41 unknown Travelling Showpeople across Essex that may meet the planning definition; and 10 unknown Travelling and Showpeople households across Essex that do not meet the planning definition.

3.7 Overall across Essex the GTAA identified a need between 2016 and 2033 for:-

- 110 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches that meet planning definition
- up to 186 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches for unknown households that may meet planning definition
- 243 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches for households that do not meet planning definition

- 36 additional Travelling and Showpeople plots for households that meet the planning definition
  - 8 additional Travelling and Showpeople plots for households that may meet planning definition; and
  - No additional Travelling and Showpeople plots for households that do not meet planning definition.
- 3.8 Transit sites serve a specific function of meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller households who are visiting an area or who are passing through on the way to somewhere else. There are currently no transit sites in Essex. The GTAA subsequently recommends that further work is undertaken to complete a more in depth analysis of data recorded by the Essex Countywide Gypsy and Traveller Unit and other relevant sources to effectively inform any future transit need assessment for the county.

#### **Rochford District: Main Findings**

- 3.9 The GTAA assesses the current and future needs of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople population living in Rochford District. The assessment was completed through desk based research and fieldwork in the form of interviews. The desk based research identified that there are 13 sites with 20 Gypsy and Traveller pitches in the district; as of January 2018 there were:-
- seven 'private' sites consisting of eight pitches;
  - one 'temporary' site consisting of one pitch; and
  - five 'unauthorised' pitches consisting of 11 pitches.
- 3.10 There are no Travelling Showpeople plots or transit sites in the district.
- 3.11 The interviews sought to define whether households met the new planning definition set out by the PPTS in 2015. Out of the 20 pitches identified, two households were unable to be interviewed and one unauthorised pitch was found to be vacant. Three attempted visits were made to all identified sites.
- 3.12 Households needed to demonstrate that they travel for work purposes, and stay away from their usual place of residence when doing so, or they have ceased to travel temporarily due to children in education, ill health or old age, in order to meet the PPTS definition. Only the households that meet, or may meet the planning definition will form the components of need to be included in the GTAA. Whilst the needs of those households that do not meet the planning definition do not need to be included in the GTAA, they have been assessed to provide the Council with information on components of need to be addressed as part of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).
- 3.13 Table 2 below highlights the findings of the interviews which assessed the planning status of households against the new planning definition of a

Traveller set out by the PPTS. It shows that for Gypsies and Travellers 7 households meet the planning definition of a Traveller in that they demonstrated that they travel for work purposes and stay away from their usual place of residence, or have ceased to travel temporarily. A total of 10 households did not meet the planning definition of a Traveller as they were not able to provide information that they travel away from their usual place of residence for purposes of work, or that they have ceased to travel temporarily due to children in education, ill health or old age. Two households where an interview was not possible either because households refused to be interviewed or were not present during the fieldwork period, despite 3 visits, were recorded as unknown. As one pitch was found to be vacant and unauthorised and showed no sign of recent occupation, it was taken away from the total number of pitches identified which was then reduced to 19.

**Table 2:** Findings of the interviews undertaken on identified Gypsy and Traveller sites in Rochford District

Site Status	Meet Planning Definition	Unknown	Do Not meet Planning Definition	Total
Private sites	5	0	3	8
Temporary sites	0	1	0	1
Unauthorised sites	2	1	7	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>

- 3.14 ORS also produced a Technical Note on Gypsy and Traveller Household Formation and Growth Rates (2015); this is a key secondary data source used to inform the emerging GTAA. For Rochford District, this means that based on the demographics of the district’s households a 1% annual household growth rate was applied to households that meet the planning definition; 1.50% annual rate for unknown households; and 1.10% net per annum rate for households that do not meet the new planning definition. This is lower than previous formation rates that have been used at the national level (around 3%) to project future needs for the travelling population. ORS’s recommended household growth rates, however, have been based on the best available evidence which supports a national net household growth rate of 1.5% per annum for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 3.15 Based on the interviews and the calculation of household formation rates for the district’s Gypsy and Traveller population, the GTAA evidence for Rochford District identified a need for an additional five pitches to be delivered between 2016 and 2033. This is based on the needs of the seven identified Gypsy and Traveller households that were found to fall within the new planning definition set out in the 2015 PPTS (Table 2). The five pitches include making provision for the two unauthorised pitches that meet the definition plus one additional pitch for a concealed household/doubling up/over crowding, and 1 other additional pitch for a teenage child who will be in need of a pitch of their own within the next five years (based on a rate of 1%).

- 3.16 This means that as of January 2018 there was a need for a further five pitches for the Gypsy and Traveller population which meet the planning definition in addition to the five private pitches already with planning permission (Table 2).
- 3.17 Two households were unable to be interviewed. In this instance, ORS has calculated that there may be a requirement for up to three additional pitches for the two unknown Gypsy and Traveller households that may fall into the new planning definition. Studies undertaken by ORS across the country show that approximately 10% of households that have been interviewed fall within the planning definition; if this is applied to the two unknown households, there could be no additional pitches required.
- 3.18 The interviews found that 10 pitches are required for Gypsies and Travellers that do not fall within the new planning definition, arising from the 7 unauthorised pitches, one concealed/doubled up household and two new household formations (based on household demographics of a rate of 1.1%). This is in addition to the three pitches for households that may meet the definition and another 5 additional pitches for households that already meet the planning definition. If the potential need from 90% of unknown households is added to this total of 10 additional pitches, then the need for non-travelling households could rise to 13 additional pitches.
- 3.19 The change in the 2015 PPTS definition, however, means that whilst there is no longer a need to provide Gypsy and Traveller pitches for those that do not meet the planning definition, there is still a need to provide accommodation for them in addition to the need for market, affordable and other types of homes assessed within the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).
- 3.20 The need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches between 2016 and 2033 are summarised in tables 3 and 4 below:-

**Table 3:** Need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Rochford District 2016 to 2033

Status	GTAA	SHMA	Total
Meet planning definition (incl. 10% of unknowns)	5 (5+0)	0	5
Not meeting planning definition (incl. 90% of unknowns)	0	13 (10+3)	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>

**Table 4:** Breakdown of five year need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches

Years	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-17	Total
<b>Planning definition status</b>	<b>2016-21</b>	<b>2021-26</b>	<b>2026-31</b>	<b>2031-33</b>	<b>Total</b>
Meet planning definition	4	0	1	0	5
Unknown	2	0	1	0	3
Do not meet planning definition	8	0	1	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>

- 3.21 No Travelling Showpeople were identified in the district and so no need for Travelling Showpeople plots was established in the Rochford District element of the GTAA.

#### **4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Local Plans must be based on adequate, up to date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of their area. The Essex GTAA 2018 sets out the evidence needed for Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plot provision across Essex. The Rochford District element sets out the implications for Rochford District's new Local Plan as of January 2018.
- 4.2 The Essex GTAA 2018 is an important evidence base document which provides recent data to enable the Council to meet the needs of its travelling community, comply with the requirements of national policies relating to the Gypsy and Travelling people, as well as ensure that the Council can clearly demonstrate at the independent examination stage a justification for the draft policies covering Gypsy and Traveller needs.

#### **5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Draft policies in the new Local Plan covering Gypsy and Traveller needs could have environmental implications. At this stage of preparing the new Local Plan, the Council has considered and presented issues and options for further consideration. Any environmental implications will need to be carefully considered at the next stage of plan-making; this being the preferred options stage. This will be informed by Sustainability Appraisal to ensure the most sustainable options are identified.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council is required to prepare a plan in accordance with the requirements of national planning policy. The Essex GTAA 2018 has been prepared to deliver a joint piece of evidence across Essex to inform plan-making. Any further outputs, such as updates the GTAA, Memorandums of Understanding or Statements of Common Ground, will need to be met from investments in the existing budget provision.

#### **7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires Rochford District Council to co-operate and work with other prescribed bodies as part of the Duty to Co-operate on strategic cross boundary issues which includes, amongst other matters, provision for Gypsy and Traveller sites. Failure to do so could risk a submitted plan not meeting the Duty to Co-operate provisions set out in the Act and/or the tests of soundness at the examination stage.

**8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed as no decision is being made.

**9 RECOMMENDATION**

9.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RESOLVES**

That the Essex GTAA 2018, attached at Appendix A, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website.



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**Background Papers:-**

None.

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