

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

03 June 2008

Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 SOUTH EAST PLAN- GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PARTIAL REVIEW - UPDATE

Summary

Advice was submitted to SEERA in October 2007 on two options for the distribution of pitches in Kent. SEERA rejected the advice generally submitted from local authorities in the Region and has invited them to reconsider their previous submissions. The Kent Joint Member Steering Group has now reconsidered the matter and sent revised advice to SEERA.

1.1 Submission of advice to SEERA

- 1.1.1 SEERA is in the process of preparing a partial review of the South East Plan with the aim of providing strategic planning advice on the level and distribution of gypsy and traveller accommodation across the South East. This is important because it will ultimately prescribe how many new pitches the Council will need to provide for in its LDF.
- 1.1.2 To inform this process, SEERA invited all local authorities in the South East to supply it with advice on pitch distribution in the light of the results of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodations Assessments (GTAAAs) and other planning considerations. It required two options to be considered: one (Option A) based upon local need as identified through the GTAAAs; and the other (Option B) based upon other planning considerations with a view to creating a more equitable distribution across the County. In Kent it was agreed that this advice should be provided on a County-wide basis. This matter is considered by a countywide Joint Member Steering Group (on which the Council is represented by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation).
- 1.1.3 The advice was submitted by the deadline of 15 October 2007 on a without prejudice basis. For Tonbridge and Malling it indicated a need for an additional 15 new pitches by 2016 under Option A. Under Option B the figure was 31 Pitches, but we raised strong objection to this latter figure on the basis that we did not agree with the scenarios upon which it was based. The advice was then subject to an independent audit commissioned by SEERA. In Kent's case the auditors endorsed the submitted advice.

1.2 Consideration of advice by SEERA

- 1.2.1 The plenary meeting of SEERA on 5 March considered the local authority submissions in some cases as amended as a result of the audit. The advice from Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire did not properly reflect the results of the GTAA and had also been criticised by the independent audit, but SEERA nevertheless agreed that these figures should be included for consultation and wider scrutiny.
- 1.2.2 In addition two further Options (C & D) were put forward for consideration which would have had the effect of reducing provision in Kent and Surrey and redistributing the requirement more equitably across the region. Otherwise Kent and Surrey would be providing almost half of the region's total requirement during the 2006-2016 period. SEERA rejected these two additional options and indicated they should be considered no further. They also invited all local authorities to review their previously submitted advice to ensure it is "both robust and up-to-date". Local authorities were given until 30 April to submit this revised advice which will be reconsidered by SEERA in July with a view to public consultation on the Issues and Options now being in September through to November (previously this had been programmed for the spring of 2008).

1.3 The revised advice

- 1.3.1 The Member Steering Group met on 25 April to consider whether there was any basis for revising the advice previously submitted. The conclusion was that there was a case for revising the advice in two specific respects; firstly to ensure consistency of assumptions between the four separate GTAs in Kent and secondly to take account of changes in supply since the GTAs were undertaken and to ensure a consistent base date for the study.
- 1.3.2 The net affect of the changes as a result of this review can be summarised as follows:

Total additional Pitch Provision 2006-2016

	Option A		Option B	
	County	TMBC	County	TMBC
October 2007 advice	386	15	387	31
April 2008 Advice	276	14	276	20

The revised advice was agreed by the Steering Group and was submitted to SEERA on 30 April. A copy of the letter is attached at **ANNEX A**. As can be seen from this letter the Steering Group felt strongly that in taking the matter forward to public consultation SEERA should definitely include additional options that more fairly distribute the requirements across the region.

- 1.3.3 The Steering Group also had before it advice on the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople in Kent. This was based on the results of a survey that itself had not been entirely satisfactory due to the relatively low number of sites in the County and a poor level of response. The report concluded that there may be a small need for additional accommodation in Dartford Borough. A separate study in East Kent concluded that 2 additional pitches are required in that area. The Steering Group agreed that the report should be submitted to SEERA and that the small additional need be incorporated into the pitch requirements from the relevant districts.
- 1.3.4 The Steering Group also considered the issue of the public consultation arrangements in the autumn. SEERA will be hosting a small number of stakeholder/Member workshops and public events throughout the region but is also expecting the active involvement of local authorities in organising and promoting local events for which material and funding support will be available. The Steering Group considered that there should be a Kent-wide focus for any consultation events in Kent having regard to the Kent-wide basis of the submitted advice. However, it was also conscious of the geographic spread of the advice and was concerned that there should be full opportunity for participation by local interests including Parish Councils. Accordingly, it felt that there should probably be three events in Kent relating to the GTAA areas (with Sevenoaks being included with West Kent). These views have been transmitted to SEERA.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The preparation of advice by SEERA is a Government requirement

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Other than staff time, the cost of the consultation exercise is to be supported by SEERA.

1.6 Recommendations

- 1.6.1 The current position with regard to the Partial Review of the South East Plan dealing with Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation be noted and the actions taken by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation as a Member of the Joint Steering Group be endorsed.

Background papers:

contact: Brian Gates

Previous advice submitted to SEERA in October 2007
 Letter from SEERA dated 10 March 2008 requesting
 review of previous advice
 Various Reports to SEERA on the issue.

Steve Humphrey
 Director of Planning Transport and Leisure