

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 3 NOVEMBER 2008

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**Title:**

**CONSULTATION ON SOUTH EAST PLAN PARTIAL REVIEW: GYPSIES,  
TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Carole Cockburn]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) is holding a public consultation on the number and distribution of new Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople pitches across the region. The purpose of this report is to determine the Council's response to this consultation.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

The Consultation will assist the South East England Regional Assembly in determining the number of additional pitches that will be required in Waverley to meet the future needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. In due course, it will be necessary for the Council to show how this requirement will be met through the Local development Framework (LDF). This clearly relates to the Council's priority of protecting and enhancing Waverley's unique mix of rural and urban communities. It also relates to the priority of improving lives.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

There are equality and diversity implications, because this consultation is part of the process of ensuring that the planning takes account of the future needs of these specific minority groups.

**Resource/Value for Money implications:**

There are no resource implications arising from this report. There will be resource implications in the future which will be dependent on the number of additional pitches the South East Plan requires Waverley to provide and the options the Council has for delivering these through the Local Development Framework.

**Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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## Introduction

1. The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) is required to carry out a partial review of the South East Plan, in order to determine the number of additional pitches required across the region in order to meet future needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The first stage of this is to consider the options for doing this. SEERA has produced a range of possible options and is now consulting on these. The public consultation will run from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 21<sup>st</sup> November.

## Background

2. In 2007 David Couttie Associates (DCA) produced a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) on behalf of the 'West Surrey Group' of local authorities, comprising Waverley, Guildford Borough and Surrey Heath. The GTAA was based on the methodology set out in Government guidance, with the aim of identifying the future need for accommodation in the West Surrey area.
3. Members may recall that in October last year the Executive considered a report relating to the response to information that SEERA was seeking on future needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. SEERA was compiling information from all the GTAAs carried out across the region to inform the work it was doing on the partial review of the South East Plan. The Executive approved the joint submission that was being made on behalf of Waverley, Guildford and Surrey Heath. This response was mainly contained in a proforma, which contained questions about the GTAA and its findings. Whilst the GTAA was based on a robust methodology, there was a concern, reflected in the joint response, that the methodology set out in Government guidance reinforces the current distribution of pitches and places no requirement on those areas currently not providing pitches. It was considered that this approach denies Gypsies and Travellers the freedom of choice in where to live and continues to place the responsibility for provision on those areas that are already providing the most accommodation.
4. Since October last, SEERA has been assessing the information submitted by the various local authorities/groups of authorities about identified needs in their areas and identifying the options for the future distribution of pitches. This consultation is the result of that work.

## The Consultation

5. The consultation deals with the needs of Travelling Showpeople separately from the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. However, the broad options are essentially the same, namely:
  - **Option A:** New spaces should all be provided as close as possible to where Gypsies and Travellers currently live. This means that some Council areas have no spaces.

- **Option B:** New spaces should all be in the same general areas where Gypsies and Travellers currently live. Neighbouring Councils would share the duty for providing new spaces but some Council areas would have none.
- **Option C:** Half the new spaces should be in the same general area where Gypsies and Travellers currently live. The other half would be spread across the region to make sure that all areas provide some spaces.
- **Option D:** Most new spaces would be in the same general areas where Gypsies and Travellers currently live. A quarter would spread across the region to make sure that all areas provide some spaces.

6. As far as the three 'West Surrey' authorities are concerned, the proposed distribution of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers for the period 2006 to 2016 is as follows:

	<b>Option A</b>	<b>Option B</b>	<b>Option C</b>	<b>Option D</b>
Guildford	32	33	19	26
Surrey Heath	7	9	7	8
Waverley	39	39	23	31

7. With regard to travelling Showpeople, the equivalent information for the West Surrey Group is as follows:

	<b>Option A</b>	<b>42 Families</b> Allocation by C/D approach	<b>Option C</b> 50% pooled plus share of 42	<b>Option D</b> 25% pooled plus share of 42
Guildford	15	1	9	12
Surrey Heath	10	0	6	8
Waverley	2	0	2	2

8. The reference in the above table to 42 families relates to the fact that it has not been possible to attribute 42 homeless Showpeople families to any particular area, so their needs have not been addressed in the assessments submitted to SEERA.

9. Attached as Annexe 1 is a copy of the consultation document from SEERA, explaining the background and details of the consultation and setting out the proposed distributions for all authorities in the south east.

### **Proposed Response**

10. As before, the aim is to produce a joint response on behalf of Waverley, Guildford and Surrey Heath. To this end, officers have been liaising with colleagues from these authorities to put together the suggested response. This is largely set out in the SEERA questionnaire, supplemented by a covering letter. Attached as Annexe 2 is a copy of the proposed response. This will continue to evolve as the respective authorities consider the consultation. The covering letter provides the opportunity to amplify the responses to the questionnaire.

11. Of the options presented, officers recommend Option C, which includes a redistribution of 50% across the region. This is consistent with the Council's previous concerns about the methodology for the GTAA's reinforcing current distributions and placing no requirement on those areas that are currently not providing pitches. A number of comments are made to support this general view. For example, the comment that environmental constraints should also be considered when determining the most suitable distribution of new pitches across the region. The Council's Housing Needs manager has commented that, from experience in dealing with the local Gypsy and traveller community, there is a local need for additional accommodation. However, this is not quantified. Clearly even if the maximum redistribution option were to be chosen, there would still be a requirement to provide a further 23 pitches to meet local needs for Gypsies and Travellers in Waverley for the period 2006 – 2016.
12. On the specific issue of the needs of Travelling Showpeople, Members may recall the unauthorised development and subsequent enforcement action regarding the Fairhaven Group, which owns land in Waverley off the Horsham Road, near Cranleigh. The opportunity has been taken to remind SEERA that this group does not reside in either Waverley, Guildford or Surrey Heath and that the requirements of this group should be addressed at the regional level.

### **Conclusion**

13. Officers consider that it is important to re-state the previous concerns about the distribution of pitches and that the Council should support the option that would require the redistribution of pitches.

### **Recommendation**

That the Executive:

1. Agrees the response to the consultation as set out in Annexe 2; and
2. Authorises the Head of Planning, after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to agree any necessary drafting amendments to the joint submission before the end of the consultation period on 21 November 2008.

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### **Background Papers (CSP)**

Consultation documents produced by SEERA

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