

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	Head of Development Services	Fwd Plan Ref No:	
Wards Affected	All	5 July 2017	
Title	AGREEMENT TO REMOVE THE GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ALLOCATIONS POLICY FROM THE SITE SPECIFIC PART 2 LOCAL PLAN		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek Members approval to remove the matter of the allocation of land for gypsy and travellers accommodation from the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan, and prepare for this topic to be considered through a standalone Development Plan Document.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members are aware that the Council is preparing a Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan (SSP2). This follows the adoption of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) in July 2016, which forms the Part 1 Local Plan. The JCS provides a criteria based policy (Policy 31) for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People. The policy sets out to protect existing sites and provides a series of criteria to guide the assessment of sites for allocation and applications for planning permission. The intention to date has been that the SSP2 will include a policy to allocate land for gypsy and traveller accommodation to meet identified need, alongside allocations for housing, employment, recreation and other uses. The period both Part 1 and Part 2 Local Plans will cover is 2011-2031.
- 2.2 National planning policy is provided by the Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS). This requires authorities to set pitch targets for gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople, which address the likely needs of travellers in their area; and that authorities work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities. Also, that this should use a robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs, this by undertaking a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). The last full GTAA for North Northamptonshire was published in 2008, and subsequently updated in 2011.
- 2.3 The Housing White Paper "Fixing our broken housing market", published in February 2017 sets out the Government's intention to ensure that all parts of the country are covered by an up-to-date plan, and that such plans should be reviewed and updated at least once every five years. Given therefore the age of the current GTAA, it is clear that this will not be considered recent enough evidence upon which to base a plan for the period up to 2031.

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- 2.4 Based on the guidance contained within the PPTS, and as a result of the review timeframes as set out in the Housing White Paper, it is considered unlikely that when tested at Examination, the evidence base to demonstrate a robust assessment of need will be found sound. The threat as a result is that at Examination the Inspector may adjourn the Examination to allow an evidence base to be found through the preparation of a new GTAA, or potentially remove the policy completely from the SSP2, recommending that the Council undertake a GTAA and prepare a separate Development Plan Document to deal with this topic area. An adjournment such as this would delay progress in adopting policies on all other areas of the SSP2.
- 2.5 Discussions have therefore taken place with officers from the other three North Northamptonshire authorities, all of which agree the need for a new GTAA to be undertaken. It is estimated that to complete a GTAA is likely to take 6-9 months. On this basis it is unlikely the evidence base on need will be in place until Spring 2018.
- 2.6 It is recognised that the swift progression of policies identified for the SSP2 is high on the Council's agenda, so as to provide a comprehensive set of planning policies across the Borough. Although the provision of a gypsy and traveller sites allocations policy is also of urgency, it must be prepared against the evidence of an up-to-date assessment. Such a policy also lends itself to taking the form of a standalone Development Plan Document, whereas many of the other policy areas proposed for the SSP2 are linked more strongly to each other. Also, as indicated above, JCS Policy 31 does already provide a policy on which applications for planning permission for gypsy and traveller accommodation can be assessed. It is therefore recommended that in order to enable the progression of the SSP2 to continue unhindered by the time required to undertake a new GTAA, that the policy on gypsy and traveller site allocations be removed from the SSP2 and be progressed as a standalone Development Plan Document.
- 2.7 Creating a new Development Plan Document will require an update to the Council's Local Development Scheme. This is something officers will progress in the coming months, once the timeframes for gathering evidence to prepare the Plan is better defined. In the meantime, it is proposed to update the Council's website to reflect the removal of the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations policy from the SSP2.
- 2.8 In summary, a new GTAA is required to progress a policy successfully through Examination. Removing the gypsy and traveller site allocations policy will ensure progress in other areas of the SSP2 are not delayed by it. A standalone gypsy and traveller site allocations policy can be created to advance this area or work within the timeframe provided through the temporary planning permissions granted at appeals at Greenfields.

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3. CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT

- 3.1 No consultation is necessary in removing the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation policy from the SSP2. The customer impact is that its removal will not delay progress with the SSP2 whilst the GTAA is undertaken. The GTAA will enable a fair and open assessment of need, ensuring that the results of this work are as accurate as is possible, and that the appropriate numbers of pitches can be set to meet agreed needs. The new Development Plan Document will be subject to consultation, as agreed at a future meeting of this committee.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Removal of the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation policy from the SSP2 will ensure other policy areas are not delayed by it. This site allocations policy can run as a standalone Development Plan Document within a timeframe likely to see adoption in just over two years. There still remains an adopted policy at Policy 31 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy on which planning applications for sites or pitches can be assessed.

5. USE OF RESOURCES

- 5.1 The resources necessary to undertake a GTAA is available in the existing Planning Policy revenue budget. Savings will be made by working jointly with North Northamptonshire authorities in the preparation of the GTAA. The cost of preparing a gypsy and traveller site allocations policy will be met through the Planning Policy revenue budget.

6. RECOMMENDATION

That Members agree to remove the gypsy and traveller site allocation policy from the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan and that it be progressed as a standalone Development Plan Document.

Previous Reports/Minutes:

Ref: Planning Policy Committee - North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Part 1 Local Plan) and Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan Programme

Date: 1st November 2016

Ref: Planning Policy Committee - Site Specific Local Development Document Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Options Consultation

Date: 19th February 2014

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