

**HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To:** Cabinet  
16 October 2012

**Subject:** TRAVELLER HOUSING NEEDS STUDY

**Scrutiny Committees  
All Wards**

**Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning: Councillor M S Robson**

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**1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 This report considers the findings of the recently published Traveller Housing Needs Study (September 2012) commissioned by the Council in May 2012 and how to respond in terms of appropriate Council action.
- 1.2 The Council commissioned consultants Opinion Research Services and Peter Brett Associates to undertake a new study as the previous Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2008) was becoming out-of-date and the Council has a number of planning applications, appeals and enforcement issues to deal with.
- 1.3 This report seeks to provide a strategy to be agreed by the Council to address the needs identified so as to plan more positively and proactively for Travellers, as recommended by the Government in its new Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (March 2012). This policy seeks in particular for local planning authorities to:
- make their own assessment of needs
  - work collaboratively to develop fair and effective strategies to meet need by identifying sites
  - plan for sites over a reasonable timescale
  - promote more private traveller sites
  - reduce unauthorised developments and encampments
  - increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply.
- 1.4 As with other forms of housing, the Government expects there to be an annually updated supply of specific deliverable sites (ie available, suitable and viably achievable) for 5 years to meet locally set targets. Also an identified supply of specific developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and where possible, for years 11-15.

**Study Findings**

- 1.5 The methodology used in the study is considered to be robust and further details can be found in Annex A. The study concludes that the estimated extra provision that is required for Gypsies and Travellers in Hambleton is 26 pitches in the period 2012-2027. This includes existing households on unauthorised sites, those seeking to develop a private site and growth in household numbers due to household formation rates. Needs arising from outside the area have been considered but have not been included as part of Hambleton's needs.

- 1.6 There is likely to be a net growth in household numbers of 11 due to household formations from the public sites. Of these, 2 pitches are required in the period 2012-2017, 4 in the period 2017-2022 and 5 in the period 2022-2027. The variation between the time periods is due to the age profile of the existing population containing fewer children who are likely to form households in the near future.
- 1.7 The remaining 15 pitches are for private sites and to address current unauthorised developments and encampments as well as future household formation from current local households. Of these, 9 are required in the period 2012-2017, 3 in the period 2017-2022 and 3 in the period 2022-2027. The reason for the higher immediate requirement is the need to address the current unauthorised sites in Hambleton.

#### Summary of Needs

<b>Net Requirement in Hambleton</b>	<b>Public Sites</b>	<b>Private Sites</b>
<b>2012-2017</b>	2	9
<b>2017-2022</b>	4	3
<b>2022-2027</b>	5	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>

- 1.8 The consultants recommend that broad locations for sites be sought within approximately 1 mile of the market towns and service villages where the need arises, avoiding sensitive areas such as nature and heritage protection areas and land liable to flooding.

## **2.0 PROPOSED STRATEGY:**

### Public sites

- 2.1 The needs assessment concluded that there is a local need for 11 pitches arising from anticipated new household formation at the two existing public sites minus any moves away from the sites and household dissolutions (6 at Thirsk and 5 at Seamer, Stokesley). A first option could therefore be for the Council and its partners to look at the potential for extending the existing public sites. However, both sites are currently at the maximum level recommended in Government guidance.
- 2.2 If this option was favoured there would need to be consultations with the existing communities as the guidance states that sites should not exceed 15 pitches “unless there is clear evidence to suggest that a larger site is preferred by the local Gypsy or Traveller community”. If an extension is preferred, there would be an assessment of the potential for an extension to existing sites, taking into account site conditions and the relationship with the existing settled communities.
- 2.3 If an extension is not preferred, or not feasible, the report suggests that consideration should be given to a new public site and this should be located within the broad locations of the Principal Service Centres (Northallerton or Thirsk), or if land cannot be identified there, at the Service Centres (Stokesley, Easingwold or Bedale).

### Private sites

- 2.4 The study advises that the identification of further private residential sites should focus on the broad locations suggested (ie within approx 1 mile of the market towns and service villages and avoiding environmental/heritage constraints) and should take into account where the need arises and the capacity of local infrastructure to determine the most appropriate locations to commence the site search.

2.5 A call for available sites could be undertaken and all sites submitted then assessed against agreed criteria, as was the case with sites for housing and other uses in the Local Development Framework process. However rather than prepare a statutory plan (Allocations Plan revision) which would take well over a year it would be more effective to encourage the most suitable sites to be put forward as planning applications. A Gypsy and Travellers consultation event was held in Stokesley Town Hall in October 2010 which resulted in a poor turn-out, but a few sites/broad areas were suggested as potentially available. However these suggestions were not taken forward.

**3.0 DECISIONS SOUGHT:**

3.1 Cabinet needs to decide how to respond to the report in terms of best meeting the needs identified and a range of options has been suggested to be investigated further so as to provide for private and public pitches.

**4.0 LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES:**

4.1 Agreeing a strategy for meeting Travellers housing needs assists the Council’s Corporate priorities to increase housing and affordable housing in the District.

**5.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:**

**5.1 Risk in approving the recommendations**

There are no significant risks in approving the recommendations.

**5.2 Risk in not approving the recommendations**

Risk	Implication	Prob*	Imp*	Total	Preventative action
No strategy or actions for meeting needs	Loss of appeals and award of costs	5	3	15	Approve strategy
Inadequate pitch provision for Gypsies and Travellers	Continued unauthorised developments and encampments leading to enforcement action	5	3	15	Approve strategy

Prob = Probability, Imp = Impact, Score range is Low = 1, High = 5

**6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND EFFICIENCIES:**

6.1 There will be cost implications for officer time on identifying and bringing forward sites and potentially for appeal costs (eg Legal advice) for the Council to bear if applications are refused and get taken to appeal.

6.2 There would be costs associated with the provision of public sites but this could possibly be met from CLG grant funding if still available. The study notes that at January 2012 some £12M was available and was subject to bidding for new sites, additional pitches on existing sites and the improvement of existing sites. The grant is open to Councils, Registered Providers and ‘other delivery partners’. The Homes and Communities Association have been informed that we are likely to want to bid, but we could not meet the end of September deadline and have asked for further advice under the Continuous Marketing Engagement provisions. This funding needs further investigating quickly with partners, including the County Council and interested Housing Associations, so as to avoid costs for Hambleton Council.

6.3 Additional pitch provision would attract New Homes Bonus income for the Council, including an Affordable Housing uplift of about £2,000 for each pitch on a public site, which is currently equivalent to around £10,000 - 15,000 per pitch in total.

## **7.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES:**

7.1 Responding to the housing needs of our Gypsies and Traveller communities is a means of tackling the inequalities experienced and will help to improve their circumstances and outcomes.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

8.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) investigates the suitability and feasibility of extending the two public sites with residents, partners and landowners, including the financial arrangements;
- (b) discusses with partners the potential for providing a new public site with Government funding, if it proves inappropriate to extend the existing public sites;
- (c) identifies and assesses options for private sites, through a call for available sites.

MICK JEWITT

**Background papers:** - Traveller Housing Needs Study, ORS & PBA, September 2012  
- Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, DCLG, March 2012  
- Designing Gypsy & Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide, DCLG, May 2008

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## **STUDY METHODOLOGY**

### 1. Desktop Research – data request.

ORS propose to collate important secondary data from available sources. As well as the CLG caravan counts, we analyse available data from the local authorities and managing agents, for example;

- Site management records
- Records of unauthorised encampments
- Relevant information from education and health services
- Any relevant information from previous studies and housing needs assessments
- Information on planning applications and appeals.

### 2. Specialist survey/census of the Traveller population in Hambleton

A detailed questionnaire that asks a range of questions to distinguish Gypsy and Traveller needs on the one hand, from what might be called aspirations on the other. The questionnaire is the basis for:

- Detailed analysis of accommodation and support needs (and demand)
- The element that is local need
- Any movement patterns that become evident
- The seasonality of these issues where it can be identified.

The necessary interviews are lengthy and searching, taking about half an hour by experienced and highly trained fieldwork researchers.

A Census approach is taken to the fieldwork, with the practical approach being to seek to interview all households on sites and as many households in bricks and mortar as can be identified. 41 interviews were achieved on sites, together with an additional 8 interviews in bricks and mortar.

### 3. Identify broad settlement locations for provision

ORS and Baker Associates will carry out detailed face to face and telephone interviews with a range of stakeholders, identified through close collaboration with Local Authorities and Traveller representatives. These interviews will contribute to desk based work to identify a series of criteria to guide site search work. These emerging criteria will be tested during a stakeholder workshop session, to establish a fit with the preferred spatial strategy and identified local needs.

### 4. Consultation with the settled community

Methods to consult with the settled community include;

- Survey questionnaire to every Parish Council and Parish Meeting
- A meeting with representatives from Great and Little Broughton Parish Council
- A session with elected Members to explore broad locations for provision

### 5. Engagement with neighbouring Local Planning Authorities

Telephone interviews with planning and housing officers from neighbouring LPAs, together with invitations to the stakeholder workshop

### 6. Dissemination of findings

The production of a thoughtful, user friendly report and a presentation that is concise and clear. Attendance at elected Member meeting to present findings and discuss recommendations