

26 September 2007

Regional Assembly Planning Panel to discuss Gypsy and Traveller accommodation consultation findings

The East of England Regional Assembly has received over 2000 responses to its public consultation on the proposed number of caravan pitches needed for Gypsies and Travellers in the region.

Responses were received from individuals, parish councils and local authorities from all over the region on two options for the number of pitches to be provided in each local council area between now and 2011. There were a wide range of views both for and against each option with neither securing majority support.

At its meeting tomorrow (27th September 2007), the Regional Planning Panel will consider responses to the first two consultation questions concerning the overall number of additional residential caravan pitches required across the East of England up to 2011. The Regional Planning Panel meeting on 12 December 2007 will consider the number of pitches required in each local council area.

Regional Planning Panel Vice-Chair Cllr Roy Davis said: "The responses have provided lots of useful information and shown a wide variety of opinion, with strong representation being made from certain parts of the region.

“We will firstly consider the regional number of caravan pitches required before developing a detailed draft policy by the end of the year.”

Of the 2027 responses received, 702 were individual responses as follows:

- 529 members of the public;
- 55 parish councils;
- 53 local authorities/regional assemblies;
- 28 voluntary sector organisations;
- 9 Government agencies;
- 9 private sector organisations;
- 9 MP/MEPs;
- 10 other.

There were two multiple responses as follows:

- 1,251 identical postcards mostly received from the residents of Bushey in Hertfordshire;
- 74 responses in support of an organisation called “EERAgOAGAIN” – mostly resident in Hertfordshire.

A brief summary of the responses to each consultation question is included in the Regional Planning Panel meeting papers (Item 2 – Appendix B) which are available at: <http://www.eera.gov.uk/Meetings.asp?id=SXB3F3-A77FB074&cat=608>

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Notes to Editors

Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

In February 2006, the Government issued its national planning policy on the provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The planning policy requires all

Regional Assemblies to review their regional planning policy to provide planning guidance to local authorities on the number of additional caravan pitches that are required in their district. The planning guidance is not location specific, local authorities will determine the locations of additional pitches in the development of district plans, which will be subject to consultation with their local communities.

The East of England Regional Assembly is therefore undertaking a single issue review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (East of England Plan) to identify the number of Gypsy and Traveller caravan pitches required in each local authority area in the East of England up to 2011.

Gypsy and Traveller research

Independent research published by the Department for Communities and Local Government and EERA in March 2007 found that the East of England needed 1,220 more caravan pitches for Gypsies and Travellers by 2011 and that the shortage of sites had contributed to the problem of unauthorised caravan pitches. The research is available at: www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1508208

Further information about the current number of Gypsy and Traveller caravans in the East of England is available at:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/586/Table1CountofGypsyandTravellercaravanson19July2006Lastfivecounts_id1153586.xls

Issues and Options Consultation

On the 8th May 2007, the Assembly published an Issues and Options consultation paper concerning the number, distribution and delivery of additional caravan pitches with a closing deadline of 31st July 2007 for responses.

The paper outlined two options for the East of England as a basis for debate:

- **Option 1:** - pitches distributed in local council areas where research has identified need - 1216 additional caravan pitches in the East of England;
- **Option 2:** – based on option 1 but with a minimum of 15 pitches in every local council area across the region to provide a wider distribution and choice of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers - 1220 additional caravan pitches in the East of England

Further information about Options 1 and 2 are contained in a Media and Public Information Pack available from: <http://www.eera.gov.uk/category.asp?cat=639>

The consultation responses are available for public inspection at the East of England Regional Assembly offices in Flempton, Suffolk or at the Government Office for the East of England in Cambridge. Please contact the Assembly Planning team on 01284 729407 if you wish to arrange to do so.

A summary of every consultation response is available at: <http://www.eera.gov.uk/category.asp?cat=710>

East of England Regional Assembly

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) exists to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the region through a partnership of elected and stakeholder representatives and is recognised by two Acts of Parliament.

Regional Planning Panel

Members of the public and the media are welcome to attend the Regional Planning meeting which will be held at 10 a.m., Thursday, 27th September 2007 at Trinity Centre, Cambridge. The agenda and papers can be accessed from www.eera.gov.uk.

Regional Planning Panel Group Leaders

Cllr Derrick Ashley (Chairman of RPP), Conservative, 01992 556571

Cllr Nicola Harrison (Panel Group Leader), Liberal Democrat, 07788 701901

Cllr Roy Davis (Panel Group Leader), Labour, 01582 730939

Corrine Meakins (Panel Group Leader), Community Stakeholder, 07960 189994