

MH5 New Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment

9 January 2016

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your email regarding the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment.

By way of background, an invitation to tender for a new Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment was undertaken during October last year and Opinion Research Services (ORS) were appointed who have experience in undertaking these types of assessments. The study area for the assessment includes: Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Forest Heath, Huntingdonshire, Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Peterborough and St Edmundsbury. A project steering group has been set up with officers from both Planning and Housing Services across the local authorities overseeing the project.

The assessment is being carried out using primary research as far as possible and it is intended to consult with as many Gypsy & Travellers as possible. Surveys are being undertaken directly with Gypsies and Travellers. Wider stakeholders and Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople organisations are also being consulted.

With your permission, we would like to include you as a contact to be consulted as part of the stakeholder engagement. I wonder if you would also be willing to let us have any other key contacts you feel should be included as part of the consultation with stakeholders. We are happy to share our list of organisations if this is helpful. Please contact Julie Fletcher, Head of Housing Strategy (cc'd to this email).

The other stage of the assessment will be contacting those Gypsy & Travellers who are in bricks and mortar accommodation. As I am sure you are aware, it is difficult to identify those to be consulted and we are asking local housing providers, community groups and also using local authority knowledge to identify these households. Again, if you have any comments on this as to how we can improve on the identification of those living in brick and mortar that would be most helpful.

I have answered your specific questions below:

When will the new needs assessment be published?

It is anticipated that the assessment will be completed in Spring 2016.

Will it need to be approved by Committee before publication?

Each local authority will need to consider its own approval/sign off for the assessment. It is anticipated that for South Cambridgeshire it will be reported to a portfolio holder or cabinet meeting once the study is completed.

I am not aware of any engagement over the assessment. How does that match up with the requirement at paragraph 7a) of Planning policy for traveller sites for 'early and effective community engagement with both settled and traveller communities (including discussing travellers' accommodation needs with travellers themselves, their representative bodies and local support groups)?

Both the authorities and ORS are clear that the work needs to meet the requirements of the most recent government planning and housing policy and legislation. The assessment is carrying out primary research as far as possible and it is intended to consult with as many Gypsy & Travellers as possible.

During November to end of January/early February ORS are undertaking community engagement by visiting all Gypsy & Traveller Sites that the local authorities are aware of and interviewing on a one to one basis. ORS are endeavouring to contact all Gypsy & Travellers on these sites for participation in the survey work, but I am sure you are aware the surveys are voluntary and some may not want to take part.

The next part of the assessment will be stakeholder engagement. We are in the process of compiling a list of all those we think should be contacted as part of the consultation. This will be by way of telephone interviews on an individual basis, with potential to hold focus groups if necessary. As above, we would like to include you in this process.

On the basis that a robust assessment will establish the need for additional pitches what proposals do you have for identifying and consulting on potential sites?

The results of the needs assessment are unknown at this stage. Once the GTANA is completed, the Council will consider what actions are appropriate.

Will you be putting out a call for sites, which is a technique used by many LPAs?

The GTANA does not include a call for sites, as it is an assessment of need. Once the GTANA is completed, the Council will consider what actions are appropriate.

What will be the process for moving from the assessment to site identification, and to testing of the proposals at the Local Plan examination?

In a letter to the Local Plan Examination Inspectors (30 June 2015), the Councils highlighted that a new needs assessment would be completed, and in response (28 July 2015) the Inspectors agreed that a review of the GTANA 2011 would be beneficial.

The results of the needs assessment are unknown at this stage. Once the GTANA is completed, the Council will consider what actions are appropriate.

It does seem to me that there if the plan is to be robust that there is an urgent need for engagement with the Gypsy & Traveller community. What are your proposals for such engagement?

See previous response.

At what point will the Council have a supply of allocated and deliverable Gypsy & Traveller sites, and what will be the steps and timeline to get that point?

The results of the needs assessment are unknown at this stage. Once the GTANA is completed, the Council will consider what actions are appropriate.

Regards,

Jonathan Dixon | Principal Planning Policy Officer