

MATTER 2: SUB REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS AND PROVISION

1 Scope of Submission

1.1 This submission by North Dorset District Council (NDDC) relates to **Matter 2E: the Bournemouth and Poole and Weymouth and Dorchester HMAs**.

1.2 It addresses three of the issues for discussion, which are:

- Matter 2E: part (i) – provision within and between neighbouring HMAs;
- Matter 2E: part (ii) – the balance within and between Districts in the HMAs; and
- Matter 2E part (v) – the implications for provision in relation to the Great Dorset Steam Fair.

2 Matter 2E: Parts (i) and (ii)

2.1 Draft revised Policy GT1 suggests that the need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the Bournemouth & Poole HMA is higher than in any other part of the South West. The District Council does not consider this to be the case. It is felt that the Dorset GTAA consistently overstates the need for pitches in the County and this view is supported by the consistency work undertaken by the Universities of Birmingham and Salford (Benchmarking Review of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments in the South West – ‘the GTAA Review’), produced in January 2008.

2.2 The reasons why the figures for the pitch requirements in the HMA appear so high are because the Dorset GTAA:

- is more comprehensive than others in the region;
- makes an allowance for the transfer of Gypsies in conventional housing to caravan pitches (no additional pitches are required to meet the demand from housing transfer in North Dorset and therefore this issue is not discussed further in this submission); and
- overestimates the need for New Age Traveller pitches due to potential ‘double counting’.

2.3 In response to the consultation on revised draft Policy GT 1, the Council suggested an amendment to the figures for North Dorset to take account of the factors outlined above. The GTAA Review, when viewed in the context of local factors, supports the amendments suggested by the District Council, which are also fully consistent with the County Council’s position.

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- 2.4 The Dorset GTAA covers all appropriate travelling groups, including New Age Traveller, Travelling Show People and various Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities. This is not the case with other studies in the region. A significant proportion of those surveyed in the Dorset GTAA were New Age Travellers (62%) and there is evidence that they also travel to the neighbouring counties of Devon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire, where estimates of need are much lower.
- 2.5 Circular 04/07: Planning for Travelling Show People was published on 21st August 2007. This reiterates the need for GTAAs and RSSs to take account of the accommodation needs of this group, which has not yet been done in all parts of the region.
- 2.6 Unauthorised camping and significant seasonal variations in travelling patterns in Dorset are thought to relate to the same groups of New Age Travellers moving between neighbouring local authority areas. Evidence suggests that these groups move between the rural districts of West Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck and, to a lesser extent, East Dorset. The calculation of need used in the GTAA is based on peak levels in each District, which is considered to represent the 'double counting' of these groups giving rise to an inflated estimate of need across the County as a whole. The local authorities in Dorset are working together sub-regionally to try and meet this need, which could be resolved by the provision of a more limited number of pitches than the GTAA suggests is needed.
- 2.7 It is suggested that the figures for additional pitch requirements in the rural districts of Dorset (i.e. West Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck and East Dorset) should be reduced to overcome the potential problem of 'double counting'. The reduction should be approximately 50% of the estimated New Age Traveller element of residential and transit pitch identified need in the GTAA.
- 2.8 The suggested revised figures for North Dorset would be 20 residential pitches and 20 transit pitches. There is also a need for a further 100 temporary transit pitches for the Great Dorset Steam Fair, which should be located within 10 miles of the main Steam Fair venue. A table setting out the suggested consistency adjustments for the Dorset Sub-region as a whole, adapted from a table prepared by the County Council, is included in Appendix 1. This table also suggests that provision should be made over the period up to 2016, for the reasons set out in the Council's submission on Matter 1.
- 2.9 The RSS formula-based estimates for Dorset suggest a need for only 55 to 66 pitches across the County, depending on the method of calculation. It is considered that these estimates are too low and do not reflect local

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factors, such as the needs of the relatively large New Age Traveller population (which the RSS formula tends to underestimate) and the need for transit sites to be able to accommodate larger groups. Some groups, for example, English Gypsies and Irish Travellers often travel in extended family groups. Failure to provide transit sites of sufficient size may result in these larger groups making unauthorized encampments.

3 Matter 2E: Part (v)

- 3.1 The transit figures in the Dorset GTAA are significantly inflated by the need for a temporary transit site for the Great Dorset Steam Fair, which is held each year at Tarrant Hinton, in North Dorset. The draft revised RSS policy and Table 4.3 reflect the need for this site in the numerical estimate of transit pitches, but do not explain the reasons behind this seemingly very high level of additional transit pitch provision either in the policy or the supporting text.
- 3.2 The 128 transit pitches allocated to North Dorset District by Policy GT 1 represent 27.8% of the total number of such pitches required in the region up to 2011 (460). However, the policy fails to explain that 100 of these pitches are required specifically for a transit site associated with the Steam Fair. The Dorset GTAA and the submissions of the Strategic Planning Authorities to SWRA clearly explained these very special circumstances, making explicit reference to the Steam Fair. The SWRA did not include this detail in the revised policy that went out to consultation.
- 3.3 The RSS covers a 20-year period and the main concern with the policy as drafted is that during this time the circumstances surrounding the Steam Fair may change. For example, it could relocate to another site (not necessarily in North Dorset), it could cease to run altogether and different locations may be used for the transit site associated with it. For these reasons, it is not appropriate for these 100 additional transit pitches to be specifically allocated to North Dorset District. It is considered that a different approach is required in the RSS, which would support any potentially suitable site.
- 3.4 To address this issue the transit site for the Steam Fair should be mentioned as a separate item in Policy GT 1, not assigned to any specific District, and listed as a footnote to Table 4.3. This approach would also highlight that it is not intended to be a permanently available transit site, but would only be made available for a few weeks each year around the time of the Steam Fair. In 2006 a temporary planning permission was granted for a transit site very close to the main Steam Fair venue.

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Following its occupation, the site was returned to agricultural use. It therefore differs significantly from other transit sites, which are of a permanent nature (although clearly they should only be used on a temporary basis by Gypsies and Travellers).

- 3.5 Policy GT 1 as written would, in effect, specifically tie the location of the Steam Fair transit site to North Dorset District, which is considered inappropriate. The map in Appendix 2 shows that large parts of East Dorset District and some parts of Salisbury District lie within 10 miles of the current site, whereas significant parts of North Dorset lie further away. As drafted Policy GT 1 would exclude the possibility of a transit site 2 or 3 miles away in East Dorset, but would support a site more than 10 miles away within North Dorset. Clearly, the regional policy framework, as drafted, needs to be amended to support the provision of any potential transit site within a reasonable distance of the main Steam Fair venue.
- 3.6 The policy, or supporting text, should seek the provision of a transit site within about 10 miles of the Steam Fair venue, wherever it is located. A form of wording for a suggested footnote to Table 4.3 is included in Appendix 1.
- 3.7 Based on the current Steam Fair venue a 10-mile radius would establish an 'area of search' including parts of North Dorset, East Dorset and Salisbury Districts, as shown on the map in Appendix 2. Asterisks (or other forms of notation reference) need to be inserted into Table 4.3, as set out in Appendix 1, to make it clear where a transit site for the Steam Fair could potentially be located.