

***The Draft Regional Spatial
Strategy for the South West
2006-2026***

***Partial Review – Gypsies and
Travellers***

***Pre-submission Consultation
Statement***

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Pre-Submission Consultation Statement

The Assembly as Regional Planning Body prepared, in February 2005, a '*Statement of Public Participation*' setting out how it planned to secure stakeholder and public involvement through the RSS revision process, and who it would work with in undertaking the RSS revision. This Pre-Submission Consultation Statement explains how this was actually carried out in respect of the Partial Review. The Regional Assembly is required to prepare the RSS on the basis of partnership working with regional stakeholders and community involvement. This Statement will be submitted to the Secretary of State with the draft RSS revision as required under Section 5 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Act).

1.2 Consultation Good Practice Principles

The Assembly works to a set of best practice principles for consultation (Appendix 1) and these have been used during the RSS revision process to date. The principles are based on the Government's Code of Practice on Written Consultation. Early on in the process of developing the RSS the Assembly set out its intention to, wherever possible, go further than simply consulting with organisations, but rather to aim to work in partnership with key bodies.

2 WHO HAS BEEN CONSULTED ON DRAFT RSS PREPARATION AND HOW HAS THIS INFLUENCED THE OUTCOME?

2.1 Introduction

In preparing the draft RSS Revision, the Assembly has worked closely with Local Authorities, Gypsy and Traveller community representatives and other partners, sector representatives, and interest groups. This section outlines who the Assembly has consulted during the process to date. Section 3 then sets out the main issues raised and how these have been addressed in the draft RSS Revision.

2.2 Gypsy and Traveller Community

Local authorities have collaborated on a county sub-regional basis to produce Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment's (GTAAs), working with the local Gypsy and Traveller community.

2.3 Regional Assembly

The Assembly has a minimum of one Member from each of the districts, unitary authorities, county councils and national park authorities in the region, together with one Member from the Council of the Isles of Scilly (53 bodies in total). In addition the Assembly includes a range of Social Economic and Environmental Partners (SEEPs) representing the various sectors of significance to the South West. These include business, voluntary, education and training, environmental bodies, faith communities, trade unions, tourism, health, disabled groups, agriculture, culture, racial equality, minority groups, public transport, youth, housing and co-operative agencies.

All Assembly Members had the opportunity to comment on the proposals for the draft Revision as part of the full Regional Assembly discussion on 13 July 2007.

2.4 Local Planning Authorities

In terms of development of the draft RSS Revision, all County, District and Unitary Authorities have been given the opportunity to participate in the two stakeholder events held on 1 November 2006 and 31 May 2007. A number of other separate meetings and discussions have been held with local authorities, at various stages, to discuss particular technical aspects.

2.5 County, Unitary and National Park Authorities

The Assembly is required, under Section 4 of the Act, to seek the advice of County, Unitary and National Park Authorities (the so-called 4/4 Authorities) when preparing, keeping under review and monitoring the implementation of a draft RSS revision.

The majority of 4/4 Authorities also provided, prior to the submission of the draft RSS Revision, First Detailed Proposals on provision for Gypsies and Travellers. This comprised numbers of permanent and transit pitches required per local planning authority in the period to 2011. The West of England (WoE) Authorities were unable to provide First Detailed Proposals as the WoE GTAA was not completed in time. However, interim draft permanent residential pitch numbers were provided which have been included in the table of pitch requirements accompanying the draft policy.

2.6 Other stakeholders

Two specific stakeholder events have been held by the Regional Assembly to engage with wider stakeholders with an interest in the process, including representatives of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. The two dates were:

- 1 November 2006 stakeholder event
- 31 May 2007 stakeholder event

The consultees invited to one or other of the events, in addition to all local authorities, were as follows (a number of members of the public also attended one or other of the events):

Advisory Council for the Education of Romany & Travellers
Black South West Network
Bournemouth Churches Housing Association Ltd
Children Society
Church Commissioners for England
Devon Consortium Traveller Education Service
Duchy of Cornwall
Fata He
Friends, Families and Travellers
Government Office for the South West
Housing Corporation
National Association of Gypsy & Traveller Officers
National Farmers Union
National Housing Federation
National Romani Rights Association
National Travellers Action Group
Penwith Housing Association Ltd
Romany Institute
Stonham Housing Association Ltd
Teign Housing
The Gypsy Council
The Gypsy Council for Health, Education & Welfare
The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain
Traveller Law Reform Coalition
University of Plymouth
Western Challenge Housing Association Ltd
Wiltshire (Churches)

3 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN ISSUES RAISED IN CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT RSS TO DATE

3.1 The Main Issues

This section summarises, on the left of the table, the main issues raised in consultation to date together with, on the right of the table, a summary of how the Assembly has responded to these in the draft RSS Revision.

Issues raised in consultation	Assembly response
Not happy with assessment of needs - don't agree with numbers.	Process allows for alternative evidence to be submitted and subsequently debated at the EiP.
Sample size too low.	The draft RSS revision is a pragmatic response and does not claim to be based on perfect information – it is going in the right direction however and stakeholders are encouraged to submit evidence as part of the consultation.
CLG formula not applicable in all areas.	Draft RSS revision based entirely on authorities' advice / first detailed proposals. Formula not used.
Concerns that RSS will initially exclude transit pitches.	Draft RSS revision identifies numbers for transit pitches for the majority of districts.
Concern about applying a range as authorities will always opt for the lower.	Draft RSS revision includes single numbers in virtually all cases, thus ensuring certainty and clarity.
New Travellers gone, hence lower numbers in Somerset.	Taken into account in draft RSS revision, which is based on thorough GTAAs.
What is the purpose of the "Pat Niner Formula".	Not an issue as not used in draft RSS revision.
Need to consider future growth - 'this is only a starting point'.	Statutory planning process requires monitoring and review. A future review will be triggered if further need identified.
Make it explicit in the policy that it is only to 2011.	Draft RSS revision makes this clear, in Policy GT1.
Gypsies and Travellers need to be treated equally with the rest of the population.	Draft RSS revision has been written in this spirit and identifies the need to be met on a comparable basis to the "mainstream" housing numbers.
Local Authorities need to continue to do research – first GTAA is not the end of the	This is catered for in the relevant planning and housing legislation and regulations

story.	ongoing monitoring and review is essential.
Don't want districts to be working in isolation – RSS must state that districts must work together to perfect the distribution.	Policy GT1 and supporting text state that the RSS provision for Gypsies and Travellers should be based on robust assessments of need. Policies elsewhere in the draft RSS underline the importance of collaborative working between authorities. The draft RSS revision is based on GTAAs covering county areas, undertaken on a joint basis between authorities.
Planners need to get on with providing the sites – the debate on numbers can't be allowed to delay things.	On submission to the Secretary of State the draft RSS revision will become “material” and can immediately assist in meeting the backlog of need through the planning process.
Need numbers to be stable and accurate.	The draft RSS revision and resultant final RSS will form part of the Statutory Development Plan and therefore will set out a stable set of numbers. Its accuracy will be ensured through the EiP.
Assembly needs to be more inclusive in terms of consultation.	The Assembly will embark on a wide ranging and thorough 12 week consultation on submission of the draft RSS revision which will ensure inclusivity.
Difficult to take account of in-migration.	Among the consultees to whom the draft RSS revision will be sent are neighbouring local authorities and Regional Planning Bodies who will be able to assist in this.

4 NEXT STEPS

4.1 Submission

The Assembly is required to submit the draft RSS Revision, and any supporting documents required by the Regulations, to the Secretary of State before the start of the 12 week consultation in August 2007.

4.2 Formal Consultation

In accordance with the Regulations, a formal 12 week consultation period will begin once the Assembly has made available the draft RSS Revision in the manner set out in the Regulations, having submitted the necessary documents to the Secretary of State.

4.3 Examination in Public

An Examination in Public (EiP) will be held in early 2008 to enable an independent panel of inspectors to hear evidence from a wide range of individuals and bodies on such matters as it considers appropriate, guided by the range of issues raised in representations submitted during the formal consultation period. The report of the panel will be published perhaps two or three months after the end of the EiP.

4.4 Consultation on Proposed Changes

The Secretary of State will then publish proposed changes to the draft RSS Revision, with a reasoned statement of the decisions, and a consultation period of at least eight weeks for comment on the proposed changes will then begin.

4.5 Issue of Final RSS

Once all the necessary processes have been completed, it is anticipated that the RSS will be issued by the Secretary of State in its final form, incorporating the outcome of the Partial Review process for Gypsy and Traveller Provision, in mid 2008.

4.6 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

Annual monitoring of the key policies, principles and outcomes of the RSS will continue to take place through the Annual Monitoring Report process. In addition a rolling process of review of the RSS Implementation Plan will take place to ensure that everything possible is being done to enable RSS policies to be implemented.

Further Partial Reviews, on specific areas of policy, may occur in later years as the need arises.

Appendix 1

CONSULTATION GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

All consultation has been carried out in the spirit of the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Consultation.

The Assembly's Consultation Good Practice Principles state that all consultation documents will:

- explain clearly who is being consulted, why and how;
- be concise, including a summary document;
- have a clear timescale and closing date;
- include a list of consultees;
- be transparent about how consultees were selected;
- be in plain English with clear numbering;
- explain clearly the process for responding - with a nominated contact for enquiries;
- seek to take account of the views of members of the community; and
- be accessible, including provision of alternative formats or translations, as determined reasonably practicable.

Consultees will be asked to give a summary of the group(s) and people they represent.

Wherever possible consultation will take throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for formal consultation at least once during the development of the policy/strategy. If this is not possible (particularly if responding to Government timescales) a clear explanation will be provided.

A named contact will be identified to handle queries.

A (second) named contact will be identified to handle complaints about the consultation process.

All contributions will be acknowledged.

Consultation responses will be made public unless requested otherwise by consultees.

Members will receive a report of the outcome of consultation to inform their decisions.

A range of mediums – postal, website, events - will be used for consultation, to be decided by the Member Group.

Consultees will receive feedback on the outcome of the consultation.

The consultation process will be evaluated and a report made public.

The Assembly will promote best practice in consultation with other regional organisations.

The Assembly will designate a consultation co-ordinator to oversee all consultation processes.