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12 October 2007

Dear Mark,

South East Plan Partial Review
Provision of Advice on Caravan Pitches For Gypsies and Travellers
Advice from the East Surrey Gypsy & Traveller Sites Steering Group

I am responding on behalf of the East Surrey Gypsy & Traveller Sites Steering Group which was established in response to the request by SEERA for advice on the future provision of caravan pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in the sub-region.

The Steering Group's advice is set out on the enclosed documents:

- Pro forma advice sheet.
- Summary of responses to the consultation on the draft advice to SEERA which was conducted by the Steering Group.
- Comments by the Steering Group on the SEERA benchmarking of the East Surrey GTAA.

As requested in the brief, the Steering Group has included in its advice two distributions of the level of new pitches forecast in the East Surrey GTAA. However, the Steering Group is concerned that neither of these distributions takes into account the current distribution within the South East as a whole.

The Steering Group consider that, in carrying out the partial review of the South East Plan, SEERA should recognise the existing inequitable distribution of pitches around the region and, as a matter of principle, should seek to remedy this.

At least six Councils within Surrey met the requirements of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and five became "designated" authorities. However the very fact that those authorities fulfilled their duties under the 1968 Act has led to a situation where, under Option "A", because of the

higher number of existing pitches, it is those same districts where the greatest number of new pitches would also be required. The provision thus becomes self-perpetuating.

Whilst the East Surrey Steering Group accepts that there is a requirement to accommodate the immediate needs of existing families it is felt by the Group that once these are met there should be a more planned approach in the future to enable a more equitable distribution of new pitches across the South East region to meet the needs of all Gypsies and Travellers.

Surrey is one of the smallest counties in the region yet it has the second largest number of authorised Gypsy and Traveller caravans by some considerable margin (Table H1 of the South East Plan).

Under these circumstances, the East Surrey Steering Group considers those counties and unitary authorities that have made little or no provision thus far must be required to make some additional or new provision to meet the needs that arise within the region as a whole.

I would also like to stress that all four East Surrey Councils (Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge) have formally considered and endorsed the advice prepared by the East Surrey Gypsy Sites Steering Group referred to above.

I am also enclosing a letter from Reigate and Banstead Borough Council setting out the Borough Council's views on the two options put forward by the Steering Group.

Yours sincerely

Jack Straw
Planning Policy Manager
On behalf of the East Surrey Gypsy & Traveller Sites Steering Group