

Note on Gypsy and Traveller need in the borough relating to following agenda items:

Item 14. Agenda Pages 28 - 38

24/500914/FULL

Land at Woodside Place, Goudhurst Road, Staplehurst, Kent TN12 0HB

Item 18 Agenda Pages 108 - 121

23/504443/FULL

Land At Oakland Place, Greenway Forstal, Harrietsham, Kent, ME17 1QA

The Maidstone Borough Council Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was published in September 2023 replacing the January 2012 assessment.

The GTAA 2023 formed part of the Local Plan Review evidence base and informs the current preparation of the separate Development Plan Document covering the period 2023-2040.

The GTAA 2023 provides the most up to date assessment of the need for Gypsy and Traveller households in the borough.

Whilst the most up to date assessment, the weight attached to the figures needs to be balanced against the following limitations:

The need figures for Gypsy and Traveller households in the GTAA are divided into three categories 'Meet Planning Definition', 'Undetermined' and 'Do not meet the Planning Definition' and following comments are provided.

i) Meet Planning Definition (Need found for 340 households).

- The GTAA 2023 uses the Gypsy and Traveller definition found in the 2015 National Planning Policy for Traveller sites.
- After the [Court of Appeal](#) found it discriminatory, this definition was changed in December 2023, after publication of the GTAA 2023.
- The revised definition now includes those who have permanently ceased to travel due to "...their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age".
- An assessment using this revised definition is likely to slightly increase the future need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation for households who now meet the planning definition in the borough.

ii) Undetermined (Need found for 122 households)

The GTAA 2023 states (para 3.31):

- "As well as calculating need for households that meet the planning definition, a GTAA has to consider the needs of any households where an interview was not able to be completed (either due to refusal to be interviewed or households that were not present during the fieldwork period)".

- “Whilst there is no law or guidance that sets out how the needs of these households should be addressed; an approach would have been taken that sought an estimate of potential need from these households”.
- “This would be an additional need which is over and above the need identified for households that meet the planning definition”.

iii) Do not meet the Planning Definition. (Need found for 67 households)

- With the definition change outlined above the size of the group outside the definition will decrease, with an increase in the group meeting the definition.
- The GTAA 2023 states (para 3.38) “*...the housing needs of any Gypsy and Traveller households who do not meet the planning definition of a Traveller will need to be assessed as part of the wider housing needs of the area and will form a subset of the wider need arising from households residing in caravans*”.

Conclusion

The key material consideration regarding need is that this Council should have a 5-year supply of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. Based on the figure in the GTAA 2023 of those meeting the planning definition only, the current supply is 1.2 years.

The need assessment in the GTAA 2023 was out of date 3 months after publication. This was due to the change in the central government definition of gypsy and travellers.

The Council’s true supply will be lower than 1.2 years and further away from the required 5 year supply. This is after accounting for the potential increased need from the change in definition, and proportion of the ‘undetermined’ group that meet the definition.

An addendum note is in progress to advise on the potential impact of the change in definition on our GTAA need figures. We are expecting this addendum update by the end of June 2024.

No change to officer recommendation for items 14 and 18.