

Dartford Local Plan Gypsy/ Traveller Sites: Duty to Cooperate (January 2023)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This note is produced by Dartford Borough Council in January 2023 to confirm the current situation in relation to adjoining local authorities and Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (GTTS). It follows the Dartford Local Plan Examination in Public Stage 2 Hearing on 9th November 2022.
- 1.2. Extensive evidence was set out on submission of the Local Plan in December 2021 in relation to the Duty to Cooperate. Most notably, activity was outlined in COR-11 [The Duty to Cooperate Statement](#) (and including appendices at COR-12 to COR-14). Pages 23 to 24 of COR-11 summarise a range of GTTS outcomes up to 2021 including:
 - (Paragraph 3.19)- the 2019 Needs Assessment (GAT-1) was produced with input from adjoining authorities,
 - (Paragraph 3.22)- efforts to identify land within the Borough, including working with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and Kent County Council, and
 - (Paragraph 3.24)- the agreements reached with adjoining and other authorities in signed Statements of Common Ground.
- 1.3. Rather than reproducing evidence in full, this note complements the position in Statements of Common Ground, or meeting minutes from 2021, with January 2023 confirmed information authority-by-authority. See sections 7 and 8 below.
- 1.4. This reflects continued engagement with neighbouring authorities and verifies submitted evidence.

2. Gravesham Borough Council (GBC)

- November 2021 Statement of Common Ground ([SCG-2](#) page 9): recognises the evidence gathered by each authority on GTTSs. It features a Point of Agreement: “DBC and GBC are currently considering all reasonable options to provide pitches to meet their Borough needs for gypsies and travellers within their respective areas. This is notwithstanding the fact that meeting such need may justify exceptional circumstances for the allocation within and release of land from the Green Belt.”

3. Sevenoaks District Council (SDC)

- November 2021 Statement of Common Ground ([SCG-3](#) page 6): recognises the evidence gathered by each authority on GTTSs, and concludes: “Both local authorities will continue to operate existing joint working arrangements through regular Duty to Cooperate meetings to ensure that suitable permanent and transit pitch provision can be made as appropriate.”

4. London Borough of Bexley (LBB)

- From the Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statement Appendix 6:
 - LBB-DBC Meeting 24/06/2021: DBC is not likely to be able to fully meet its needs for gypsies and travellers. Further work is being carried out and, as part of this process, DBC may need to ask Bexley in future if it can help. Bexley has limited capacity and can only just meet its requirements, i.e. through intensification of existing sites. It is not looking for any new sites. Page 39 of [COR-14](#).
 - LBB-DBC Meeting 10/11/2021: It is not considered that there are outstanding strategic cross-border issues in terms of gypsies and travellers and it was agreed that this matter did not need to be included in the SOCG – page 42 of [COR-14](#).
- November 2011 Statement of Common Ground ([SCG-1](#)): does not include reference to gypsies and travellers.

5. Thurrock Council (TC)

- November 2021 Statement of Common Ground ([SCG-4](#) pages 3 to 4): recognises the evidence gathered by each authority on GTTSs, and notes an unauthorised travelling showpeople's site was present at Drudgeon Farm, Bean within DBC. It was understood that a number of families on the site moved from Thurrock.

6. Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC Local Planning Authority)

- November 2021 Statement of Common Ground ([SCG-6](#) page 9): recognises the evidence gathered by DBC on GTTSs. It features a Point of Agreement: "It is agreed that EDC and DBC will work together to explore opportunities for identifying a site or sites which may be suitable for gypsy and traveller pitches within Ebbsfleet Garden City, particularly in the event that the London Resort proposal does not proceed."
- January 2023 position: Policy E1 in the Ebbsfleet and Swanscombe part of the submitted Local Plan, which includes criterion E1:6 on exploring GTTS site opportunities within Ebbsfleet, was discussed on 16 November 2022 with EDC and DBC present at Examination in Public (Stage 2 hearings).

7. Post-Submission Update

- **GBC:** January 2023 position- GBC have commissioned an update to their Needs assessment, this has not been completed.
- **SDC:** January 2023 position- SDC undertook an update to their Needs assessment in 2022; it considers as of January 2023 (noting all existing SDC Gypsy and Traveller sites are within the Green Belt), it is unlikely to have additional capacity to help with unmet Gypsy and Traveller need.

- **LBB:** January 2023 position: Bexley's consultation on Local Plan Main Modifications is has just closed. Bexley consider their Local Plan's approach is unlikely to generate surplus capacity to be able to help meet unmet need in adjacent Boroughs.
- **TC:** January 2023 position- Thurrock have now confirmed outcomes of need studies in progress when the Dartford Local Plan was submitted, and note further study work/ updates are ongoing. From this Thurrock consider that with high levels of need for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople, and limited site availability due to constraints, it is not currently planning to meet unmet need from other authorities. Some of Thurrock's existing unauthorised pitches have included gypsy and travellers from other areas so it is considered in effect there has been some need met from elsewhere.

8. Summary

8.1 Evidence on submission of the Local Plan in December 2021, including signed Statements of Common Ground, demonstrates outcomes of co-operation with other authorities but that no authority had agreed to help meet Dartford GTTS need.

8.2 Subsequent information confirms this remains the case, no authority has indicated potential capacity to help accommodate unmet need.