

PLANNING FOR GYPSY AND TRAVELLER CARAVAN SITES

33. Local authorities must allocate sufficient sites for gypsies and travellers, in terms of the number of pitches required by the RSS, in site allocations DPDs. A requirement of the Planning Act (2004) is that DPDs must be in general conformity with the RSS. Criteria must not be used as an alternative to site allocations in DPDs where there is an identified need for pitches. Local planning authorities will need to demonstrate that sites are suitable, and that there is a realistic likelihood that specific sites allocated in DPDs will be made available for that purpose. DPDs will need to explain how the land required will be made available for a gypsy and traveller site, and timescales for provision.

47. Gypsies and travellers in rural areas often face difficulties in securing an adequate supply of affordable land for their needs. Where there is a lack of affordable land to meet local gypsy and traveller needs (as demonstrated by an up-to-date accommodation assessment) local planning authorities in rural areas should include a 'rural exception site policy' in the relevant DPD.

53. However, local landscape and local nature conservation designations should not be used in themselves to refuse planning permission for gypsy and traveller sites.

54. Sites on the outskirts of built-up areas may be appropriate. Sites may also be found in rural or semi-rural settings. Rural settings, where not subject to special planning constraints, are acceptable in principle. In assessing the suitability of such sites, local authorities should be realistic about the availability, or likely availability, of alternatives to the car in accessing local services. Sites should respect the scale of, and not dominate the nearest settled community. They should also avoid placing an undue pressure on the local infrastructure.

55. In some cases, perhaps involving previously developed (brownfield), untidy or derelict land, the establishment of a well-planned or soft-landscaped gypsy and traveller site can be seen as positively enhancing the environment and increasing openness.