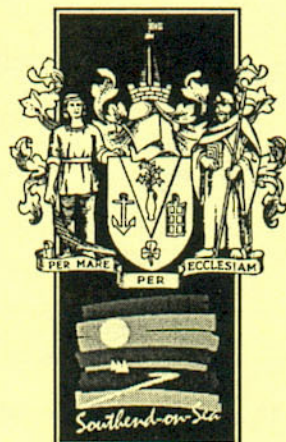


PART THREE

Gypsy Caravan Sites



Southend-on-Sea  
Borough Local Plan  
First Alteration  
Adopted October 1997

## **Southend-on-Sea Borough Local Plan First Alteration**

### **PART THREE : Gypsy Caravan Sites**

#### **3. Reasons for Alteration**

- 3.1 The Government has repealed the statutory duty of local authorities to provide caravan sites for Gypsies residing in or resorting to their areas. This is expected to lead to more planning applications for private Gypsy sites. In recognition of this, the Government has issued new planning guidance (Circular 1/94 - Gypsy Sites and Planning, January 1994). This advises that, although Gypsies make up only a tiny proportion of the population, their land requirements need to be met. Local planning authorities must therefore be aware of the accommodation and occupational needs of Gypsies and must continue to indicate the regard they have had to meeting these needs in preparing or amending their development plans.
- 3.2 In view of these changes, the Essex County Council requested all District Councils to undertake urgent reviews of their Local Plans in order to ensure that appropriate policies and proposals for Gypsy site provision are incorporated.
- 3.3 The Borough Council has undertaken such a review as part of the preparation of the First Alteration. This concluded that, in the light of the limited land resources in the town and the lack of demand for such sites, it would be inappropriate to seek to identify any sites for Gypsy caravans within the Borough at the present time.
- 3.4 Given these circumstances the First Alteration introduces a criteria based policy for assessing the merits of any planning application for Gypsy caravan provision. This is in accordance with Circular 1/94 which provides that where it is not possible to identify specific Gypsy sites the local planning authority should set out clear, realistic criteria for suitable locations as a basis for site provision policies. The new policy and related preamble are set out overleaf.

## Alteration Relating to Gypsy Caravan Sites

### 1. New Sections

- a) Chapter 3 Housing Provision and Residential Environment.

New text and policy to be inserted after Policy H13. Page 62 of the Adopted Borough Local Plan refers.

#### *"Gypsy Caravan Sites*

3.49 *Following changes in legislation the Government has repealed the statutory duty placed on local authorities to provide caravan sites for Gypsies residing in or resorting to their area. This is expected to lead to an increase in the number of planning applications for Gypsy sites. To guide local planning authorities in the determination of such applications the Department of the Environment has issued Circular 1/94 (Gypsy Sites and Planning - January 1994). This emphasises the need for local authorities to be aware of the accommodation and occupational needs of Gypsies, and the importance of having in place appropriate policies in development plans.*

3.50 *The Circular advises that local planning authorities should make a quantitative assessment of the amount of accommodation that is required, taking into consideration the number of Gypsy caravans in their area, particularly the six-monthly counts undertaken by local authorities which are collected and published by the Department of the Environment. However, it also notes that proposals for Gypsy caravan sites should continue to be determined solely in relation to land use factors. Local Plans should therefore, wherever possible, identify locations suitable for Gypsies and where this is not possible set out clear, realistic criteria for suitable locations as a basis for site provision policies. Proposals should be consistent with agricultural, countryside and environmental policies and Gypsy sites are not regarded as being among those uses of land which are normally appropriate in Green Belts. Green Belt land should not, therefore, be allocated for Gypsy sites in development plans. The Circular advises that local planning authorities might, for example, consider locations outside existing settlements within a reasonable distance of services and facilities. Regard should be had to highway considerations and the potential for noise and other disturbance from the movement of vehicles to and from a site, the stationing of vehicles on the site, and on-site business activities. The guidance also states that, wherever possible, sites should be suitable for mixed residential and business use having regard to the safety of the occupants and their children.*

3.51 *In seeking to identify appropriate locations for Gypsy caravans, it has to be recognised that in the Southend context land resources for all forms of development are limited. Southend is a densely*

*developed area which has now expanded to the extent that the urban area tightly abuts the Green Belt. Having regard to this, Government guidance and the policies for environmental safeguards contained in this Plan, it is extremely difficult to identify any site within the Borough which could be regarded as suitable for Gypsy caravans. The Borough Council does not therefore consider it possible or appropriate for a policy to be formulated which is site specific as no suitable locations are available within the Borough at the present time. Such an approach is consistent with the Council's policy for tourist caravan accommodation which recognises that, whilst demand indicates that it would be desirable to expand the tourist caravan facilities in the town to beyond the one long-standing site in the Borough at Shoebury East Beach, no other sites in the Borough can provide additional facilities due to policy constraints (see paragraph 6.29 and Policy L9).*

- 3.52 *In relation to needs, Borough Council records indicate that very few Gypsies have resided in or resorted to Southend in recent years and that there is no need for Gypsy caravan site provision in Southend at the present time. This was borne out following a planning inquiry in March 1993, when the Secretary of State in considering a proposal by Essex County Council to establish a Gypsy caravan site at Eastwood concluded that there was no genuine need for a permanent Gypsy site in Southend, or in South-East Essex as a whole, at that time. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the needs of Gypsies, particularly for transit facilities, should be kept under review. However, given the particular land-use constraints that apply in Southend and its inability to find suitable sites for Gypsy caravans, the Borough Council considers that an evaluation of potential sites within South-East Essex as a whole should be undertaken.*
- 3.53 *In the light of these factors, the Borough Council will apply the following policy in considering proposals for Gypsy caravan site provision in the Borough.*

**POLICY H14 - GYPSY CARAVAN SITES**

*In the light of the very limited land availability for all forms of development and the lack of need for a permanent Gypsy caravan site at the present time, no specific allocations are made in this Local Plan for such provision. The need for Gypsy caravan sites within the Borough will, however, be kept under review.*

*In considering applications for Gypsy caravan site facilities regard will be had to the following criteria:*

- i) proposals will only be permitted where it can be shown that Gypsies reside in or regularly resort to the area. Any planning permission granted will be limited to use by Gypsies,*
- ii) sites shall not be in close proximity to residential properties and their location should not give rise to noise or other disturbance, including disturbance at unsocial hours, from the movement of vehicles to and from the site, the stationing of vehicles on the site and on-site business activities. In addition proposals should not harm the visual character of the area and amenities of adjoining land uses, in accordance with Policies C11 and E5,*
- iii) sites will not be permitted in the Green Belt, on land identified as being of High Grade Agricultural Quality or within designated Special Landscape Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland and the Coastal Protection Area (see Policies G1, G2, G5, G6 and G7),*
- iv) proposals should not give rise to serious problems of access, road safety or traffic congestion, and should make provision for parking and the safe turning of vehicles on site,*
- v) proposals should not materially prejudice the provision of other major land use needs in the Borough, particularly the supply of land for open space and employment. Proposals will be considered against the provisions of Policies C15 and E4,*

*cont/.....*

- vi) any proposal sites and (where they are appropriate) any working or storage areas, shall be of sufficient size to allow them to be adequately screened with landscaping both within and on the boundaries of the site in order to give privacy to occupiers and to protect the amenities and appearance of the surroundings. Earth mounding and planting will also be required in certain circumstances on site boundaries (see also Policy C14),*
- vii) sites should be provided with necessary services to include electricity, drinking water, washing facilities, sewage disposal and refuse collection point, and be capable of providing for an acceptable living environment. Arrangements should also be made for securing the site in the event of its seasonal or other temporary unoccupation,*
- viii) in dealing with unauthorised caravan sites, the Borough Council will have regard to the considerations set out above*

*Policy cross references: G1 (Development Within the Green Belt), page 13; G2 (Land of High Grade Agricultural Quality), page 14; G5 (Special Landscape Areas), page 16; G6 (Nature Conservation), page 18; and G7 (Coastal Protection), page 19, C11 (New Buildings, Extensions and Alterations), page 30; C14 (Trees, Planted Areas and Landscaping), page 33; C15 (Retention of Open Spaces), page 33; E4 (Industry and Warehousing), page 73; E5 (Non-Residential Uses Located Close to Housing), page 74;*

## 2. Amendments to Existing Text

Chapter 3 - Housing Provision and Residential Environment, paragraphs 3.49 to 3.51. Pages 62 to 64 of the Adopted Borough Local Plan refer.

Amend paragraph numbers 3.49 to 3.52 to read '3.54 to 3.57'.