



RTPI

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London
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Sent via email to: commonground@cre.gov.uk

20 April 2007

Dear Mr Johnson,

**ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE RESPONSE:
COMMON GROUND MONITORING PROJECT**

This letter sets out the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) response to your consultation on the action taken to implement recommendations in the Common Ground inquiry into sites for Gypsies and Travellers.

The report made two recommendations to the RTPI, 69 and 70. The paragraphs below record the text of each recommendation, the current status of the RTPI response, the actions taken and reasons for them.

continued: >

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Recommendation 70:

Supplement its guidance on 'racist representations' with specific advice on handling applications for Gypsy sites.

Status

Implemented in full, with additional supporting actions also taken.

Action taken and reasons

The RTPI convened a Gypsy and Traveller Working Group, which identified the need to prepare new good practice guidance, closely based on the evidence set out in the Common Ground report. It held an evidence session in Birmingham, attended by members of Gypsy and Traveller communities, the Communities and Local Government Gypsy and Traveller Unit, Planning Aid, the National Association for Planning Enforcement (NAPE), local government planning, enforcement and Gypsy and Traveller liaison staff, academics and consultants responsible for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments.

It decided to exceed the brief set in recommendation 20 and to prepare a five part advisory note and web pages to include:

- [A Gypsy and Traveller planning web page](#)
- Good Practice Note 4A: [Communication, Consultation and Participation](#)
- Good Practice Note 4B: [Accommodation Needs Assessment](#)
- Good Practice Note 4C: [Accommodation and Site Delivery](#)
- Good Practice Note 4D: [Enforcement](#)
- Good Practice Note 4E: [Sources of Further Information and Advice](#)

Parts A to D are available as print and online publications. Print copies are enclosed with the hard copy of this letter and the links above can be executed in the electronic version of this letter to launch the online versions. Additional copies can be obtained from the RTPI free of charge. Part E is a continuously updated information service and is only available online, and (amongst other resources), promotes the Common Ground report.

All five parts were developed by RTPI and NAPE in close collaboration with Planning Aid, the Communities and Local Government Gypsy and Traveller (now the Equalities) Unit and the Planning Advisory Service.

The decision to exceed the brief set by recommendation 70 was in part a response to evidence set out in the Common Ground report itself, in part to joint work with the bodies mentioned above, particularly the opportunity to draw on Planning Aid experience and to support the dissemination and implementation of former ODPM Circular 01/2006 and PAS case studies, and in part reflected the findings of the RTPI's own research and evidence session. The balance of evidence suggested that the negative experiences of Gypsy and Traveller communities in the planning system were due to and spanned a broad range of planning services and interactions including:

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- the need for improved communication with and by officers and councillors;
- the need to promote robust Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments;
- the lack of appropriate policies and allocations in plans to enable proper responses to applications;
- the need to respond properly to applications;
- the need for advice on handling racist representations, in circumstances where evidence suggested that some members of the public do not appreciate that derogatory remarks about members of Gypsy and Traveller communities are racist;
- the need to ensure that breaches of planning control are sensitively managed by enforcement officers; and
- the close relationships between the actions necessary to address all of these objectives.

Our work sought to address this broad agenda.

The RTPI is actively searching for further partners to promote and disseminate our work and would encourage the CRE to do so.

Recommendation 69:

Make race equality and planning for Gypsy sites a specific part of the continuing professional development programme for all planning officers

Status

Implemented in part.

Action taken and reasons

The RTPI has taken action to ensure that race and equality planning for Gypsy and Traveller communities are built in to the continuing professional development programme for planners. For example, RTPI conferences now deliver a Gypsy and Traveller event twice yearly. Our good practice advice was launched at the last event on 1 March 2007, which also received updates from CLG and PAS. RTPI Regions and Planning Aid also provide a wide range of support for planners working with Gypsy and Traveller Communities and for Gypsy and Traveller Communities themselves.

The RTPI has not made race and equality planning for Gypsy and Traveller communities a compulsory training subject matter, simply on the basis that there are no compulsory training subject matters. All planners are required to maintain and implement a continuing professional development plan and failure to do so is a disciplinary matter.

The RTPI carries out member monitoring to ensure that this requirement is met. It is for the individual planner to determine what is relevant to be addressed by their own continuing professional development plan. Where a plan is monitored, the RTPI judges the relevance of content based on the context in which the planner operates. Whilst there are circumstances in which and equality planning for Gypsy and Traveller communities would be highly relevant for a planner's professional context, there will be other circumstances where this might not be the case.

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The RTPI remains ready to assist you with any questions that may emerge from this response. NAPE through the RTPI provides you with access to experience and advice from enforcement officers whose daily task is to protect the environment through effective enforcement.

If you have any questions about this response, please contact Rynd Smith on 020 7929 9478.

Yours sincerely



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not for unauthorised use

Rynd Smith
Head of Policy & Practice