

KENT MESSENGER

Gravesham could see an expansion of travellers' sites

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Under new targets being imposed by Government, Gravesham Borough Council must provide 15 pitches for travellers with rubbish collection, running water, electricity and other services. In return travellers will have to pay rent and council tax.

Across the UK, work on some of the proposed 7,500 extra pitches will get the go-ahead within weeks under a controversial £97million scheme.

Figures for January this year show that there are currently 4,902 pitches on local authority sites, accommodating 6,696 caravans.

Apparently, there are around 25,000 gypsies and travellers who do not have fixed places to live. We need to challenge the term 'travellers' - the only stipulation is that at some point in the past they have 'travelled' and now choose to 'settle'.

I blame 'political correctness' for the proposed explosion in the number of official traveller camps. We are going to face the bombshell of having a traveller camp dumped in our back yard, whether we like it or not. Councils are powerless to resist these regional targets, and are being bullied into using compulsory purchase powers. It's not fair that hard-working families in Gravesham have to save up to get on to the housing ladder, while travellers get special treatment at taxpayers' expense. Sole Street and Northfleet come to mind here.

The Government states: 'It's important we have enough authorised sites for gypsies and travellers.'

I am all for old style people of the road: I am not for the new breed of traveller (settler) - many from the Republic of Ireland - who are playing our legal system, EU rules, and naive good intentions.

Adam