

HOUSING THE MIGRANT POPULATION



Reporting on a District Council study into the accommodation provided to migrant workers in Arun

Housing Conference: February 15th 2011



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Arun District Council

www.arun.gov.uk

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THE CONTEXT

- Arun has the second highest number of registered migrant workers recorded through the Workers Registration Scheme in the South East of England
- Many, though not all, of these workers are involved in the local agricultural / horticultural industries

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PLANNING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Local planning authorities must address the accommodation requirements of specific and diverse groups (PPS 3)
- Therefore planning policies needed to be identified to develop the Council's approach to transient workers accommodation

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THE RESEARCH

- Carried out by consultants Smiths Gore under the leadership of Jason Beedell
- Involvement of Dr Gavin Parker, University of Reading
- Seen as a ground-breaking initiative

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THE STUDY

- Sample of 37 agricultural and horticultural businesses
 - Interviews with 19 migrant workers
 - Total of 27 other stakeholders interviewed to establish best practice
 - Focus group critiqued the draft study findings
 - Expanding Communities Team input
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THE FINDINGS

- 19 local businesses had employed 987 migrant workers
- Most (766) were seasonal but just under a quarter (221) were permanent employees
- Provision of accommodation seen as a key issue to improve worker recruitment / retention

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THE FINDINGS

- Key issue reported was a shortage of staff which was seen as a significant threat to business
- Employers had responded by:
 - Recruiting from abroad
 - Trying to make their employment and accommodation “offer” more attractive

CATEGORIES

- Three distinct categories of migrant workers were identified, each using different types of accommodation:
 - Permanent migrant workers: no need for planning policy
 - Seasonal migrant workers – employed through an agency – no need for planning policy
 - Seasonal migrant workers – directly employed – planning policy recommended
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HOUSING STANDARDS

- Permanent migrant workers tend to find their own accommodation, mainly in the towns, and want to establish stable homes for their families.
- Seasonal migrant workers, employed through agencies, tend to live in rented accommodation, mostly private sector, often shared and often of lower quality reflecting low wages earned

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HOUSING STANDARDS

- Directly employed seasonal migrant workers generally housed in caravans or mobile homes
- Minority in halls of residence
- Most share accommodation but enjoy the company and feeling of community
- Generally accommodation rated as good

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LOOKING AHEAD

- Businesses keen to provide attractive, comfortable accommodation with suitable amenities
- A number would like to provide more, both caravan and hall of residence-style
- Many want to improve quality of accommodation as they see this as giving them a competitive advantage

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Council to continue its dialogue with agricultural and horticultural businesses through the existing Farmers Forum (jointly with Chichester DC)
- Visit industry best practice examples of caravan style and hotel-style accommodation to see how principles might be applied to Arun

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Introduce new planning policies to meet the requirements of directly employed seasonal workers:
 - Based on Chichester DC policy on horticultural development so there is consistency of approach between our neighbouring districts
 - Consider merits of both caravan-style and hostel-style accommodation

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NEXT STEPS

- The planning policies developed as a result of this study will be incorporated into the Local Development Framework
- The LDF will guide development within the district between now and 2026, in line with Our Kind of Place, the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Arun District

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WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT

- The study recognised the issues for new migrant workers employed in the local agriculture / horticulture industries
- It assessed how their accommodation needs could be met by their employers now and in the future
- It recognised the need to address the potential for community tensions arising where accommodation might be provided without planning permission in the absence of robust planning policies

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