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Winchester District Local Plan

Winchester City Council Local Plan Examination

Hearing Statement Matter 9:

Meeting the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people

April 2025



Winchester
City Council

Matter 9 Meeting the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people

Issue: Would the Plan be positively prepared, and would it be effective in addressing the likely accommodation needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people?

1. What are the implications of the introduction of the updated Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (12 December 2024) for the Plan's approach to gypsies and travellers?

WCC response:

- 1.1 The December 2024 PPTS makes three key changes from the 2023 version, relating to the Green Belt, situations where an authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of sites, and the definition of gypsies and travellers. Of these, the change to the definition of gypsies and travellers has most potential to have implications for the Local Plan (Winchester has no Green Belt).
- 1.2 The 2024 PPTS changes the definition of gypsies and travellers (but not travelling showpeople) to add to words *'all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan'* (while deleting the previous paragraph 2). The Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2022 ([GT01](#)) broke down needs into those arising from households that met the (then 2012) PPTS definition of travellers, those that did not meet the definition, and those that were 'undetermined'. The Council updated the GTAA with a Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper in July 2024 ([SD10d](#)), which took account of the change to the definition of travellers made by the December 2023 PPTS.
- 1.3 The Topic Paper looked at all traveller needs without attempting to break these down into those meeting / not meeting the definition and 'undefined'. Chapter 3 of the Topic Paper explains that this was done following the 'Smith' Court of Appeal Judgment and concludes that *'the PPTS definition is no longer particularly helpful in plan-making and, as a starting point, the totality of the needs identified by the GTAA have been taken into account when considering the needs which the Local Plan should be aiming to meet'* ([SD10d](#), paragraph 3.6). Paragraph 3.7 of the Topic Paper confirms that the GTAA considered all 'nomadic' groups, which in Winchester District consist of those of gypsy, roma or showpersons heritage.
- 1.4 The review of traveller accommodation carried out in preparing the Topic Paper went on to confirm that *'the vast majority of traveller sites provide family accommodation and that the families occupying them consist, wholly or partly, of households with traveller or travelling showperson heritage. The only exceptions would seem to be a few large sites where there is unauthorised occupancy, including by non-travellers using the sites for general residential accommodation'* ([SD10d](#), paragraph 3.6). The large sites in question are at Carousel Park, Micheldever and Firgrove Lane, North Boarhunt where enforcement action has been taken to remove or regularise non-traveller households.
- 1.5 Accordingly, the Council considers that it has assessed the needs of all *'persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan'* (2024 PPTS definition), initially through the GTAA and then updated in the Traveller Topic Paper. The figures for traveller needs in the Topic Paper, which are carried forward into the Local Plan, are for all traveller needs and does not distinguish

between whether they meet the (2023 PPTS) traveller definition or are 'undetermined'. Therefore, the changes to the PPTS in December 2024 do not have any implications for the Local Plan, as traveller needs are already assessed on the basis of *'persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan'*.

2. With regard to the Winchester Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, what are the minimum pitch and plot requirements for travellers and travelling show people for the plan period?

WCC response:

- 1.6 The [GTAA](#) concluded that the need within the Local Plan area was up to 200 pitches for gypsies and travellers ([GT01](#) Figure 2, page 9) and up to 33 travelling showpersons' plots ([GTAA](#) Figure 6, page 12). However, this was updated by the Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper ([SD10d](#)), which revised these figures to 91 gypsy traveller pitches and 35 travelling showpersons' plots ([SD10d](#), table at paragraph 5.1, page 33). The Topic Paper explains the changes in detail, but the large reduction in gypsy traveller pitch needs results largely from enforcement action to remove or regularise unauthorised pitches at the two large previously unauthorised sites at Carousel Park, Micheldever and Firgrove Lane, North Boarhunt.
- 1.7 The traveller pitch / plot needs identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper are carried into the Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19), at Table H4 (page 246). Hence policy H12 of the Local Plan contains the most up to date pitch / plot requirements, which are evidence-based and compliant with the latest version of the PPTS.

3. Is it the purpose of this Plan to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites to meet the objectively assessed needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people?

WCC response:

- 1.8 Yes, the Local Plan has sought to meet the updated needs for traveller pitches / plots. However, despite exploring all possibilities to achieve this ([SD10d](#), Chapter 4) it has not proved possible to meet the identified needs in full.
- 1.9 Table H5 of the Local Plan (page 250) indicates the expected supply of pitches / plots over the Local Plan period, derived from the evidence in the Traveller Topic Paper ([SD10d](#), Chapters 4 and 5). This shows that the supply of 128 gypsy traveller pitches is expected to exceed the overall need of 91 pitches over the Plan period as a whole. However, for travelling showpersons', only potential for 17 plots has been identified against a need for 35. Therefore, the Local Plan has only been unable to identify adequate provision over the plan period for travelling showpersons.

1.10 The Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper describes in detail the search for potential sources of traveller provision and how this has not been able to identify sufficient sites to meet identified needs for showpeople in full ([SD10d](#), Chapter 4). It is noted that the only representation in relation to traveller needs is a comment by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council questioning whether the City Council has fully assessed the scope to require traveller provision on larger housing allocations. While it is acknowledged that this approach is included in the Basingstoke Local Plan (and some others), it has been fully assessed in the Topic Paper, which concluded that it would not realistically achieve additional provision in Winchester's case.

1.11 The long-standing shortfall of travelling showpersons' plots has been raised over several years with neighbouring authorities through the course of 'duty to cooperate' discussions and in comments on neighbouring local plans. The publication of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment ([GT01](#)) in 2022 highlighted a considerable increase in future needs for gypsy traveller pitches too and the Council started to raise this as a potential 'unmet need' in discussions with neighbouring authorities from that point onwards. The various Statements of Common Ground with neighbouring authorities (SD08a – SD08l) record this process and the results. In summary, no other authorities were able to offer sites to assist and several have also notified the Council of their own difficulties in identifying adequate traveller sites.

1.12 Therefore, the Council is satisfied that it has 'left no stone unturned' in seeking to meet the updated need for traveller accommodation. It has taken a positive approach and this is fully explained and justified in the Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper ([SD10d](#)). It has sought help from neighbouring authorities in meeting unmet needs. As such, its approach is consistent with national policy and the Local Plan has done all that it realistically could to meet traveller needs.

4. If so, what is the evidence that there would be on adoption of this Plan a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against locally set targets, and a supply of specific, developable sites, or broad locations for growth, for years 6 to 10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 as required by the Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites?

WCC response:

1.13 Overall pitch targets are set in policy H12 of the Local Plan and Table H4 (page 246) breaks these into 5-year periods. The Gypsy & Traveller Topic Paper assesses / updates traveller needs and potential sources of supply but concludes that, while it shows an adequate supply of gypsy traveller pitches over the Plan period, it is not possible to identify a deliverable 5-year supply (for gypsies or travelling showpeople). This is illustrated in table 5 of the Topic Paper ([SD10d](#), Chapter 5).

1.14 The Authorities Monitoring Report 2023/24 ([SD13](#), pages 32-33) includes a 5-year assessment of traveller pitch supply which indicates a 3.2 years supply for

gypsy traveller pitches (as April 2024) and 3 years for travelling showpeople. The supply figures are for years 0–5 and are taken from the Gypsy & Traveller Topic Paper ([SD10d](#), table at paragraph 5.2). These consist of capacity within or adjoining existing traveller sites, identified through the officer review of traveller site capacity. While it is not possible to identify which ‘specific deliverable sites’ will come forward, most needs will only arise if a traveller family has an unmet need. If this is on a site with scope for intensification / expansion the family will be able to bring forward a proposal for site intensification / expansion in accordance with policies H14 and H15.

- 1.15 The Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper, July 2024 includes an assessment of all the potential opportunities for the Local Plan to make provision to meet identified needs ([SD10d](#), Chapter 4). For travelling showpeople, there is expected to be a shortfall in both the first 5-year period and over the Local Plan period as a whole. This reflects the situation when the Traveller DPD was adopted in February 2019, when it was also not possible to identify sufficient provision to meet all identified needs.
- 1.16 The Council believes it has explored all realistic means of achieving sufficient traveller sites but has not been able to meet identified needs for travelling showpeople in full, nor identify a 5-year supply for either gypsy travellers or travelling showpeople. The Council acknowledges that this will result in NPPF paragraph 11d being triggered, in accordance with PPTS paragraph 28, which may itself help to increase provision should suitable sites be brought forward through the planning application process.

5. Would the proposed policy criteria be effective in bringing forward the level of windfall sites necessary to meet the identified need for pitches and plots?

WCC response:

- 1.17 Yes. The Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper, July 2024 ([SD10d](#)) provides detailed evidence on the potential sources of traveller site supply. The officer review of the capacity of existing authorised sites contained at Chapter 4 of the Topic Paper concluded that the majority of households which had a future need for accommodation would have scope to meet this either within their existing site or by its expansion.
- 1.18 In estimating future supply the Topic Paper made a cautious estimate that 75% of the need for gypsy traveller sites could be met in this way, and 50% of the need for travelling showpersons’ sites ([SD10d](#), Table 4). Local Plan policy H13 is necessary to safeguard existing (and future) authorised traveller sites and these are defined on the Policies Map. Policies H14 (site intensification) and H15 (site expansion) are criteria-based policies that are critical to ensure that site intensification / expansion can take place, so as to achieve the provision estimated. Policy H15 also allows for new sites to be permitted and will facilitate this source of future ‘windfall’ provision.

1.19 The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) advises that criteria-based policies should be included as a basis for decision taking where there is no need, but they are equally relevant to help meet identified needs by facilitating intensification / expansion of existing sites. This is potentially a substantial source of supply, especially as most needs arise from existing traveller families and the intensification / expansion of existing sites is likely to be a relatively affordable and achievable way to help meet their needs. Accordingly, criteria-based policies H14 and H15 are justified by the evidence of existing / future needs and the limited options to meet them, and are an effective way of achieving a substantial level of future supply. Their criteria are reasonable and necessary for good planning, given that sites will generally be located in the countryside, where residential development would not otherwise normally be permitted.