

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

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SESSION 10B – GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE

Hearing Statements: Please refer to the Inspector's Procedural Guidance Notes for information on the provision of hearing statements.

Deadline: One electronic copy in pdf format and three hard copies to be sent to the PO by 6.00pm on 20th October.

Inspector's Agenda with Matters, Issues, and Questions

1. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 1.1. Paragraph 7 in the Government's Document Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) requires local planning authorities to use robust evidence to plan positively and manage development, and in paragraph 9 to work collaboratively setting targets for pitches. In preparing their local plans, local planning authorities should undertake an objective and up-to-date assessment of need; that need should be translated into a policy confirming pitch requirements over the full plan period; there should be a realistic assessment of supply (including whether potential sites are achievable / deliverable); and, where there is a gap between need and supply, proposals to meet that gap, including achieving a deliverable 5 year supply of pitches and identifying developable sites or broad locations beyond that period (paragraph 10).
- 1.2. According to paragraph 11.1 of the Local Plan the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (2012) (GTTSA) [HOU 001] revealed during the Local Plan period a need for 187 permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches to be provided in the Borough together with 11 plots for Travelling Showpeople.
- 1.3. The Report of Findings of the GTTSA Site Assessment is Document HOU 006. Policies GT1 and GT1(1) to GT1(16) would allocate sites for approximately 41 pitches for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation with site specific criteria. Policy DM16 provides for development either on the allocated sites or that meets specified criteria elsewhere.

- 1.4. Representation R1954 objects to the low provision of 41 pitches on allocated sites by comparison with the identified need for 187 pitches.
- 1.5. MBC has issued a Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Topic Paper [Document SUB 004]. Amongst other things the Topic Paper records that planning permissions were granted for 92 pitches for Gypsies and travellers between 1 October 2011 and 13 May 2016. 21 pitches are also expected to become available on public sites during the Local Plan period leaving a residual need for 33 pitches to be delivered on unidentified sites under policy DM16. The Paper claims that there is therefore a 5.6 years supply of pitches.
- 1.6. R19423 Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) R1952 (CPRE) and other Representors consider that the need for pitches may be overstated because the GTTSSA preceded changes to the Government definition of gypsies and travellers in August 2015 changed to exclude those that have ceased to travel permanently. However the Topic Paper explains that the GTTSSA did assess travelling habits and the reasons households gave for not travelling. A deduction of 14% had already been made for those not travelling. Distinctions are drawn between the methodology used and that for the Swale BC assessment which had led to a greater reduction.
- 1.7. R19423 KALC and other Representors also complain that when assessing need the GTSSA analysis failed to consult the settled community. They consider that the need has been overstated on the basis that the large numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in the Borough arises from agricultural work in the past which is no longer available.

Qn10.1 What is the source of the claimed requirement to consult with the settled community and what is MBC's response to the complaint about a lack of consultation?

- 1.8. The Topic Paper explains how sites were selected and includes evidence to justify a continued supply from unidentified sites.

Qn10.2 As there would be a significant shortfall in site allocations against the assessed needs, would a revised assessment necessarily

affect the need for such allocations or only the allowance for development on unidentified sites?

Qn10.3 When would MBC intend to next assess needs and would that necessarily be part of a review of all housing needs?

Qn10.4 Would it be proportionate to reassess need now on the basis of the most recent Government policy and how could the associated delay be accommodated?

2. POLICY GT1 SITE ALLOCATIONS

- 2.1. R19450 The Kent Downs AONB Unit objects to the proposed allocation of site GT1(12) Cherry Tree Farm, West Wood Road, Stockbury as the site is an unauthorised existing site within the AONB (Representation R19450). The Unit also seeks to amend Policy DM16 to preclude all development of gypsy and traveller sites in the AONB or its setting, arguing that this is necessary for consistency with national policy.
- 2.2. Policy DM16 criterion 2 begins: *'The development would not result in inappropriate harm the landscape and rural character of the area, ...'*. MBC has proposed a minor change (PC/52) to criterion DM16(2) to correct a typographical error by amending the above wording to *'inappropriate harm to the landscape etc.'* The AONB Unit objects to the term 'inappropriate harm' when referring to the AONB.
- 2.3. **Qn10.5 What purpose does the word 'inappropriate' serve in the above criterion and would it be better replaced by eg 'significant'?**
- 2.4. R1954 Ulcombe PC objects to the proposed allocation of GT1(15) and GT1(16) Neverend Lodge, Pye Corner, Ulcombe on the basis of adverse cumulative impact and claimed conflict with other Local Plan policies. Reference is made to a claim that there are now over 94 traveller pitches either within or within 1 mile of the parish and that 75% of children at the village school are from traveller families.

Qn10.6 Would MBC please provide a response to this objection?

- 2.5. Three representations object to allocation GT1(5) Little Boarden, Boarden Lane, Headcorn. However it appears that the site is already the subject of a planning permission.

Qn10.7 If the site has permission would deletion of the allocation have any practical effect?