

Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy Examination.
Policy CP5 re Gypsies and Travellers
User Reference Number: 2176.

1. 'Sites for gypsies and travelling showpeople' forms part of the 'Countryside and Natural Environment' chapter of the Winchester District Local Plan Review (2006). Paragraph 4.89 states that 'The Housing Act 2004 requires all local authorities to assess the need for gypsy and traveller accommodation within their area, as part of the wider assessment of housing requirements...Such an assessment is currently being undertaken for Winchester district...Any locally assessed need will be incorporated into the Regional Spatial Strategy as regional targets for provision'.

2. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment undertaken by David Couttie Associates in 2006 for Hampshire & Isle of Wight '...found a need for 18 new permanent pitches in the south of the study area over the next 5 years' (ie by 2011). Paragraph 7.9.3 of the Assessment recorded that 'The need identified in the south of the study area was focused in Winchester (11 pitches)...This reflects the higher proportion of Gypsy and Traveller households already in Winchester and the need arising from overcrowded households on existing authorised sites and new forming households on all sites in Winchester...The turnover of pitches on the Tynefield site in Winchester will go some way to meeting need within the south of the study area'.

3. The South East Plan (2009) continues to form part of the statutory development plan. Its paragraphs 7.28 and 7.29 tells one that 'The regional planning body are currently (April 2009) undertaking a single issue review of Gypsy and traveller accommodation needs in the region...As part of the review, local authorities in the South East have now completed their Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments in accordance with the Housing Act 2004...The accommodation assessments will provide for the first time comprehensive, robust and credible data relating to the needs and requirements of the Gypsy and traveller community'. Table H7a of the single-issue Partial Review identified (in June 2009) a need for 21 additional pitches 2006-2016 and Winchester City Council did not object to that proposal.

4. Winchester City Council has known since 2006 that there is a sizeable need for additional traveller pitches within its district but it has failed to quantify that need or to clarify how it should be satisfied through the identification of public or private sites. Further, the City Council has known since 2009 of a requirement for 21 additional pitches to be provided during the period 2006-2016 but has allowed another three years to pass without bringing forward proposals in Local Plan Part 1 to indicate the distribution or scale of sites. It remains unclear how the Council intend to address this need. It would appear that the Council has assumed that sites are likely to continue to come forward as the result of private initiatives but there can be no guarantee that this will happen; such an approach generates uncertainty and could prove overly optimistic, with the result that the sizeable need for additional sites is not addressed or only addressed in part. It is submitted that the Council should be planning positively for the identification of additional sites through *this* local plan process, to enable a comprehensive and thorough

examination to be made of all the relevant criteria, with a view to identifying the most suitable sites.

5. Winchester City Council has failed to make its own timely assessment of need for the purposes of planning; has failed to generate a robust evidence base to establish traveller accommodation; has failed to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale; and has failed to promote the provision of more private traveller sites. In the absence of definitive targets, progress towards their achievement cannot be monitored. It is apparent from the Self Assessment Checklist that, although the Partial Review provided a good starting-point in 2009, the City Council has not progressed the matter because of the ‘..Government’s announcement of its intention to abolish regional guidance’; in my contention, that is an excuse for inaction, not a reason.

6. One reads in the Self Assessment Checklist that, as recently as June this year, the City Council was expecting work on the ‘needs assessment’ to be completed by the end of August; it is now October and the survey has not yet appeared, to inform debate at this hearing. Having failed to give timely attention to traveller pitches, it is unreasonable of the City Council to now plead that the requisite work *should* not be undertaken because it would hinder progress on the rest of Stage 1.