

## New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016 – 2036

### Examination Statement – New Forest National Park Authority

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#### **Matter 9 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople**

***Issue – Whether the Local Plan is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to the approach towards Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople?***

**9.1 *What is the evidence in terms of the need for additional provision? Was the methodology for the assessment appropriate and robust? What does it show?***

1. The Authority, together with a consortium of other Hampshire Authorities, commissioned an accommodation assessment for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople (GTAA), the final report of which was published in May 2017 (Hampshire Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment 2016-2036, CD113). It considers any current and future permanent accommodation needs in the National Park.
2. The GTAA was prompted by the publication of the revised version of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (CD112) in August 2015, which set out a change in the definition of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople for planning purposes. This change meant that those who have ceased to travel permanently do not now fall within the definition of a Traveller when assessing accommodation need for planning purposes.
3. Opinion Research Services (ORS), who are experienced consultants in this area and have undertaken similar work with other authorities in Hampshire, carried out the GTAA. ORS used a robust and credible methodology through a combination of desk based research, stakeholder interviews and direct engagement with the travelling community, which is set out in more detail in Chapter 3 of the GTAA. Interviews were undertaken with travellers from all known gypsy and travelling showpeople sites in the National Park. The GTAA (paragraph 3.3) emphasises that the current methodology used by ORS has been considered in recent planning appeals, and a Planning Inspector recently concluded that *"The methodology behind this assessment included a full demographic study of all occupied pitches, interviewing Gypsy and Traveller households, including those living in bricks and mortar accommodation, and considering the implications of the new Government policy. On the evidence before me, I am satisfied that the assessment has been appropriately carried out, and there is no reason for me to dispute the figures"*.
4. The GTAA concludes that there is a need for one additional pitch for gypsy or traveller households to meet current need (2016-21), and no requirement for future need. Furthermore, there is a current and future need totalling 21 additional plots for travelling showpeople households (see Figure 48 of the GTAA for more details).

**9.2 Will the identified need of one pitch be met through the allocation in Policy SP33? Will the allocation be deliverable?**

1. Policy SP33 allocates one pitch for gypsies and travellers, encompassing an existing gypsy site in Landford, and the Submission Draft Local Plan confirms (paragraph 7.67) that this allocation seeks to meet the need for a gypsy site identified in the GTAA (CD113).
2. Footnote 11 of the NPPF states that *“To be considered deliverable a site must be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within 5 years and...that development of the site is viable”*. The site at Forest View in Landford was submitted to the Authority by the landowner for consideration as a gypsy site as part of the Call for Sites process in the preparation of the Local Plan. The assessment of the site is set out in the Authority’s SHLAA (CD104), which concludes *“the site has been used as a single gypsy pitch for a number of years. It is well screened from the surrounding area and benefits from an existing access. Landford itself has a basic range of local services.”* (SHLAA Appendix C, page 31). The landowner’s agent made a representation on the Submission Draft Local Plan supporting the allocation in Policy SP33.
3. The allocation is located within the curtilage of an existing gypsy pitch, which was granted planning permission in June 2014 for the permanent stationing of a residential mobile home and ancillary domestic buildings for a gypsy. The original temporary consent for the stationing of the mobile home was granted in 2004 for 5 years (by the predecessor local authority) and was subsequently extended by a further 5 years in 2009 by the Authority. An application for Forest View to be made a permanent gypsy site was granted planning permission in June 2014.
4. Policy SP33 recognises that the proposed site is close to sensitive nature conservation designations (the adjacent land to the north east of the site is designated as both the New Forest SAC and the Landford Bog SSSI) and requires any potential user of that site to put mitigation measures in place. Infrastructure is already in place for the existing gypsy pitch.
5. A planning application for a gypsy pitch would be subject to consideration of the other policies in the Submission Draft Local Plan, in particular Policies SP5, SP6, DP8, DP10 and SP15. Policy SP5 provides protection from development proposals that have the potential to affect internationally designated sites, such as the New Forest SAC which is close to the proposed site in Policy SP33. Policy SP6 provides protection from development proposals that have the potential to affect SSSIs, such as Landford Bog. In addition, any subsequent application on this site would also be subject to Policy DP8 on Safeguarding and improving water resources, Policy DP10 on Open Space, and Policy SP15 on Tranquillity, which covers light pollution.
6. Natural England have not objected to the proposed site allocation.

7. In conclusion, the Authority considers that the site is deliverable as it is available now, as the landowner has indicated, and it is considered suitable as it already has planning permission for use as one permanent gypsy pitch.

**9.3 Do the criteria set out in Policy SP33 provide clear and effective guidance on constraints and suitable mitigation in relation to the Forest View allocation, Landford?**

1. Policy SP33 sets out a number of detailed requirements for the consideration of a gypsy site at Forest View, Landford. The policy addresses the issues of suburbanisation and landscape character within the National Park context in **criterion (a)**, and in so doing reflects the broad principles of a number of guidelines in the Landford Village Design Statement (CD162), especially relating to boundary treatments. Given the National Park designation and the special qualities, it is considered appropriate to seek to minimise visual harm and any adverse impact on landscape character. This is also in line with paragraph 26 clause d of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (CD112) “*not enclosing a site with so much hard landscaping, high walls or fences, that the impression may be given that the site and its occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community*”.
2. The Local Plan recognises that there is an historical, cultural tradition of gypsies and travellers in the New Forest, and seeks to address the identified need. In so doing, **criterion (b)** focuses on meeting the needs of those gypsies that have a need to be located within the National Park due to a local connection. Policy SP33 seeks to make provision for gypsies and travellers in a similar way that rural exception sites allow for local needs to be met in an area that would otherwise not be considered suitable for open market, unrestricted housing. The English National Parks Circular (CD35), in paragraph 78, emphasises that National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing and should focus on meeting local needs and affordable housing.
3. The issues addressed by **criterion (c)** were raised through the iterative process of the Authority’s HRA of the draft of the Local Plan. The HRA considered the issues of urban edge effects from development, including at Forest View, Landford and made the recommendation that the policy should address the potential impact on the New Forest Special Area of Conservation by requiring any development to put in place measures to adequately mitigate the potential for the introduction of invasive species from fly tipping of garden waste (see paragraph 4.36 of the HRA (CD15)). This now appears in the Submission Draft Local Plan as criterion (c) to Policy SP33.

**9.4 Are the criteria in the second part of the policy justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to proposals for any additional sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople, the need for which may arise in the future?**

1. The criteria in Policy SP33 are consistent with national policy in PPTS that states “*Criteria should be set to guide land supply allocations where there is identified need.*” (paragraph 11). The identified need for a gypsy and traveller pitch requirement will be met through the allocated site at Landford, although the criteria will allow consideration of any additional sites through the usual planning application process. However, no suitable sites have been identified or come forward through the Plan ‘Call for Sites’ process to meet the identified need for travelling showpeople plots. Consequently, in line with national policy the Authority has set out relevant criteria for the consideration of such sites during the lifetime of the Plan.
2. Criterion a of Policy SP33 reflects national policy set out in the NPPF emphasising that National Parks have the highest status of landscape protection and that great weight be given to conserving landscape (paragraph 115) . Therefore it is appropriate to include this criterion and "*to have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment*" (paragraph 4, PPTS CD112)
3. With regard to criterion b please refer to the answer to question 9.3 above.
4. Criteria c, d, e and f broadly reflect national policy in PPTS and the NPPF, as well as having regard to the National Park purposes and its special qualities (Annex 1 of the Submission Draft Local Plan). In particular, paragraph 11 of the PPTS states that “*Criteria based policies should be fair and should facilitate the traditional and nomadic life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.*”