

Examination into Soundness of Merton Sites and Policies Plan.  
Agenda.  
Resumed Hearing Session.  
Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.  
Wednesday, 30 January, 2014

Background

At the first session dealing with this matter a wide range of points were discussed, not all of which came directly out of the submitted Hearing Statements and not all of which were comprehensively dealt with. I propose, therefore, that the first part of this resumed hearing session be devoted to a recapitulation of these points to ensure both that I understand them correctly and that everyone has had their full say.

I set out in Part I of the agenda the main points raised as I understand them and have included a number of outstanding questions (in blue) that I have identified. I anticipate that most discussion on the first part of the agenda will centre on point 6.

I will resist the introduction of additional points not already covered in Hearing Statements. However, if the points listed in the agenda below miss any important matters already raised, please let the Programme Officer know by Tuesday morning at the latest.

**Agenda Part I: Recapitulation**

1. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments: October 2007. (The 2007 Guidance) On the one hand reference was made to the Taylor Review ([full reference needed](#)) which indicated that this was up to date guidance; on the other hand reference was made to the Mayor's comments about this guidance quoted in paragraph 3.10 of the Council's Hearing Statement.
2. Core Strategy (CS). On the one hand it was said that the CS indicates at paragraph 18.50 that the results of the GTANA would be used; on the other it was said that this paragraph simply notes the existence of GTANA while paragraph 18.51 states that the Council will carry out a local assessment of need.
3. Psychological aversion. On the one hand reference was made to paragraph 15 of the 2007 Guidance which recognises this concept. On the other hand reference was made to the Mayor's comment that this concept 'does not provide an as yet sufficiently robust justification for specific planning intervention in the very tight London land market. (Paragraph 3.4 of Document 5.61 Accommodation Needs Assessments of Gypsies and Travellers in Merton.)
4. South West London Housing Market Assessment. Doc 2.6. The date of this document has to be established as has its relevance.
5. Role of 'Bricks and Mortar' accommodation. It was accepted that 'Bricks and Mortar' had a role to play in providing for G&T accommodation (paragraph 26 of the 2007 Guidance and 3.33 of the Council's Hearing Statement). However it was argued that the Plan overemphasises the role that this will play given that it is acknowledged that in paragraph 2.9 that there is a high level of housing need and a limited supply of housing. Planning Policy for Traveller Sites is primarily about pitch provision. [Question. How would the Council prioritise the Brickfield Road residents moving off the site beyond the next 5 years while ensuring an equitable approach to others in priority housing need? \(paragraph 3.37 of Council's Hearing Statement\)](#)

6. Three main criticisms were levelled at the Accommodation Needs assessment of Gypsies and Travellers (SP5.61).
  - a. That it underestimates the number of people who want to move out of 'bricks and mortar'. It was suggested that the Council had 'filtered down' the responses to its survey and relied on the answers to one question. Page 29 and Table 2.7 of Doc SP 5.61. The Council deals with these points in paragraphs 3.19 to 3.26 of its Hearing Statement. The 'cultural preference not need' point made in paragraph 3.25 of the Council's Hearing Statement was also queried.
  - b. That it overestimates the number of people wanting to move into 'bricks and mortar'. Paragraph 2.7 of the Plan refers to 5 households that would prefer or consider moving to 'bricks and mortar'. [Question. Where is the evidence to support this in Document SP5.61? Is it in appendix II to Document SP5.61?](#)
  - c. That the waiting list is not accurate. [Question. What is the basis for this statement?](#)
  - d. It was therefore suggested that 2008 London Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA) (4-16 pitches to 2017) should be relied on. On the one hand it was argued that this was still the best evidence and should be used as a starting point for any assessment. On the other hand the point was made that this survey that was specifically disavowed by Mayor in the preparation of the London Plan Minor Alterations where it was concluded that G&T accommodation needs should be assessed and managed locally. ([Reference needed](#)) It was also pointed out that this survey was based on 2007 data and much had changed since then.

#### Agenda Part II. New Points

1. What is the appropriate minimum pitch size, 250sqm or 500sqm?
2. Are any of the sites allocated in the Plan deliverable or developable as G&T sites? On the one hand it is said that Document SP5.60 (Assessment of Site Allocations for the Potential to Provide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation) demonstrates that they are not. On the other hand it is said that a number of these sites (Site 08 Leyton Road Centre, Site 17 Worsfold House/Chapel Orchard, Site 36 Chaucer Centre, Site 65 Kenley Road Car Park, Site 78 Bushey Road and Site 79 Western Road.) could be suitable and the Council should be negotiating with the owners of such private sites to seek possible G&T provision.
3. Can a 5 year supply of specific deliverable sites be identified?
4. Can a supply of specific developable sites or broad locations be identified for years 6 to 10 and years 11 to 15?