



HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land West of Parsons Field Stables, Pickhurst Lane, Pulborough
DESCRIPTION:	Use of land for the stationing of 2 static caravans for residential purposes and associated day rooms. Erection of stable buildings and formation of hardstanding (retrospective). Associated landscape works including planting of native hedges and removal of hardstanding (Retrospective)
REFERENCE:	DC/25/1371
RECOMMENDATION:	Advice / No Objection / Objection / More Information / Modification / Refusal

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

A set of comments has already been provided for a nearly identical application for this site under DC/25/0317. Therefore, the comments in this response are identical to those previously submitted, except for updated information on Horsham District's supply figures for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.

The proposal is for Gypsy & Traveller (G&T) provision on a site not identified in the development plan. It is therefore not supported by HDPF Policy 21. An assessment against the criteria in HDPF Policy 23 must take place by the case officer.

It is noted that the site is not identified as an allocation in the Council's emerging Local Plan (eLP). However, the status of the eLP is such that no more than limited weight could be applied to relevant policies and progress of the eLP is uncertain.

The Pulborough Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has passed the referendum stage. Therefore weight could be applied to relevant policies. However, there is no policy relating to the principle of G&T provision. It is therefore my view that the NP will not be significant in the determination of whether the principle of the development should be accepted.

The scheme will need to demonstrate that the proposed development would be water neutral. It is for the case officer to consider any information provided relating to this. My understanding is that the proposal would not qualify for allocated capacity from the SNWCS, which is expected to become operational in the forthcoming months.

The case officer will need to consider the merits of the application against Policy H of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS). Should water neutrality be demonstrated, of critical importance to the application is the fact that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable G&T sites. Per national policy (as expressed in the NPPF and PPTS), relevant policies for the HDPF should be considered out of date and the 'tilted balance' should be engaged. The case officer should therefore recommend approval unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits.

Based on the information considered and presented in this consultation report, I do not object to the principle of the proposed development.

MAIN COMMENTS:

Preamble

Through the material reviewed, the application would be for accommodating the needs of Gypsies & Travellers (G&T). These comments discuss policy (both emerging and adopted) relating to G&T provision, identify the latest position with respect of need and provide advice on the principle of the proposed development in light of the policy and need positions.

Development Plan

As is made clear in NPPF para 2, planning law requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan includes the Horsham District Development Framework (HDPF, 2015), the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan (2018), the West Sussex Waste Local Plan (2014) and adopted (or 'made') Neighbourhood Plans. The Pulborough Neighbourhood Plan has passed referendum and therefore has equivalent weight as would apply if the Plan had been made but does not contain any relevant policies (see further in this response). The respective Minerals and Waste Local Plans are not relevant in this case. As such, the HDPF is the part of the development plan of greatest relevance to the proposal.

I do not set out advice on the policies within the HDPF in its entirety. However, in relation to the principle of development, HDPF policies 21-23 address G&T provision.

HDPF Policy 21 identifies allocations for G&T provision. The site is not included in this list and therefore the policy does not support the proposed application.

In simple terms, HDPF Policy 22 seeks to:

- Protect existing sites (clause 1)
- Commit the Council to preparing a Site Allocations DPD for needs beyond 2017 (clause 2)
- Commit the Council to working with neighbours to make provision for G&T needs (clause 3).

In my view, the clauses are not relevant to the application. Though the application is, in part, retrospective this does not mean that the site is existing in terms of clause 1 of the policy. The case officer will be aware the Council did not adopt a Site Allocations DPD (as per clause 2) to meet G&T provision and it finds itself being unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of sites (see further in this response).

HDPF Policy 23 sets the approach for considering any applications for G&T provision on unallocated sites. The case officer should review the policy in full but in short, clause 1 of the policy seeks to ensure:

- that consideration is given to various environmental factors (sub-clause a)
- safe and convenient access and avoid significant hazard to other road users (sub-clause b)
- that the site is supplied with all utilities and essential services, parking and amenity space (sub-clause c)
- the site is located in or near to existing settlements and within reasonable distance of local services (sub-clause d)

- development would not have an unacceptable impact on landscape and the amenity of neighbours and is designed sensitively to mitigate impacts (sub-clause e)

The case officer must assess the proposal against the full criteria of clause 1. Clause 2 of the policy relates to travelling showpeople provision and is not of relevance to this application.

National Policy

National policy for G&T provision is set out in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites Document (PPTS), most recently updated in December 2024. Of most relevance to the application is Policy H of the PPTS, which relates to the determination of planning applications.

The case officer should review Policy H in full, but in short, the provisions outline:

- That decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (para 23)
- The presumption in favour of sustainable development apply, as do policies in the NPPF and PPTS (para 24)
- Consideration should be given to: local provision and need for sites; availability of alternative accommodation; personal circumstances of the applicant; locally specific criteria and; that applicants need not have local connections (para 25)
- Development should be limited in open countryside, should not dominate the nearest settled community and place undue pressure on infrastructure (para 26)
- Weight should be given to: effective use of brownfield, untidy or derelict land; landscaping which enhances the environment and increases openness; promoting healthy lifestyles and; avoiding enclosing a site so that it causes isolation from the rest of the coming (para 27)
- That consideration should be given to using conditions or obligations to overcome objections (para 28)

In addition, and of particular relevance to this application, is the explanation within PPTS para 28 that "if a local planning authority cannot demonstrate an up-to-date 5 year supply of deliverable sites, the provisions in para 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework apply." As is discussed further in this response, the Council cannot demonstrate a year supply of deliverable sites for G&T provision.

The case officer should review NPPF para 11(d) in full, including all sub paragraphs and associated footnotes. However, it is my view that HDPF policies in relation to G&T provision are rendered out of date. The consequence of this is that the 'tilted balance' is to be engaged (subject to addressing any water neutrality issues) and that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits, taking account of relevant national policies.

Emerging Local Policy

NPPF paragraph 49 sets out that "Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

The Emerging Local Plan

The Council is preparing a Local Plan to replace the HDPF. Strategic Policy 43 of the emerging Local Plan (eLP) sets out the approach with respect of G&T provision and is split into 2 clauses. The policy should be read in full but is summarised below:

- Clause 1 seeks to protect existing sites and identify allocations to meet G&T needs
- Clause 2 identifies the criteria that the proposals for G&T applications should be determined against

The eLP was submitted for examination. A full schedule of Hearings was programmed and the first week of Hearings were held in December 2024. However, after the first week of Hearings, the Inspector cancelled further Hearings. On 22nd April 2025, the Council published a letter from its Local Plan Inspector. Within it, he recommended that the emerging Local Plan (eLP) be withdrawn.

On 18 August 2025 the Council wrote a Response to the Initial Findings Letter and submitted it to the Planning Inspectorate to ask them to reconsider their position on the Local Plan in view of the imminent changing planning regulations which will repeal the Duty to Co-operate. A response was received on 1 September 2025 inviting the Council to submit its further evidence. The Council will be responding further to the Inspector shortly.

Given these correspondences, the Council's Cabinet did not consider whether to withdraw the eLP when it met on 17 September 2025. Hence the emerging plan remains the Council's own policy position and continues to have some, albeit limited, weight to Policy 43 in the eLP until such a time when this position changes.

I note that this change will be unlikely to have a major bearing on the application, given that the Council's supply position means that the tilted balance is in effect, as per policy contained in the NPPF and PPTS.

The Emerging Neighbourhood Plan

The Pulborough Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has passed the referendum stage with 83.71% in favour of the plan. A meeting of the Council's Cabinet is programmed for 8 October to consider the formal 'making' (or adoption) of the Plan, in the meantime full weight should be applied to its policies. However, there is no policy relating to the principle of G&T provision and no allocation for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. It is therefore my view that, for the particular use of land proposed, the NP will not be significant in the determination of whether the principle of the development should be accepted.

Supply Position

To inform the development of Strategic Policy 43 the Council undertook a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA, November 2023) and a Targeted Update (September 2024) was also produced in response to changes regarding the PPTS's definition of who is a member of the G&T community for the purposes of planning policy. Collectively, 50 pitches are identified as being needed for the first five years of the eLP (2023-2028).

For the reasons stated above, I give little weight to the proposed allocations within the eLP and thus I do not assess that they can reasonably form part of the Council's five-year supply.

Accordingly, I consider that the Council's supply consists of the following and amounts to 12 pitches:

- Peacocks Paddock, North Heath, (DC/25/0150) – 2 pitches granted 8 August 2025
- Parsons Field Stables, Pulborough (DC/24/0256) – 1 pitch granted 5 June 2025
- Pear Tree Farm, Henfield (DC/21/1796) – 5 pitches granted on appeal 29 February 2024
- Redgates, Lower Beeding (DC/24/0273) - 1 pitch granted 26 April 2024
- Stonepit Lane, Henfield (DC/24/0367) - 3 pitches granted on appeal 21 November 2024

The supply is insufficient to meet needs within a five-year period. As such, per national policy contained within the NPPF and PPTS, the 'tilted balance' is in effect. The impact of this is discussed earlier in this consultation response.

Water Neutrality

Of importance to the determination of the proposed application, will be whether the application can demonstrate water neutrality. I make no assessment of whether the proposal can demonstrate water neutrality and that is for the case officer to determine.

The Council and its partners are due to launch the Sussex North Water Certification Scheme (SNWCS), formerly the Sussex North Offsetting Water Scheme (or SNOWS), in the forthcoming months and will likely be able to allocate capacity. However, considering the retrospective nature of the application should the application be determined in advance of launching SNWCS, it would not be possible to allocate capacity to the application and therefore would need to demonstrate water neutrality by other means. As such, the case officer will need to assess the application considering this context.

Extent of policy comments

I have limited my comments only to those which relate to the principle of development. I have not considered the finer details of the proposal, and it is for the case officer to assess the merits of the proposal against all relevant policies.

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

N/A

NAME:

Mark Daly

DEPARTMENT:

Planning Policy

DATE:

23/09/2025