

Head of Planning  
Horsham District Council  
Albery House  
Springfield Road  
Horsham  
West Sussex  
RH12 2GB

26 January 2026

Dear Sirs,

**RE: PROPOSED GYPSY/TRAVELLER SITE COMPRISING 4 No. PITCHES, EACH ACCOMMODATING 2 No. CARAVANS AND A DAYROOM. FRYERN PARK FARM, FRYERN ROAD, STORRINGTON**

Please find attached completed planning application forms plans and supporting information in respect of the the above-mentioned proposal.

## **DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT**

### **Planning History**

Planning permission was granted in October 2016, under application No. DC/16/1659, for the erection of a replacement 4-bay stable and hay barn.

Planning permission was granted in November 2019, under application No. DC/19/1069, for: "Creation/Reinstatement of access, laying of hardstanding and construction of a sand school".

In December 2019 The Planning Inspectorate allowed an appeal for two Traveller Pitches, HDC ref DC/18/2084.

### **Use, Scale and Layout**

The proposals involve the material change of use of land from equine use to use as a residential caravan site for 4 No. Gypsy/Traveller families. Each family

would have two caravans, including no more than one static caravan/mobile home, and an ancillary amenity building. The plans include space for the parking of 2 cars for each pitch.

The proposed development utilises areas already laid to hardstanding made lawful in 2019 and, as shown on the aerial photograph, dated April 2020 , attached below.



### **Planning Policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) puts the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of both plan-making and decision-taking. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; or, if the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless, *inter alia*, any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against

the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.

In the latter regard, the application site is not located within the Green Belt, or within a SPA, SSSI, Conservation Area, local greenspace, National Landscape or National Park. Furthermore, the proposed caravan site is not located within an area shown on the Environment Agency's flood maps as being at high risk from flooding.

Paragraph 4 of the NPPF requires that the Framework should be read in conjunction with the Government's *Planning policy for traveller sites*. Policy C of PPTS makes clear that some sites will be in rural areas and the countryside. This advice is qualified by Policy H (paragraph 26) which states that sites should be very strictly limited in the open countryside **away from** existing settlements.

Paragraph 28 of PPTS makes clear that if a local planning authority cannot demonstrate an up-to-date 5 year supply of deliverable sites, the provisions in paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework apply. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should consider how they could overcome planning objections to particular proposals using planning conditions or planning obligations.

Policy 26 of the Horsham District Local Plan (HDPF) seeks to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside against inappropriate development, and seeks to support certain forms of development related to the needs of rural enterprise and sustainable rural development, while seeking to prevent a significant intensification of use and retain important components of rural character.

Policy 23 of the HDPF sets out the criteria for use in the determination of planning applications for non-allocated gypsy and traveller development, seeking to ensure that sites are appropriate in terms of ground conditions, vulnerability to flood risk, served by safe and convenient vehicular/pedestrian access, appropriate to local character, appearance and neighbouring amenity. Policy 23 seeks to support sites located in or near existing settlements, within

reasonable distance of local services and community facilities, in particular to schools and essential health services.

Paragraph 25 of the PPTS sets out that Local Planning Authorities should consider the following issues amongst other relevant matters, in the determination of applications for traveller sites: a.) The existing level of local provision and need for sites; b.) The availability (or lack) of alternative accommodation for the applicants; c.) Other personal circumstances of the applicant; d.) That the locally specific criteria used to guide the application of sites in plans or which form the policy where there is no identified need for pitches/plots should be used to assess applications that may come forward on unallocated sites; e.) That they should determine applications for sites from any travellers and not just those with local connections.

### **Local Provision and Need for Sites**

The need for provision of 93 pitches for Gypsy Traveller households set out in a GTAA dated January 2020 was updated by Opinion Research Services for Horsham Council and published in December 2023. The update indicates a need between 2023-2040 for 128 pitches. This follows the result of the Lisa Smith Judgement (Smith v. SoS for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (CA 2021-00171, 31st October 2022) where the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) was updated in December 2023 to revert back to the 2012 PPTS planning definition of a Traveller by reintroducing those who have ceased to travel permanently due to education, ill health, or old age into the definition (now referred to as the 2023 PPTS). The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2023 (GTAA) does not however reflect the most current national policy definition of “Traveller” as revised in December 2024. These changes significantly broaden the scope of who qualifies as a traveller for planning purposes and, as such, materially affect the validity of the GTAA’s conclusions regarding accommodation need.

A targeted update of the 2023 GTAA, published in July 2024 estimates a cultural need for 128 permanent pitches, 2023 – 2040, of which 80 pitches are required in the first 5 years (2023-2027). The current five-year period runs to 2030 and, therefore, more than 80 pitches are required to be provided by

2030. The Council's planning records show that permissions have only been granted for about 9 pitches in the last 3 years, leaving a considerable shortfall in the five-year supply. As such, paragraph 11d of the NPPF is engaged by which **planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.**

This is a high hurdle. It has been established in case law that: *"Whatever entered the "tilted balance" needed to do so to the extent that it "significantly and demonstrably" outweighed the benefits of the proposed development. Merely to find "harm" or "material harm" or, for that matter, that the development would be out of keeping with the established character would be to apply the wrong test, or at least is not demonstrably consistent with the application of the correct test"* [Green Lane Chertsey(Developments) Limited v SSHCLG [2019] EWHC 990(Admin)].

### **Adverse Impacts**

In an appeal in 2023, for a further two pitches at Fryern Park Farm adjoining the access road (APP/Z3825/W/20/3263152), the Inspector identified 3 main issues:

- a) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
- b) the effect of the proposal on the Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site in relation to water neutrality; and
- c) if harm would be caused to the above issues, whether there are other material considerations that would outweigh that harm and justify a development otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.

As far as harm to the countryside is concerned, HDPF Policy 2, amongst other things, seeks to maintain rural character, while providing for the community's housing needs, including the temporary and permanent needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and retaining and enhancing landscape character. HDPF Policy 23 on Gypsy and Traveller accommodation sets out criteria on allocation of sites and for determining planning applications for non-allocated sites. Criterion e. of

HDPF Policy 23 refers to development not having an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and being sensitively designed to mitigate any impact.

The in-principle acceptability of gypsy sites in rural and semi-rural locations has a number of inevitable consequences. Traveller sites have a number of characteristic features which, depending on the particular setting, can be atypical in the countryside, such as: caravans, hardstandings, utility buildings and residential paraphernalia. As a result, some degree of visual impact must be expected and, if an adequate supply of gypsy sites is to be provided, some degree of visual harm must usually be acceptable.

The test for countryside harm is whether the development causes unacceptable harm which cannot be made acceptable with additional landscaping. In this regard, paragraph 26 of Policy H makes clear that soft landscaping can positively enhance the environment, whereas sites should not be enclosed with so much hard landscaping that the impression is given that the site and its occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community. This infers that, firstly, sites do not have to be adequately screened from the outset; secondly, that gypsy sites do not have to be hidden from view; thirdly, that sites can be assimilated into their surroundings to a sufficient degree using indigenous species; and fourthly, that it is to be expected that gypsy sites will be more visible in the winter months, when the leaves are off deciduous trees and shrubs.

In this case, the application site is located along a quiet country lane, and enclosed within fencing, mature hedgerow boundaries and built development which would substantially screen the proposed development from public view. Caravans would be visible from the site access, both on the adjacent pitches and on the site subject to this application. However, this effect on the character and appearance of the area would be highly localised as a result of the range of boundary treatments partially screening the site. Though it would be visible to those walking, cycling or riding along the right of way, there would be only a brief and transient visual effect on passing the site access. Even this would be in a context of other caravans and adjacent equestrian structures. As

such, I consider that the proposal would not have a harmful effect on the surrounding landscape and would have no detrimental effect on the wider Green Gap given the level of containment of the site.

It would be a small site, close to an existing settlement, which is of a scale which would neither over-dominate the local settled community or, put undue strain on local infrastructure.

The Inspector determining the 2023 appeal refused planning permission purely on the basis that the appellant had failed to demonstrate that the proposed development could achieve water neutrality. Natural England has since withdrawn its Position Statement on water neutrality in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone and, therefore, this no longer forms a reason for refusal.

### **Balance of Considerations**

In addition to the significant unmet need for gypsy sites in the District, the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable land and, the current development plan lacks a policy to remedy this situation. The unmet need, absence of alternative sites, absence of a five-year supply and failure of the development plan to meet the identified need relate separately to past failings, current need and shortages of supply, and expected future shortcomings of supply and policy. They are material considerations which weigh separately and cumulatively in favour of this application.

In my opinion, any adverse impacts on the character or appearance of this area do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development. For the above reasons, I respectfully request that planning permission be granted but, if you require any further information in support of this application please do not hesitate to email me your requirements.

Kind regards,

PHILIP BROWN BA (Hons) Urban and Regional Planning