

**Submission to Planning Inspector by West Hemel
Action Group [WHAG]**

**Examination of the Dacorum Site Allocations
Development Plan document – October 2016**

**Dacorum Site Allocations DPD
Matters, Issues and Questions**

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

**Submission to Planning Inspector by West Hemel Action Group [WHAG]
Examination of the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan document –
October 2016**

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

1. *Does the Council's approach in relation to traveller sites generally conform with the expectations of the CS and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (August 2015)? If not, why not?*

1. We do not believe that the Council's approach to the traveller sites conforms with the expectations of the CS or Planning Policy.
2. Traveller sites are an emotive subject fraught with misunderstanding and bias. We recognise national and local policy and the need for fairness, integration and sustainability but, we have concerns about the proposed Gypsy and Traveller sites. In particular, we continue to question (1) the default inclusion of traveller sites in the Local Allocations (LAs) and (2) the ability to provide a compliant site within LA3.

Core Strategy

3. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF requires a Council's plan to be "*the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence*".
4. The Council's logic (PC3c, May 2016) for the location of Traveller sites does not follow this requirement.
 - The 2008 Scott Wilson report (HG15) and associated consultation (SA18 and SA11) identified 26 "reasonable alternatives" (PC3c, p5) for traveller sites all outside the Green Belt because the study concluded that "*because of the restrictions.....Green Belt should not be used in the selection criteria*".
 - This detailed study and consultation was obviated by the Council's emergent Core Strategy which made a wholesale determination that traveller sites would be "expected to be provided alongside large-scale planned development, particularly the appropriate local allocations". However, this was well before the LAs were approved and without the benefit of any equivalent study as to the reasonableness or relative merit of potential sites within the LAs. No detailed work on the 'reasonableness' of sites within the LAs has been conducted to date.
 - Thus there is no "proportionate evidence" to suggest that sites within the LAs are more appropriate or reasonable than those previously identified sites.

**Submission to Planning Inspector by West Hemel Action Group [WHAG]
Examination of the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan document –
October 2016**

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

5. It is not an “appropriate strategy” to disregard viable sites outside the LAs on the basis of a Core Strategy that has not been considered or consulted on the basis of like for like or proportionate evidence.

6. The Council’s statement that “*no objections have been received either in the soundness of the Sustainability Appraisal undertaken, or any concerns raised that it does not fulfil the requirements of the relevant legislation*” (PC3c, p9) is fallacious. WHAG has made numerous informal submissions to this effect as well as formal submissions alongside individual members of the public in response to ongoing consultations.

7. Further, by reference to the relevant DCLG Planning policy and Good Practice Guide, in relation to LA3 we do not consider that the Council can be in accordance with its own stated approach “*...to aid integration of sites with the settled community; reduce the marginalisation of the travelling communities; and ensure occupants of the sites have good access to local services and facilities such as health and education.*” (CS hearing paper 7, para 7.3.4)

8. The location of the Traveller site at the furthest point from the central community hub would seem to mitigate against equality and integration which is surely the aspiration of the CS. The discreet access to the SW would seem to run counter to the notion of integrating within the broader community of the new development and raise issues of further inappropriate use by heavier vehicles and caravans in Chaulden Lane.

Planning Policy for Traveller sites (DCLG, August 2015) – The “Policy”

Ref	Requirement	WHAG Comment
Policy A- using evidence		
7 a)	Pay particular attention to early and effective community engagement with both settled and traveller communities	While the 2006 and 2008 consultations were supported with a detailed report, the CS/LA3 consultation has been generic; with the “potential location” for the traveller site now being presented as a foregone conclusion without any apparent meaningful public consultaion or design and sustainability review. In the papers and minutes relating to Agenda Item 14,Public Participation, at the DBC

**Submission to Planning Inspector by West Hemel Action Group [WHAG]
Examination of the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan document –
October 2016**

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

		<p>Council meeting 20 January 2016 the Council refers to the process defined in the 'Homes and Communities:Background Issues Papers' accompanying the Site Allocations DPD. This document is generic and in no way demonstrates how LA3 or the specific location now apparently selected by DBC meets the requisite guidelines. In response to specific concerns in this regard, the Council abrogated responsibility by stating that: <i>"The location of the Gypsy and Traveller site within the LA3 sites will however be a matter for the independent Inspector to consider when he examines the Council's Site Allocations document."</i></p>
Policy B – Plan-making		
10 a)	Identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites	No update since 2008, providing no 'proportionate evidence' in favour of Traveller sites on the LAs
10 b)	Identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth	The 2008 study provides a dated but detailed appraisal by comparison to the broad proposals in the LAs
10 c)	Consider production of joint development plans that set targets on a cross-authority basis	No evidence seen
10 d)	Relate the number of pitches or plots to the surrounding population	As currently proposed, the hamlet of Winkwell – a designated Conservation Area (1978) - is the relevant population http://www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk/data/places/places-h/hemel-hempstead/hemel-winkwell.htm
13	Ensure that sites are sustainable economically, socially and environmentally	See comments below under "the Guide"

**Submission to Planning Inspector by West Hemel Action Group [WHAG]
Examination of the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan document –
October 2016**

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

Policy C: Sites in rural areas		
14.	Local authorities should ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled community.	Given the “potential site” and orientation, the nearest community is the hamlet of Winkwell; the 6 residential properties will be dominated by 7 traveller pitches.
Policy E: Traveller sites in Green Belt		
17.	Green Belt boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances.	This issue is covered in detail in our response to Matter 2. There may be better alternatives outside LA3 and the Green Belt but no comparison has been made.

Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites – A Good Practice Guide (DCLG, May 2008) – The “Guide” – Chapter 3, Site Location/Selection

Ref	Requirement	WHAG Comment
Location		
3.2	Easy access to local services and to social contact with other residents in the community	The “potential” site is marginalised at the lowest most South Westerly corner of the site, with egress South away from the main development. It is the furthest point from local services; as the crow flies 600m uphill on foot and a circuitous route of 2.7km via the minor road and already strained infrastructure of Chaulden Lane
3.4	Factors which are important for the sustainability of a site:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is 600 metres from an A41 junction but only via minor rural roads with specific weight and width constraints; in particular over canal bridges which are notorious bottle necks

**Submission to Planning Inspector by West Hemel Action Group [WHAG]
Examination of the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan document –
October 2016**

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

		including the unreliable swing bridge which is narrow and has a weight limit – see Appendix 3.1 at the end of this document.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of integrated co-existence between site and local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As 3.2 above, the site seems designed to turn its back on the community and vice versa.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy access to GP and health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As 3.2 above, the location is too far to walk (especially if in need of healthcare) and the lack of internal road linkages necessitate a circuitous drive.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Near a bus route, shops and schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As 3.2 above. There is no convenient bus route
Relationship to surrounding land use		
3.8	It is important to ensure that proposals to develop a site link in with other broader strategies for improving community cohesion	There are no proposals for cohesion and particularly physical linkages (roads, paths, etc), effectively segregating the site from the rest of the development
Health and safety considerations		
3.18	When considering sites adjacent to main roads, flyovers and railway lines, careful regard must be given to: the health and safety of children and others; and noise	The London to Manchester mainline is less than 100m away from the proposed site
3.19	Sites should not be developed on exposed sloping sites where there is risk of caravans being overturned..	The site as proposed is exposed to the prevailing wind from the SW

**Submission to Planning Inspector by West Hemel Action Group [WHAG]
Examination of the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan document –
October 2016**

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

2. Paragraph 6.2 of the Dacorum Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council Traveller Needs Assessment - January 2013 (GTAA), says that the owner of the Timber Yard, Water Lane, Bovingdon wishes to convert the site which currently contains Showmen plots to residential use. Can you provide any more up to date information on this situation?

1. Further, a recent DBC planning determination dated 15 December 2015 declined an application for a private Traveller Site in Bovingdon on the basis that:

"The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in a Green Belt area. The very special circumstances which have been advanced to show why planning permission should be granted are not considered to outweigh the harm of the inappropriate development. The proposal is therefore contrary to DBCS Policy CS5 and 22 and national planning policy as set out in the NPPF and the PPTS."

2. However, the proposed inclusion of the Traveller Site in the Local Allocations for LA1, LA3 and LA5 supposedly accord with National Planning Policy and DBC's policy, which are explicit that inclusion in the Green Belt is "inappropriate" other than in "very exceptional circumstances" as opposed to the preferred use of brownfield sites and the promotion of more private traveller sites. The Council does not adequately justify these seemingly contradictory interpretations of national and local planning policy.

3. The argument for - and practice of- removing land from the Green Belt before permitting development that would otherwise be prohibited is specious, particularly when other sites have previously been identified within DBC - the Sept 2006 Scott Wilson report on traveller site identification refers.

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

3. ***Figure 13 on page 32 of the GTAA shows that in Dacorum Borough there is a need for 7 extra pitches in the period 2012-2017, 8 pitches between 2017 and 2022 and then one pitch in each of the following 5 year periods. The Plan seeks to provide 5 pitches on site LA5, which is available for immediate development and 12 pitches on 2 other new 'local allocation' sites that will be permitted to come forward from 2021 (unless they are needed earlier to secure a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land). The likely development/release of the traveller sites allocated under policies LA1, LA3 and LA5 does not correlate with figure 13 of the GTAA. It would appear that there is likely to be a lag in their provision compared to when they are likely to be required. Is it expected that some other private sites will come forward and be approved to fill this void? Could, if necessary, the traveller site element of these allocated sites come forward early (in advance of the rest of the development) or would the whole of the allocation be required to be developed comprehensively?***
1. Could the requirement not also be accelerated and fulfilled (in part at least) by revisiting the previously identified and demonstrably appropriate sites as set out in the Scott Wilson report (Sept 2006) and associated consultations.

In conclusion, we feel that the myopic origins of CS22 constraining traveller sites to 'Major Development' are overriding sound policy and design principles to the detriment of both traveller and settled communities. Therefore, we believe that the Council should reconsider the viability of this site in light of reasonable alternatives within the Borough.

**Submission to Planning Inspector by West Hemel Action Group [WHAG]
Examination of the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan document –
October 2016**

Matter 3 – Gypsies & Travellers

Appendix 3.1



Figure 1 Pictures of swing bridge at Winkwell.