
Local Plan Sub-Committee MINUTES

**Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on
Thursday, 7 August 2025 from 7.00 - 8.49 pm**

Present: Councillors Stephen Giles-Medhurst OBE, Oliver Cooper, Steve Drury,
Vicky Edwards, Philip Hearn, Sarah Nemes, Narinder Sian, Paul Rainbow and Stephen Cox

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Rue Grewal, Councillor Jon Tankard and Jon Bishop (Three Rivers Joint Residents' Association)

Officers in Attendance:

Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy & Conservation
Emma Lund, Senior Committee Officer
Aaron Roberts, Senior Planning Officer

LPSC7/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Louise Price, Chris Mitchell and Stephen King.

The substitutes were Councillors Paul Rainbow, Narinder Sian and Stephen Cox respectively.

LPSC8/23 MINUTES

The Part I and Part II minutes of the Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

LPSC9/23 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

LPSC10/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

**LPSC11/23 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT AND
GYPSY, TRAVELLER AND TRAVELLING SHOW PEOPLE TOPIC PAPER**

The Sub-Committee received a report which provided an overview of the most recent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) which had been prepared to assist with the formulation of the Emerging Local Plan and which identified current and future accommodation need. The Sub-Committee was invited to note the contents of the report, agree to publish the GTAA to the Emerging Local Plan evidence base, and recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee the update to the 'Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople' policy.

The Senior Planning Officer summarised that the GTAA had required updating following its earlier publication in March due to an amendment to the definition of a traveller to include 'all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or living in a caravan.' This had resulted in an increase in the number of people who would fall into the category of traveller.

In terms of gypsies and travellers, the identified need of 37 pitches arising from those households who met the planning definition was required to be met directly from site allocations (either by allocating new sites or expanding existing sites). The need of 4 pitches arising from households with undetermined need would be met through criteria-based policies. The five-year need for gypsies and travellers was 21 pitches.

In terms of travelling showpeople, the identified need of 6 plots arising from those households who met the planning definition was required to be met directly from site allocations (either by allocating new sites or expanding existing sites). The need of 10 plots arising from households with undetermined need would be met through criteria-based policies. The five-year need for travelling showpeople was 6 plots.

A call for sites to help identify any potential additional sites had been undertaken, ending on 4 August 2025. However, this had resulted in little interest from landowners and there had been only one formal submission. This had included two sites, one of which was currently subject to a planning application for dwellings and was therefore unavailable. The other site was subject to a planning application for gypsy pitches which was awaiting validation; it therefore did not represent a new site.

In terms of the strategy for meeting the need, the Senior Planning Officer reported that there were a number of pending planning applications which would result in a new gain of 6 gypsy pitches in the event that all were approved. A further planning application to change the conditions of an existing permission would result in 5 further static caravans at one site if approved, although this would not necessarily equate to 5 pitches at the current time given that they may be used by existing families. There was therefore currently a deficit of c 15 gypsy pitches (or potentially 10) compared to the five-year need, and so the potential for expansion of existing sites would need to be investigated, as well as other options such as allocating provision within larger housing sites.

Additionally, many of the existing travelling showpeople sites appeared to be at full capacity with little room for expansion due to site constraints, although this would require also further investigation.

In response to a question officers advised that it would be important to be able to demonstrate at Examination that as much as possible had been done to seek to meet the need. In the event that it were not possible, the Council would need to make the case for this and look at a criteria-based policy for the outstanding need. However, at this stage the expectation was that the need could be met.

Committee Members asked questions about the detail of the report and individual sites which were responded to by officers.

RESOLVED:

That the Local Plan Sub-Committee:

- (i) notes the contents of the report;
- (ii) agrees to publish the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment July 2025 to the emerging Local Plan Evidence Base (available on the Local Plan webpage); and

- (iii) recommends to the Policy & Resources Committee the update to the 'Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople' policy.

LPSC12/23 GREEN BELT TOPIC PAPER REPORT

The Sub-Committee received a report which provided an overview of the draft Green Belt Topic Paper which had been prepared to assist with the formulation of the Local Plan. The Sub-Committee was invited to note the contents of the report and the associated Topic Paper.

In introducing the report, the Head of Planning Policy & Conservation summarised that as 76% of the District was Green Belt, this topic area was one of the most important within the Local Plan. Recent updates to national planning policy set out that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances were fully justified: these exceptional circumstances included releasing Green Belt where housing needs could not be met in other areas (i.e. through urban and brownfield sites) and also the acute need for affordable housing and other forms of specialist accommodation.

The report summarised the three Green Belt reviews which had been undertaken in the past and introduced the latest Green Belt review. Further detail on the evolution of strategy and policies, previous approach to the Green Belt, and key national policy changes was included in the Topic Paper. The Sub-Committee heard that the Topic Paper was a 'living document' which would be updated throughout the plan-making process in order to reflect the updated evidence, changes to the policy context, and the outcomes of various stages of consultation and engagement.

In response to a question, officers advised that if it was felt that the standard method local housing need figure could not be met without unacceptable harm to the Green Belt, and the evidence met the test set out in paragraph 146 of the NPPF, then there was potential for the Council to make a case at Examination for a Local Plan with a lower housing need figure.

Jon Bishop, of the Three Rivers Joint Residents' Association spoke on the item, drawing attention to potential anomalies arising from the settlement hierarchy outlined at paragraph 4.13.5 of the report. It was considered that the current definition may result in a lesser protection for Carpenders Park than for South Oxhey (although they were considered to be essentially the same conurbation), and for Kings Langley (which partly sat in Dacorum) and it was suggested that officers review the paragraph to allow these areas to be viewed more holistically.

Officers advised that the settlement hierarchy would be updated as part of the Plan-making process but it was not expected to change significantly. In classifying settlements as towns or villages consideration was given to Office for National Statistics (ONS) definitions, as well as definitions in previous Green Belt reviews. As the classifications would be closely scrutinized at Examination, changes were likely to be challenged. In relation to Carpenders Park it was not considered to be a village, but rather part of the urban sprawl conurbation of South Oxhey and Watford. The classification of a settlement as a town, key centre or village would apply through the totality of the Plan, and not solely in relation to the Green Belt.

In response to a question officers also clarified the criteria for classification as a historic town, noting that the threshold was high. Within the totality of the South West Herts area, only one town/city (St Albans) had been considered to meet the designation.

In response to another question, officers confirmed that the current Green Belt review included checking previous reviews for compliance with current NPPF requirements.

RESOLVED:

That the Local Plan Sub-Committee notes the contents of the report and the associated Topic Paper.

LPSC13/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act. It has been declared by the Sub-Committee that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

LPSC14/23 MEMBER BRIEFING ON EMERGING GREEN BELT EVIDENCE AND UPDATE ON NON-GREEN BELT SITES

Councillor Cooper arrived at 19.59.

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the initial findings of the ongoing Green Belt review, which had recently been received from the Council's consultants. It was noted that the findings still required verification and checking: a report would be brought to the September meeting with the final findings and a full list of sites.

CHAIR