

Hittisleigh Parish Council has reviewed the MDDC Local Plan proposed modifications for gypsy and traveller sites and have the following comments:

MM11 – S14: Countryside and paragraph 2.82 Local Plan page 59

We understand the rationale for removing the words ‘**very strictly**’ to give MDDC flexibility to make provision for required sites but we are concerned that this means sites could potentially be included in the countryside where the same policy (S14 Countryside) does not permit development: ‘new isolated homes will be avoided in the countryside unless circumstances as set out in national policy and supplemented in relevant Local Plan policies such as Policy DM6 (rural exception sites), DM8 (rural workers dwellings) and DM9 (conversion of rural buildings)’.

It is not clarified what the ‘**certain circumstances**’ might be for ‘the development of such sites outside of settlement limits’.

Windfall sites: the Local Plan makes no mention of ‘**windfall sites**’ in relation to gypsy & traveller sites specifically but only to housing provision in general (paragraph 2.10, page 28). In the MDDC statement from the February 2018 hearing however, an estimate of a further 1.5 windfall gypsy & traveller *itches* every 2 years is given (mh-mddc-1-7-gypsies-and-travellers). Should para 2.10 (page 28) be amended to also include mention of windfall sites/pitches for gypsy & travellers?

We propose that planning consent for a gypsy and traveller site in the open countryside cannot be transferred without further planning consent and the on- site dwelling cannot be accepted as criteria for further residential development.

MM48 DM7: Traveller sites and paragraph 4.29 Local Plan pages 164-165

Is the potential number of ‘**dependents**’ included in the estimates for site numbers? Do ‘dependents’ need to also fit the criteria as set out in DM7?

Paragraph 4.28 (page 164) we assume this paragraph is to be deleted and replaced by the proposed text (1. Planning applications for pitches and plots and 2. Provision on allocated sites). However, we cannot see this is stated in

the MM or that the paragraph is shown with text struck through (as with other changes).

DM7 4.28 To ensure that sites will meet the needs of the travelling communities and the settled community a criteria based policy will be operated as set out above to determine applications for traveller sites. In order to ensure that users of sites will have access to facilities, national policy indicates that local planning authorities should very strictly limit new traveller site development in countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside allocations in the development plan. Sites will therefore only be permitted where facilities will be accessible without recourse to a car either by walking, cycling or utilising public transport. However, sites must also be in locations where the local environment is of satisfactory quality, so locations adjacent to noisy or polluting land uses or in areas of floodplain will not be suitable.

Hittisleigh Parish Council is aware of the difficulties currently being met in assessing an application for a gypsy and traveller site in open countryside, because the various policies can be interpreted to both support and object to the application. There is a need for clarity so that the policy requirements, for managed pitches and a planning application for a single development in open countryside, are understood by all involved.

There is concern that a relaxation of current policy, so that gypsy/traveller applications for development in open countryside are allowed, will encourage many applicants and engage MDDC Planning and Parish Councils in protracted assessment.

Hittisleigh Parish Council.
17th February 2020