

Community Involvement Statement

Proposal: Change of use of land to allow the siting of two residential static caravans (2 pitches) (Gypsy/Traveller)

Introduction

This statement accompanies the planning application for two Gypsy and Traveller pitches intended for residential occupation. It sets out the approach taken to community involvement and explains why direct engagement with the local community has not been undertaken, while highlighting the wider policy and equality context.

Policy Context

National planning policy, including the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS), requires local authorities to identify and maintain a five-year supply of Gypsy and Traveller pitches. Wokingham Borough Council has not met this requirement. In such circumstances, applications that contribute to addressing unmet need are consistent with both national and local planning objectives.

The Equality Act 2010 also places a duty on public bodies to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups. Provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation is a key part of meeting this duty.

Community Engagement

No direct engagement has been carried out with the local community for the following reasons:

- **Unmet Need:** The Council has failed to provide a five-year supply of Gypsy and Traveller pitches. This application seeks to make a positive contribution towards addressing that shortfall.
- **Local Sentiment:** Previous proposals of this nature have attracted negative responses from the local community. While community views are acknowledged, they do not override the Council's statutory duty to provide adequate accommodation.
- **Policy Priority:** In light of the Council's unmet need, the overriding planning priority is to deliver suitable sites. Engagement was therefore not considered necessary at this stage, as the proposal directly responds to a recognised shortfall.

Positive Contribution

Although direct engagement has not been undertaken, the proposal itself represents a constructive step towards:

- Meeting identified housing need for Gypsy and Traveller families.
- Promoting inclusivity and equality within the Borough.
- Supporting the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations under national planning policy and equality legislation.

Conclusion

This application is submitted in recognition of Wokingham Borough Council's failure to meet its five-year supply obligation for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. While community

involvement is an important aspect of the planning process, in this case engagement has not been undertaken due to:

1. The overriding policy requirement to address unmet need.
2. The consistently negative local sentiment towards such proposals, which does not alter the Council's statutory duty.