

# **Cheltenham Plan Examination**

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## **Matter 9: Other**

**Written statement by Cheltenham Borough Council**

**23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019**

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## **Main Issue: Gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople (GTTS)**

### **1. Policy GT1 proposes the designation of a site which is located outside any settlement and which is in the AONB to accommodate the needs of GTTS in accordance with the JCS Policy SD13. How does this allocation comply with Government policy for traveller sites?**

In order to fully understand this allocation, a history of the site is required. The site in question currently benefits from temporary planning permission to be used as a Gypsy/Traveller site. The occupants of the site are the only permanently situated Gypsies/Travellers identified in the Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Assessment (March 2017) (GTAA) within Cheltenham Borough. The site is owned by the occupant of the site and has been the occupant's home since 2012, when planning permission was first sought for this land-use on a permanent basis.

Due to the occupants being unavailable to be interviewed when the GTAA was undertaken, it was not possible for the work to fully gauge the number of households living at this site. Therefore the view was taken that there could be concealed households living at this location, or children who may need their own pitch within the plan period, hence the requirement identified in the GTAA.

The site itself has been recommended by the planning officer on each occasion of renewal for permission, even when planning permission was sought on a permanent basis, therefore this would suggest that in planning terms the site is acceptable despite being situated within the AONB. The site is well screened from the road, so much that many people do not realise there is anything on the site.

Proximity to local services and on-site utilities are covered in later questions, but are also relevant in demonstrating this site's suitability for use as a Gypsy/Traveller site to meet the identified need in Cheltenham Borough.

For the reasons set out above the Council considers Policy GT1 to be in conformity with national policy for traveller sites.

### **2. In particular, how easily accessible is the site to health services, local education facilities, and other community services?**

When the Strategic Assessment of Land Availability (SALA) (EB020 in examination library) is undertaken, part of the assessment collects data from Gloucestershire County Council on accessibility from the site in question to key services. This has been done for the site allocated in Policy GT1, and the overall score came back as "good". This means that the majority of services assessed can be accessed in under 30 minutes by either walking, cycling or through the use of public transport.

The services assessed are the nearest:

- A&E and Minor Injuries Units
- Primary School
- Secondary School
- GP Surgery
- Major Brand Supermarket
- Children Centres
- FE Colleges
- Local Centres
- Open Spaces
- Pharmacies

The only services which scored less than “good” were A&E and minor injuries units if walking or taking the bus/walk; and Secondary Schools, again if walking or bus/walk. A Pharmacy is also assessed as being less than “good” if using public transport/walking only. This means that these services are assessed as being more than 30 minutes journey time away from the site, by these means of travel.

### **3. Does the site have main drainage, and an electricity and water supply?**

According to the Design and Access Statement as submitted in support of the latest planning application which was decided in April 2017, the site is serviced by a septic tank and benefits from land drains. Having contacted the planning agent acting on behalf of the occupants, it has been confirmed that the site does have an electricity and water supply.

### **4. Paragraph 13.5 of the CP states that it would not be possible for the current occupants of the site to move to other suitable accommodation within the Borough. Can the reason for this statement please be explained?**

The site being allocated is identified in the GTAA as being the only authorised site within the Borough, therefore no other authorised sites are available should the occupants need to move. Only one other site has been put forward through the Strategic Assessment of Land Availability (SALA) for this land use, which is the land to the west of the proposed allocation at Castle Dream Stud (site reference S025 in the SALA). This land is not currently in use nor has any built form on it, therefore this site is not considered suitable.

## **Main Issue: Renewable Energy**

### **1. Is there a need for the CP to include a policy on renewable energy?**

When considering the development plan as a whole, including the policies in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), it is felt that a further policy in the Cheltenham Plan is not required. Policy INF5: Renewable Energy/ Low Carbon Energy Development, of the JCS gives details on the types of renewable energy developments that will be supported, alongside the considerations that will need to be taken into account when decision making on such schemes. Furthermore the policy gives guidance to applicants on the circumstances when a scheme will be looked at more favourably; for example, when designed to minimise impact on the surrounding area. This policy is relatively detailed and it is not felt that a further policy in the Cheltenham Plan could add value or understanding to the policy already in use in the JCS.

## **Main Issue: Broadband provision**

### **1. Is Policy CI4 appropriately worded and how could it make provision to improve existing broadband in those locations where it is currently poor?**

The policy included in the Cheltenham Plan relating to broadband provision (Policy CI4) is aimed at ensuring high-speed broadband provision is available at new development sites, rather than rectifying existing infrastructure. As explained in the supporting text at paragraph 17.35, the Council is aware that in some parts of the town broadband provision is poor and will work with the telecommunications industry to ensure this is rectified at the earliest opportunity. It is not felt that further or amended wording in the policy would be able to achieve this.

## **Main Issue: Terminology**

### **1. A number of the policies include a phrase such as “other relevant policies embodied within this Plan”. Since the Policies of the JCS also apply to the area of the CP, should reference also be made to the relevant policies of the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury JCS?**

The Council are happy to revise wording of policies if it is felt that the revisions would make the use of the Plan easier and would aid with understanding of the development plan as a whole. The Council understand that the use of a two tier plan can be confusing and wish to make every effort to make use of the plan as easy as possible, so that the two plans together can be used to full effect.