

**Examination of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan**

Inspector: Matthew Birkinshaw BA(Hons) Msc MRTPI

Programme Officer: Charlotte Glancy

email: [bankssolutionsuk@gmail.com](mailto:bankssolutionsuk@gmail.com) Phone: 07519 628064

Carlos Hone MRTPI  
Head of Planning  
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Royal Tunbridge Wells  
Kent  
TN1 1RS

7 February 2024

Dear Mr Hone,

1. Thank you for your letter dated 11 January 2024 confirming that public consultation is now underway on the Council's suggested changes to the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan. This will run until 26 February 2024.
2. In that letter you also highlight the recent change in the Government's Planning policy for traveller sites ('PPTS'). More specifically, the change in definition of gypsies and travellers contained in Annex 1. In light of this revision, you advise that it may be the case that some gypsy and traveller needs have now not been planned for, and that to establish whether there is a shortfall in provision would require an update to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment ('GTAA') (2018). Given the Council's suggestion for an early review of the Plan, you propose that the necessary update to the GTAA is carried out as part of that process.
3. I appreciate that updating the GTAA will result in additional time and expense for the Council. However, the current assessment no longer reflects national planning policy. The surveys used to support the GTAA also date back to 2017. With likely adoption of the Plan not until late 2024/early 2025, the evidence supporting it will be almost 8 years old. It is therefore not possible to determine whether the Plan will provide a sufficient supply of sites, as future needs are unknown. A new GTAA will therefore be required as part of this examination.
4. Insofar as any delays this may cause, the Council is currently undertaking consultation on the suggested changes to the Plan. That will run for 6 weeks. Responses will then need to be collated, considered and further hearing sessions will be held in late spring/early summer. Consultation on the recommended Main Modifications will take place thereafter. It is therefore unlikely that updating the GTAA now will cause any further, significant delays to the existing programme. Doing the work now will also be of benefit, at a

time when gypsies and travellers are less likely to be away travelling compared with the summer months.

5. In response it would be helpful for the Council to provide an initial estimate on the likely timescales for carrying out the additional work. I have asked the Programme Officer to upload a copy of this letter to the website for those following the examination, but I am not seeking any representations or correspondence on this specific issue at this stage.
6. Should you have any queries please feel free to get in touch through the Programme Officer.

Yours sincerely,

*Matthew Birkinshaw*

Inspector