

Rebuttal Proof of Evidence to Planning Proof of Dr Simon Ruston

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 78 appeal against the refusal of planning permission

Subject of Evidence: Land at Lawrences Lane, Thatcham

Appeal: APP/W0340/W/22/3292211

Site: Land at Lawrences Lane, Thatcham

Proposal: Change of use to 7 no. Gypsy/Traveller pitches comprising
7 no. static caravans, 7 no. day rooms, 7 no. touring
caravans and associated works

Council Reference: 21/02112/FUL

November 2022

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 My name is by Dr Michael Bullock, Managing Director of arc4 Ltd. I hold a BSc(Hons) and PhD in Geography, both from Lancaster University. I have over 25 years' housing research experience and I am a Member of the Market Research Society and a Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing.
- 1.2 I was responsible for preparing the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) evidence base including the latest GTAA which was published in June 2021. Over the period 2012-2022, we have completed GTAAs for 100 local authorities (72 initial studies for LAs and a further 28 updates). Since the revised PPTS was published in August 2015, we have completed GTAAs for 58 local authorities (34 initial studies for LAs and a further 24 updates). Overall, through our GTAAs we have interviewed 3,231 Gypsy and Traveller households living on pitches, 348 living in Bricks and Mortar accommodation and 540 Travelling Showperson households. Our work has been successfully tested at 7 local plan examinations.
- 1.3 I confirm that the evidence which I have prepared and provided for this appeal is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Purpose and Scope of Evidence

- 1.4 This rebuttal proof of evidence has been prepared to respond to the Planning Proof dated November 2022 prepared by Dr Simon Ruston.

2. Rebuttal responses to housing need matters paras 37 to 53

The unmet need for sites locally, regionally, and nationally (37-41)

- 2.1 The Court of Appeal judgement in Lisa Smith v SSLUHC and others has not yet filtered through to changes in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) and at this stage it is not known if the decision will be appealed by SSLUHC. However, the GTAA has always established an overall cultural need of which PPTS need was a subset of that need.
- 2.2 The NPPF does not provide further guidance on how need should be met for those who do not travel. Paragraph 9 of the PPTS requires LPAs to only set pitch targets for Gypsies and Travellers as defined in Annex 1, i.e. PPTS Need. In the absence of guidance for those who do not travel Councils need to positively plan for Gypsy and Traveller needs by meeting all need in a culturally appropriate manner. This is to be considered as part of the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document, where work will commence in early 2023.

Emerging need from ‘decanted’ Four Houses Corner (42-44)

- 2.3 The GTAA is clear that need from 16 households has been included in the modelling of future pitch need. An update of the GTAA is recommended once the site has been reoccupied and at that point any changes to overall need can be calculated.

Paices Hill (45-48)

- 2.4 It would be helpful here to return to the evidence set out in the 2021 GTAA. Para 6.14 of the 2021 GTAA update notes ‘The 2019 GTAA reported 24 residential pitches and 16 transit pitches at Paices Hill. The site is split into 2. The first part (1A Paices Hill

on the right hand side as you enter Paices Hill) comprises a chalet and 16 transit pitches. However, the owner now has family living with him and wants to convert some of the transit pitches to residential pitches. Planning permission has recently been granted for the change of use from 8 transit pitches to 8 permanent pitches, as set out in my Proof. . 1A Paices Hill would then have 8 residential pitches, the chalet occupied by the owner and 8 transit pitches.

Need derived from current planning applications and appeals (49)

- 2.5 The specific need from households associated with Lawrences Lane site were not included in the GTAA. However, the GTAA needs modelling did include an allowance for expected in-migration of 9.7 households over the period 2021/22 to 2025/26 based on past trends of movement into West Berkshire. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that the needs from households at Lawrences Lane has been factored into the GTAA needs modelling.

Conclusion on need (50-51)

- 2.6 The GTAA has articulated the overall cultural need and, as a subset of that need, the need from those households meeting the PPTS 'nomadic habit of life' test. The GTAA recognised a minimum need arising from Four Houses Corner but this will have to be reassessed once the site is reopened and reoccupied. The level of need may therefore be higher, but this needs to be assessed in due course through an updated GTAA.
- 2.7 It should also be added that having reviewed the appellants' witness statements, all households meet the nomadic habit of life test as set out in the PPTS.

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