

Wednesday, 27 November 2019

## Hearing statement for Local Plan Examination in Public

### Issue II, Issue IV

#### **Introduction**

1. In this hearing statement I set out the following:
  - The site 'Boyd's Farm' should be allocated in the Site Allocations Document
  - The GTAA is unsound, out of date, and presents a significant underestimate of need in Woking

#### **Site allocations (Issue IV)**

##### ***Boyd's Farm***

2. In my view 'Boyd's Farm', north of Murrays Lane, West Byfleet, should included as part of the Site Allocations approach to grant permission in principle for permanent use as a Travellers' site (I would suggest for 2 pitches at the southern part of the site along Murray's Lane) – see Site Location Plan at Appendix 1. Boyd's farm is subject to Green Belt designation.
3. Notably Boyd's Farm is adjacent *Land to the south of Murray's Lane*, also subject to Green Belt designation, which has been granted permanent permission for a 4-pitch Gypsy/Traveller site (ref: PLAN/2018/1072).
4. It is significant that all of the Traveller sites identified in the Woking Site Allocations DPD Regulation 18 Consultation, published in June 2015 (see sites GB2, GB3 and GB7) are in the Green Belt. It can be said with near certainty (and without doubt on the balance of probabilities) that future pitches will have to be situated within the Green Belt.

#### **Criticisms of the Woking TAA evidence base (Issue II)**

5. In my view there are several reasons that the *Traveller Accommodation Assessment* (TAA) cannot be relied upon as a robust evidence base and is likely to underestimate need in Woking.

### ***Assessment out of date***

6. The 2013 TAA is out of date. Whilst the DCLG's *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments: Guidance* (2007) was revoked in 2016, it has not been replaced by an updated document and therefore it currently represents the only government advice on carrying out GTAAs. This guidance advised that an updated assessment is produced every five years and that assessments older than this are considered out of date.

### ***Assessment unclear***

7. Another issue simply concerns presentation; the figures in Table 8 '*Demand and Supply of Pitches*', for example, are not just unclear but at times incalculable and as a result difficult to critically assess.
8. This is contrary to the requirements of *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments: Guidance* (2007), which we recognise above has been revoked but which currently represents the only government advice. The Guidance sets out at paragraph 11:

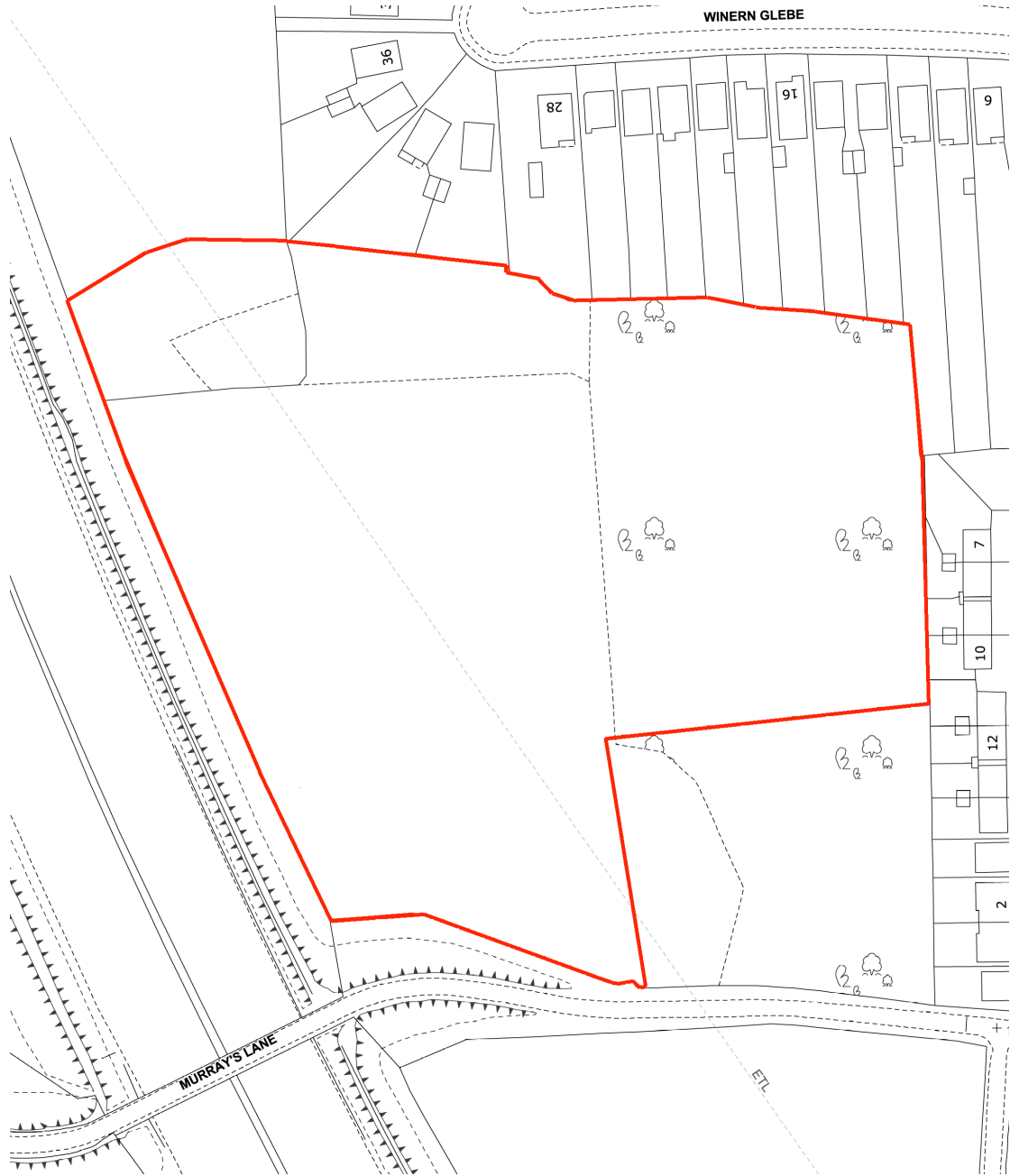
*Regional Planning Bodies and Planning Inspectors will require local authorities to produce Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment reports **which are clearly expressed** and provide a robust and credible evidence base. These should demonstrate that the assessment process has been conducted properly and fairly, giving details of the methodology used to ascertain levels of need. (our emphasis)*

9. Whilst regional planning bodies are no longer in existence, the principle of requiring clearly expressed and readily understandable assessments is still relevant. We are of the view that the Woking TAA does not meet this standard. I attach the most recent appeal DL where these criticisms are noted.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Simon Ruston MRTPI

APPENDIX 1



Plan showing Boyd's Farm, Murray's Lane, West Byfleet, Surrey