

Shropshire Council. Examination of Shropshire Local Plan 2016-2038

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Dear Mr West

Shropshire Local Plan Examination

Thank you for your letter dated 21 February 2024 in response to our letters ID37 and ID38.

We note your intention to carry out the additional work we have requested and the expected timescales for this work to be carried out.

In terms of future hearings, we note your eagerness to get to hearing sessions and we share this aim. Based on the timescales you have set out for the additional work and our diaries we anticipate that hearings would take place in October and November of this year. The dates will need to be firmed up in due course as you progress with the consultation work. The programme officer will coordinate the programming and arrangement of these.

Turning to the matter of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), we have carefully considered what you say in your letter. However, as set out previously we are concerned that no further survey work has been undertaken since 2016/17. Whilst the GTAA was updated in 2019 the original survey work from 2016/17 formed the basis of the GTAA 2019 update which is dated February 2020. As you point out, further updating was carried out in the first half of 2023 as requested in our letter dated 15 February 2023 (ID28). Again, that did not include new survey work. At the time of writing that letter we did not expect to be at the stage in the examination we are now.

Given the timescales for producing other additional evidence, the holding of further hearing sessions and consultation on recommended main modifications, the Plan will

not be adopted until 2025 at the earliest. By then the survey work would be 8 or 9 years old. This is a significant period of time, and it is likely that material changes will have occurred in terms of the accommodation needs of the gypsy and traveller community in Shropshire since 2016/17. It is therefore not possible to determine whether the Plan will provide a sufficient supply of sites.

Given the need to carry out other work, we consider that the time has come to commission a new GTAA. This need not hold up hearings later in the year as we could, if necessary, hold a separate hearing session on gypsy and traveller accommodation at a slightly different time. In terms of whether the gypsy and traveller element could be divorced from the Local Plan, such a recommendation would have to be made in response to a soundness matter. At this stage, the need for gypsy and traveller accommodation, and whether the Plan will be effective in meeting those needs, is unknown due to the age of the evidence before us. A new GTAA will therefore be required as part of this examination. Once the outcomes of the GTAA are known, we will reassess timescales later in the year and advise on next steps forward for the examination.

We also appreciate that this would result in additional costs for the Council, but this is not a reason to avoid producing a new GTAA which we have identified as necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the needs of the gypsy and traveller community.

Once the new GTAA has been commissioned it would be helpful to know what the timescale is for carrying out this work. Upon completion and publication, we will advise on the next steps in relation to the new evidence and this part of the Plan.

Finally, in terms of minerals and waste, we do not require any further work in this regard.

We are not inviting comments from any representors to this letter. Should the Council have any questions please direct them through the programme officer.

Louise Crosby, Elaine Worthington and Nick Palmer

Examining Inspectors