Interim Policy: Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People in Hyndburn

Background

Unlike a number of Districts in Lancashire Hyndburn provides a significant number of pitches for the gypsy and traveller community. This has previously been acknowledged by an Inspector dealing with enforcement appeals for a site at Sough Lane, Oswaldtwistle (APP/R2330/C/08/2062744). Notwithstanding this position the Government has recently (July 2009) partially reviewed the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021. In particular draft Policy L6 of the Partial Review of RSS NW requires that between 2007-2016 10 permanent residential pitches and five transit residential pitches are provided in Hyndburn (Table 7.2 Scale and Distribution of Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Provision).

An examination in public into the partial review of RSS NW took place in March this year. The policy is set to be adopted in the coming weeks. In advance of the adoption of Policy L6 the Government is encouraging Local Planning Authorities to prepare policies and to search for sites that can accommodate provision.

In the Hyndburn Borough Local Plan an area of land in the Altham ward was protected as an “Area of Special Restraint” under Policy S4. Whilst this policy is now not saved the land has nonetheless been previously looked at and agreed as one which would have the potential to accommodate development after 2006 where there was a “strategic requirement”.

According to Policy L6 of the Partial review of RSS NW it is considered that there is a strategic need across the North West for additional gypsy and traveller pitches and in respect of Hyndburn this equates to 10 full time pitches and five transit pitches.

Following discussions with the landowner there is an available site at Sankey House Farm off Whinney Hill Road, Altham. It is adjacent to a caravan site and is well served by cycle and walking facilities connecting to employment opportunities, local amenities and local schools. In fact the site links in well
with the “Huncoat Greenway” project (a cycle / pedestrian route project) which is a Council corporate priority (as outlined in the Council’s Corporate Strategy 2008-2013). The site includes hard standing areas which have been in situ for more than 4 years. To this extent the site is brownfield. Vehicular sightlines on to Whinney Hill Road are acceptable. It is understood that the owner would make the site immediately available for use in the event that the site were allocated for gypsy and traveller pitch use and planning permission were granted.

In addition to the above the Council needs to recognize that circumstances could change in the plan period (eg further reviews) which may necessitate the release of further sites. As such the policy contains some development and location criteria for the purposes of making development control decisions.

In recognition of the current position the following planning policy is to be used for the purposes of making development control decisions:-

**Policy**

- The existing site in Altham used by travelling show people be protected for use by travelling show people.
- Existing authorised gypsy and traveller sites be protected.
- Support be given in principle to the release of land at Sankey House Farm, Whinney Hill Road, Altham (see plan) to accommodate the full gypsy and traveller provision for 2007-2016 as indicated in Policy L6 of the North West Plan Partial Review (July 2009).

In the event that there is further identified need in Hyndburn within or beyond the 2007-2016 period applications will be assessed against the following:-

- There is a strong presumption against gypsy and traveller sites in green belt. Green belt sites will only be released where the harm to green belt is (I) outweighed by justified “special circumstances” and (ii) documentary evidence is presented to the Local Planning Authority demonstrating a systematic approach to examining the suitability and availability of all alternative sites in less sensitive locations in Hyndburn.
- Sites should be accessible to a range of facilities including schools, shops, employment and recreation opportunities and where there is a choice of means of transport. Should there be evidence that there is a multitude of available and in principle suitable sites for gypsy and traveller use/purposes the Council will adopt a sequential approach to the consideration of the release of sites taking into account distance from public transport / cycling facilities, shops, employment and recreational facilities and matters of visual/residential amenity, highway safety and conservation/heritage interest.
• Extensions to existing authorised sites may be more acceptable to the Local Planning Authority subject to considerations of visual/residential amenity, highway safety and heritage/conservation impact.

• Proposals should not cause material harm to visual or residential amenity, to highway safety or to matters of heritage and conservation interest.