

Council
16 December 2015

Questions from Councillors

Question from Councillor Victoria Wheeler to the Regulatory Portfolio Holder

“The Council has a requirement to provide 19 additional gypsy sites within the borough.

At a recent ruling by the planning inspectorate concerning Stonehill piggeries and chicken farm, the Councils failure to demonstrate an up to date 5 year supply of deliverable sites was cited as a reason for approving temporary sites.

This decision will have a negative impact on residents’ ability to enjoy their homes and be detrimental to the SPA. There is also a risk of precedence.

What action is the council taking to ensure that any subsequent appeals cannot be granted on this basis?

How is their approach evidenced, and when will there be an update?

What action is the Council taking in order to support their tax payers, and how will they protect themselves against a potential claim from residents for negligence as a result of not fulfilling the requirement for additional pitches.

Is the Council intending to challenge this decision?

Answer from the Regulatory Portfolio Holder

The Council undertakes a regular call for sites through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment process. This is for all types of housing, including sites for Gypsies and Travellers. To date no sites have been put forward by landowners. A further call for sites will be undertaken in the new year and will look at all sources including publically owned land such as County land. An additional site has been identified at Kalima but has yet to be delivered by Surrey County Council.

The Government has issued advice seeking to amend the definition of Gypsy and Travellers in respect of excluding those who have stopped travelling permanently. This may have implications for future requirements within Surrey Heath, however at this stage it is not yet clear whether this approach will be challenged in the Courts.

With regard to the recent appeal decision on Stone Hill Piggeries the Council is aware of the appeal decision and is currently reviewing and seeking advice on the implications of the decision.