



Examination of the Medway Local Plan 2041

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Mr Dave Harris
Chief Planning Officer
Planning Service
Medway Council

By email only

28 May 2026

Dear Mr Harris,

Examination of the Medway Local Plan 2041 – Follow up to the Council’s response to the Inspectors Initial Queries

1. Thank you for the submission of the response to our Initial Queries [MLP/ED6] and notes concerning Green Belt [MLP/ED7], and Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople [MLP/ED8]. We have a number of follow up queries, which are set out below.

Green Belt

2. The Green Belt Note sets out the process and assessment it has undertaken through the Green Belt Review and its assessment of revising Green Belt boundaries and removing land from the Green Belt. It refers to the external critique of Medway’s Green Belt Review (page 2 of the note). Please provide us with this document and make arrangements for it to be placed on the Examination website.
3. The proposed Green Belt release to accommodate the Policy SA6: Land West of Strood allocation will likely be a key issue as to whether the Medway Local Plan 2041 (the Plan) is sound with regard to housing need. This will be the subject of Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) that we intend to issue and considered at the hearings. We note the discussions with Gravesham Borough Council (Gravesham BC). It would assist us if an update can be given on the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with Gravesham BC through the Prescribed Bodies SoCG and when this is likely to be complete.

Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople

4. We note that the Council is proposing a number of actions as the submission version of the Plan does not meet the full needs of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople over the plan period. These are:
 - A 'Call for Sites' exercise to identify the availability of any wider land for assessment for its suitability for use;
 - Review sites in its ownership with the objective of identifying deliverable and developable sites for the first 10 years of the Plan, with a report to be presented to the Council's Cabinet in Summer 2026;
 - Options to securing land suitable for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation that is being used for wider residential needs, including through Compulsory Purchase, related to the supply later in the plan period;
 - Assessing the potential for including land in strategic development allocations for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople as part of the wider land uses; and
 - Engagement with the Traveller Showpeople's community to re-assess the existing site to confirm whether it has capacity to accommodate additional plots.
5. If this results in allocations being made or altered, it will also likely necessitate a need for these allocations to be consulted upon, and the updating of evidence.
6. We note the timescale that the Council has put forward for the 'Call for Sites', and we agree that a related six-week consultation should take place. Please provide us with timescales (month by month) for all these actions so that we can understand what impact they may have on the Examination timetable, incorporating a potential consultation on allocations.

Supporting Evidence Documents

7. We note there are a number of supporting evidence documents that have been produced since the Regulation 19 consultation of the Plan. These include the Submission Habitat Regulations Assessment (A4.1 to A.4.3); the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (B6.1 to B6.5); Strategic Transport Assessment documents (B18.1, B18.4 to B18.7, B18.8.1 to B18.8.3, B18.9) and the Green Belt Exceptional Circumstances Topic Paper (B22.4). The Council's response to our Initial Queries (page 7) also refers to a proportionate review of the Sustainability Appraisal (A3.1 to 3.3).
8. In addition, the Plan also refers to draft documents such as the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (C2.7) which as far as we are aware has not been finalised, and strategies due to be produced in relation to playing pitches and sports facilities.
9. We note that the Council is proposing a six-week consultation for the consideration of these documents. In order that the Examination is not unduly delayed, we consider that a four-week consultation should take place instead. If the Council is intending to publish further, final or amended versions of all other supporting evidence documents, they should also form part of this consultation. It is important to inform us as soon as possible what these documents are.

Examination Programme

10. At this stage, we consider the Examination should proceed on the basis of two sets of hearings. We will confirm what the hearings will cover when our MIQs are issued. However, it is likely that the first set of hearings (Phase 1) will cover legal requirements; vision, objectives and spatial development strategy; housing and employment requirement /need, and Green Belt, as well as some of the topic policy areas. The second set of hearings (Phase 2) would cover the remaining topic areas, Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople, and the site allocations.
11. We consider that the Examination programme should proceed as follows:
 - 8 June to 6 July 2026 - Consultation on the supporting evidence documents
 - 8 June to 20 July 2026 – ‘Call for Sites’ for Gypsy and Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople
 - 24 July 2026 – Council to provide representations, summary and Council’s responses to the representations related to the consultation in supporting evidence documents
 - w/c 3 August 2026 - MIQs issued by Inspectors for Phase 1 hearings
 - w/c 14 and 21 September 2026 - Phase 1 hearings
12. In order to establish when the Phase 2 hearings would take place we would need to know the outcome of the Council’s actions on Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople and the next steps, including potentially the planning of a consultation on allocations. This should be provided to us by **no later than 31st July 2026**.

Next Steps

13. We request that the Council respond to this letter by no later than **12 noon, Wednesday 3 June 2026** explaining its position with respect to the points that we have raised. We appreciate that the consultation on the supporting evidence documents and the ‘Call for Sites’ would need to start shortly after that date, however we understand from the Council’s responses to our initial questions and the notes, this should be achievable.
14. Please ensure that this letter is published on the Examination website as soon as possible. If there is anything in the preceding paragraphs that is unclear, please do not hesitate to contact us via the Programme Officer, Louise St John Howe. We are not inviting further submissions from any other party at this stage.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew McCormack and *Darren Hendley*

Inspectors