

Reading Borough Council**Examination of the Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update****Inspector:** Ms Joanna Gilbert MA (Hons) MTP MRTPI**Programme Officer:** Jane Greenway**Telephone:** 0118 937 4029**Email:** Programme.Officer@reading.gov.uk**Address:** Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU.**Webpage:** <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/>

26 June 2026

Dear Mr Worringham

Examination of the Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update - Inspector's Third Letter following Stage 2 Hearings

1. This letter addresses two outstanding issues pertaining to the housing needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople and water quality and the effect of these outstanding issues on the progress of the LPPU examination.

Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople

2. The Government's Planning policy for traveller sites confirms at paragraph 10 that local planning authorities should, in producing their Local Plan: identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against their locally set targets, and identify a supply of specific, developable sites, or broad locations for growth, for years 6 to 10 and, where possible, for years 11-15. The Council has confirmed that it has no five year supply of deliverable sites or developable sites for years 6 – 10 and beyond for permanent accommodation for gypsies and travellers.
3. The LPPU was submitted on the basis of evidence which was not up to date in respect of the needs of gypsies, travellers, and travelling showpeople. When asked at the Stage 1 hearings, the Council confirmed there would be budgetary and procurement restrictions which would delay the ongoing examination of the LPPU to allow further evidence to be produced or to produce a separate single issue plan document. As the Council has identified no sites for permanent provision, despite the out of date evidence indicating need, the LPPU is not sound in this respect. In my post-hearings letter dated 24 November 2025 at EX030, I noted pragmatically that this omission would be best addressed through an early plan review. I also stated that there may be other elements which also form part of the rationale for early plan review.

Water Quality

4. I am grateful for the work that the Council has undertaken with its consultants and with the Environment Agency to progress matters in respect of permitting and modelling. I understand that your consultants have produced a draft update to the Water Quality Assessment which confirms that Reading Sewage Treatment Works (STW) is currently using approximately 97% of its volumetric permit and that by 2041, it would exceed its volumetric permit capacity and would not be able to serve the LPPU's proposed development before any upgrade takes place. I note that Thames Water Utilities Ltd is planning to upgrade Reading STW to improve its ability to treat volumes of incoming sewage in 2027.
5. I understand that the SIMCAT-SAGIS modelling required by the Environment Agency requires identification of a budget and procurement processes prior to undertaking the modelling itself. This would lead to further delay in the plan-making process.
6. Notwithstanding the content of LPPU Policy EN16 in respect of development only being permitted where adequate water resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure will be in place to support the proposed development prior to occupation, I am concerned that this would not satisfactorily address water quality issues for development coming forward after the first few years following adoption of the LPPU or in the event that the expected upgrade to the Reading STW does not take place. Consequently, we had discussed the possibility for an early plan review to be triggered.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

7. The Council will be aware that since the Stage 1 and 2 LPPU hearings were held in November 2025 and February 2026, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 came into force on 25 March 2026. These Regulations implement the plan-making system provided for by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023).
8. Under this new legislative framework, Councils will not be able to undertake a single topic plan document such as a separate plan document on gypsies, travellers, and travelling showpeople. Furthermore, it will not be possible for Councils to produce a partial update to address a particular topic or topics within a local plan.
9. Accordingly, I consider that the Council has two options with regard to the outstanding issues on the housing needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople and water quality as follows:

10. Option 1 would involve me recommending a main modification introducing a new policy in the LPPU that commits the Council to commencing the preparation of a new-style local plan in the new system upon adoption of this LPPU. This would allow the LPPU to proceed to adoption to bring forward much needed development whilst securing a way forward in terms of provision for gypsies, travellers, and travelling showpeople and water quality. In the meantime, LPPU Policies H13 and EN16 will need to address any relevant development coming forward.
11. Option 2 would be for the Council to withdraw the LPPU from examination.

Next Steps

12. I ask that the Council considers the content of this letter and responds to me to confirm which option it wishes to follow. I appreciate that the content of this letter will be disappointing at this juncture in the examination and that the Council will need some time to absorb the content of the letter. However, it would be helpful to have a formal response on the Council's preferred course of action as soon as possible.
13. This letter should be uploaded to the examination website, but I am not seeking any comments from participants at this stage. In the meantime, should the Council have any queries about the content of this letter, then please do not hesitate to contact me through the Programme Officer.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Gilbert

Inspector