Dear Ms Wilson,

Didcot Town Council welcomes the Inspector’s invitation to make representations following the NPPF publication and its possible effect on the emerging SODC Core Strategy.

National Planning Policy Framework

There is a new policy for traveller sites which states:

“The Government’s overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community. (Para 3)”

At Para 9 it requires that:

“local planning authorities should, in producing their Local Plan “identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years’ worth of sites sufficient to provide five years’ worth of sites ...”

and in footnote 7 states:

“To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now ...”

Para 11 (h) requires that policies “reflect the extent to which traditional lifestyles (whereby some travellers live and work from the same location thereby omitting many travel to work journeys) can contribute to sustainability.”

Policy F: Mixed planning use traveller sites para 16 requires:

“Local planning authorities should consider, wherever possible, including traveller sites suitable for mixed residential and business uses, having regard to the safety and amenity of the occupants and neighbouring residents.”
Para 11 g) says:

“do not locate sites in areas at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplains, given the particular vulnerability of caravans …”

Core Strategy

SODC’s Core Strategy Policy CSH5 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople no longer meets the requirements of the NPPF policy. Considering a supply of pitches SODC requires the extension of existing sites and the identification of new sites, but does not identify deliverable sites, available now. Considering the location of new sites it sets out that the first priority should be new sites “incorporated within the greenfield neighbourhood at Didcot”.

This development area is not available now and is therefore not deliverable. It will not be deliverable until the access from the Mersey Way roundabout on the A4130 has been made flood proof.

Additionally, the requirement for mixed residential and business use provision cannot be met within a high density residential extension without increasing the tensions between settled and traveller communities which would conflict with Government’s aims in para 4. Also roughly one third of the Greenfield neighbourhood is shown in the map on page 193 of the Core Strategy to be not available for any development due to the risk of flooding.

In conclusion, the Planning Inspector is asked to require South Oxfordshire District Council to re-draft policy CSH5 and subsequent paragraphs to identify specific locations for Pitches that are available now in appropriate locations.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Dodd
Deputy Town Clerk
15th May 2012