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12.12.2014

Dear Sir

Sites for Gypsies and Travellers Preferred Options Consultation Land at Stratford Road, Warwick

I write to record my objection to the Gypsy and Traveller site proposed for Stratford Road, Warwick.

The Stratford Road site was not included in the consultation document "Sites for Gypsies and Travellers Preferred Options" published in March 2014. The current consultation on the Stratford Road site is unsound and unfair

- The suitability and sustainability criteria on which comment has been invited for the Stratford Road site differ from the criteria set out in the wider March consultation. For example the Stratford Road consultation does not invite comments on the:

"Impact on heritage assets and the setting of heritage assets." This is particularly important given the proximity of the site to Warwick Castle and the historic town of Warwick. The Stratford Road is a major gateway to Warwick.

"Impact of land contamination, noise and other disturbance" and ***"Proximity to other residential properties."*** All of these criteria are particularly important given the size of the proposed site and the other development taking place in the near vicinity.

"Flooding", is particularly important because of the proximity of the proposed site to the river Avon and the fact that it is on the current flood plain.

"Impact on ecology." The Stratford Road consultation document states that a review has been commissioned but does not present evidence for public comment.

"Availability of the site" This is particularly important because the site is not currently available and would need to be acquired under a compulsory purchase order

“Safe access to and from the site for vehicles and pedestrians” The current access is inadequate and proposals to improve access have not yet been put forward for public consultation.

- It is inappropriate and unfair at this late stage to identify the Stratford Road site as a possible location for Gypsy and Travellers and for this consultation to be carried out in isolation of the other potential sites. The original consultation in March 2014 had much greater public visibility, press comment and engagement from the general public.
- The District wide proposals published in March affected many more people and enabled and encouraged comparison between the sites. The Stratford Road consultation only affects and, as a consequence, will only elicit comments from those directly affected.

The Stratford Road proposal fails to satisfy the suitability and sustainability criteria on which comment has been invited.

- ***Reasonable distance from local services***

Whilst there are local services near to the proposed site these are insufficient to cope with the additional demands created by the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site. For example it is likely that there will be insufficient places at local schools to support the gypsies and travelers. Insufficient schooling facilities will have a detrimental effect on the children that already live in the local area, forcing the Gypsy and Traveller children and/or other local children to travel further afield.

Local residents already find it very difficult to access a local dentist under the NHS and therefore it is likely that Gypsy and Travellers will also find this an issue.

In the WDC's councils Sustainability Assessment the effect on the economy is 'uncertain at this stage'. This is not an acceptable assessment of the impact that the Gypsy and Traveller site will have on the local services.

- ***Good access to local road networks***

Whilst the proposed site is very near the A46/M40 junction, the exact details of how the proposed site will be accessed have not been adequately addressed. Information published in the consultation document states 'advice expected soon'. It is unacceptable to plan a site and hold a consultation without telling the public how the site will be accessed.

The current narrow farm track to the land is inadequate and would not provide access for emergency vehicles as outlined in the government guidelines regarding the necessary arrangements for Gypsy and Traveller sites.

One proposed new access road to the site would also place the main entrance of the site next to a Grade II listed building. This will be located on a dangerous bend with poor visibility to motorists thereby putting the public at increased risk of serious road traffic accidents. This is not acceptable.

- ***Suitable size***

There are Government guidelines which provide guidance on size. Therefore, this is a matter of fact and it is inappropriate to ask public opinion.

- ***Infrastructure requirements can be met***

The WDC's own assessment states that air, soil and water quality are of 'significant concern' and notes that the development of a Gypsy and Traveller site could have a potential 'major negative effect'. Although WDC claims this can be 'mitigated' there is little detail as to how this will be achieved, which is unacceptable.

A site close to a sewage works and a busy motorway network will also require a significant cost to rectify these aspects to ensure safety of the Gypsy and Traveller community residing in the area to ensure their safety.

The water treatment works produce significant and unpleasant smells, particularly in summer months. It is unfair to expect Gypsies and Travellers to have to suffer these smells. These smells will make the proposed site unattractive to Gypsies and Travellers with the consequential risk that it is not used.

There is also a flood risk associated with the site and according to the government guidelines, Gypsy and Traveller sites should not be built where there is probability that flooding will occur. Whilst 'mitigation work' has been alluded to, there is no information with regards to what this will be, how much this will cost or whether the risk can be eliminated. Again this is unacceptable.

- ***Potential for the site to be adequately screened***

There is no information as to how the site will be adequately screened. The Stratford Road site is the main entrance road into Warwick from the motorway and a high amount of tourists travel up the road. It is a major Gateway to the historic town of Warwick. Even with a screen, I believe that the Gypsy and Traveller site will still be visible to the people visiting Warwick and will have a negative impact on the impression of the beautiful medieval town and ultimately on its popularity.

The current consultation is unfair and unsound. There are multiple reasons why the proposed Stratford Road location is unsuitable as a Gypsy and Traveller site. The location is inappropriate, the local infrastructure cannot support the increase in population, and the proposals have not been adequately thought through.

Yours sincerely,
Jonathan Lander