



Stoneleigh & Ashow Joint Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs P. A. Maddison

Development Policy Manager
Warwick District Council
Riverside House
Milverton Hill
Leamington Spa
CV32 5HZ

25nd July 2013

Dear Sirs

WDC PLANNING
Ref
Officer
26 JUL 2013
SCANNED
CC CR PD MA
PRE GEN DIS

Sites for Gypsies and Travellers 2013

The proposed Gypsy and traveller sites in Baginton referred to as GT01 & GT07 are inappropriate development in the Green Belt and they are not sustainable development.

Among the many reasons why the sites numbered GT01 and GT07 are unsuitable include;

The proposed sites in Baginton parish are within the Green Belt and are not within easy reach of local facilities such as doctors, schools, hospitals etc. In addition, there is only a limited bus service making access to employment difficult. This means that these sites do not satisfy the following points in the document: -

Paragraph 2.6 of the consultation document refers to 'areas of search' selected by officers within which could be potential for a Gypsy and Traveller site, outside the Green Belt, close to the road network and within easy reach of local facilities (schools and doctors etc).

Paragraph 5.2 says the Government guidance is: -
to enable provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure
that plan-making and decision-taking should protect Green Belt from inappropriate development

Paragraph 7.3 refers to the criteria by which sites would be assessed for suitability:
The Council will bring forward site(s) under a Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocation Development Plan Document, using the following policy criteria:
Convenient access to a GP surgery, school, and public transport;

Recently, the Government has decided to change the appeals recovery criteria by adding proposals for Traveller sites in the Green Belt. That announcement was made by Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis in the Commons.

He told MPs: "Having considered recent planning decisions by councils and the Planning Inspectorate, it has become apparent that, in some cases, the Green Belt is not always being given the sufficient protection that was the explicit policy intent of ministers.

"The Secretary of State wishes to make clear that, in considering planning applications, although each case will depend on its facts, he considers that the single issue of unmet demand, whether for Traveller sites or for conventional housing, is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the 'very special circumstances' justifying inappropriate development in the Green Belt."

The minister added; "For the avoidance of doubt, this does not mean that all such appeals will be recovered, but that the Secretary of State will likely recover a number of appeals in order to test the relevant policies at national level. The SoS will apply this criteria for a period of six months, after which it will be reviewed."

In a separate but related move, Mr Lewis also announced that the Coalition was cancelling the last administration's practice guidance 'Diversity and equality in planning' issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005.

In a written Ministerial Statement by Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis Originally given at House of Commons he stated that;

The coalition government has taken a series of steps to ensure fair play in the planning system. We have tackled the abuse of planning rules by a small minority, abolished top-down targets, increased protection of the green belt and aligned the planning system for traveller sites with that for settled housing.

The policy document, Planning policy for traveller sites, was issued in March 2012. It makes clear that both temporary and permanent traveller sites are inappropriate development in the green belt and that planning decisions should protect green belt land from such inappropriate development.

As set out in that document and in March 2012's National Planning Policy Framework, inappropriate development in the green belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Having considered recent planning decisions by councils and the Planning Inspectorate, it has become apparent that, in some cases, the green belt is not always being given the sufficient protection that was the explicit policy intent of ministers.

The Secretary of State wishes to make clear that, in considering planning applications, although each case will depend on its facts, he considers that the single issue of unmet demand, whether for traveller sites or for conventional housing, is unlikely to outweigh harm to the green belt and other harm to constitute the 'very special circumstances' justifying inappropriate development in the green belt.

The Secretary of State wishes to give particular scrutiny to traveller site appeals in the green belt, so that he can consider the extent to which Planning policy for traveller sites is meeting this government's clear policy intentions. To this end he is hereby revising the appeals recovery criteria issued on 30 June 2008 and will consider for recovery appeals involving traveller sites in the green belt.

Under the last administration's flawed rules, a sense of unfairness was embedded in the planning system. Unauthorised developments created tensions between travellers and the settled population, whilst some community groups seemingly were given favoured treatment. That

approach has harmed community cohesion. We want to redress the balance and put fairness back into local communities.

I appreciate that there is ongoing concern, as reflected by some honourable members recently proposing a Private Member's Bill on this issue.

I can announce today that the government is cancelling the last administration's practice guidance Diversity and equality in planning which was issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005.

This guidance is outdated, excessive in length (at 186 pages), and sends unhelpful signals about the planning process. For example, the document:

fails to strike the correct balance between the spatial impact of a planning proposal and the background of the applicant in considering a planning application

encourages monitoring of local residents' private lives – such as through intrusive lifestyle/diversity surveys

promotes the excessive use of Equality Impact Assessments, which are an expensive and bureaucratic burden on the public sector

tells councils to translate into foreign language, which undermines integration by discouraging people from learning English, weakens community cohesion and a common British identity, and wastes taxpayers' money.

As part of our wider consolidation of practice guidance, we do not intend to replace it.

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that councils should plan to provide wide choice of high quality homes based on the needs of their local community. Councils should simply use their common sense in light of prevailing legislation, planning policy and material considerations.

We hope this will send a positive message about treating all members of the community with respect and with due process, and that this government is restoring a proper sense of fairness to the planning system.

These sites should be discounted and removed from the Local Plan as they are clearly inappropriate.

Yours sincerely

Stoneleigh and Ashow Parrish Council

