



24th April 2014

Development Policy Manager
Development Services
Warwick District Council
Riverside House
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WDC PLANNING
Ref
Officer
25 APR 2014
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CC CR PD MA
PRE GEN DIS

Dear Sir

Preferred Options for Gypsy Traveller Sites

Whitnash Town Council has considered the Preferred Options for Gypsy Traveller Sites and would like to bring the following points to your attention.

Whitnash Town Council is aware that Gypsy Traveller Sites are needed in Warwick District as the illegal encampments cause interruption, angst, pain and cost to those in close proximity. They also disrupt the leisure and business activities of legitimate council tax paying members of the community.

Vast sums of money have been spent reinforcing entrances and securing sites where illegal encampments are a regular occurrence, but these measures do not deter the travellers.

The occupants of these illegal encampments seem incapable of vacating without completely trashing the site and leaving rubbish for the local Council to clear up at the tax payer's expense.

In the Consultation document Warwick District Council has identified a requirement for 11 permanent and 15 transit pitches for the Gypsy Traveller community. The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) review took place and the distribution of pitches across the region was reassessed. This resulted in an assessed requirement for 23 permanent pitches in the district. The assessment undertaken by Salford University for Warwick District in 2012 shows a need for 31 permanent pitches to be provided over the life of the Local Plan. Twenty five pitches are needed within the first five years and a further 6-8 transit pitches over the Local Plan period. The requirement seems to differ and increase with every assessment?

Transit sites should be considered before permanent sites as this may alleviate the problems caused by illegal encampments.

The siting of all the gypsy traveller sites south of the river raises concern yet again. In the previous Preferred Options consultation for gypsy traveller sites these were also located north of the River Leam, but northern options do not appear in the current preferred options. Were those sites just a smoke screen in the consultation?

Warwick District Council's preferred options site at Harbury Lane / Fosse Way should not be considered as one option!

Our major concern is the loss of a relatively new and well established sporting facility, Leamington Football Club. It would be a great loss to the community to give up this facility to make way for a gypsy traveller site as it is an 'Asset of Community Value'. Funds were raised by public subscription to build this facility.

The Town Council also strongly objects to the site being obtained using a Compulsory Purchase Order.

Another serious concern is traffic issues. The junction of Harbury Lane and Fosse Way is already an accident 'hot spot' with high casualty rate and fatalities. Entrances to and from gypsy traveller sites could cause further problems as there will be a significant increase in trailers, caravans and lorries on the road. Major road improvements will need to be undertaken along Harbury Lane and Fosse Way to ensure safe access if these sites become traveller sites.

This is a semi-rural area and gypsy traveller sites will most certainly spoil the vista of the country side and the area at Chesterton Windmill which is a heritage asset in the area. Green field sites south of the river are being over developed for housing so we need to preserve the few areas of green fields left near our town.

Drainage and sewerage infrastructure in the area will also need to be upgraded. Flooding is also prevalent in this area.

There will be an adverse impact on local schools, medical centres and other local amenities not only by the gypsy traveller sites, but by the other large housing developments in our area. Currently the schools in Whitnash are at full capacity. Warwick District Local Plan does not indicate that any infrastructure improvement or additional medical facilities, schools or shopping areas will be provided to sustain the influx of gypsy traveller sites.

If the sites on Harbury Lane and Fosse Way were to go ahead there are no public footpaths or shopping areas close by.

Warwick District Council needs to give careful consideration when deciding on where the gypsy traveller sites are sited south of the River Leam as this area is being bombarded with development and there are serious issues regarding the infrastructure that needs to be addressed.

Please consider moving these gypsy traveller sites to the area north of the river that was identified in the previous Preferred Options consultation. The travellers would have more employment opportunities if the Gateway project goes ahead as this is nearer to Kenilworth and Coventry.

Sites GT01 and GT19 may be better options as there are facilities close by and the schools may be better able to accommodate more pupils. There are also fewer housing developments proposed in the area so members of the travelling community could be accommodated.

A small portion of the land West of Europa Way where there are plans for housing and business development would be a better and more suitable site because this site does not require a compulsory purchase order as some of the land is already owned by Warwickshire County Council. It is an undeveloped site and will also provide better access to roads and motorways. This area will also have the new planned infrastructure in the Draft Local Plan.

Yours sincerely

