



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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Local Plan: Sites for Gypsies and Travellers

We write with specific reference to land at Stoneleigh Road, Baginton – map reference GT07 – but also regarding the above sites in general.

We are concerned about the identification of the Stoneleigh Road site as one possible for the settlement of travelling families because it fails to meet even the basic criteria stated in the District Council’s June 2013 document - Sites for Gypsies and Travellers, Section 7 Local Plan Requirements.

7.3 identifies seven important criteria to be met when identifying a suitable and sustainable site. Only one of these criteria - ‘avoiding areas with a high risk of flooding’ – is met by this site. All the other criteria are suspect.

Baginton Village has neither a GP practice nor a local school. Access to these facilities is complex and far from ideal for all current residents. We are served by a variety of GP practices in Coventry and Kenilworth and access to surgeries generally necessitates private transport. Our primary school closed many years ago and the pressure on places at Priors Field Primary School in Kenilworth – where the majority of village children are taught - is such that in some years not all the children currently living in the village are able to attend the same school but have to be divided between at least three Kenilworth primary schools. We have already even had such pressure on places that some children have been allocated places at Ryton-on-Dunsmore – to which there is no direct transport link. The children are all bussed to school and, additionally, this considerably extends their school day and is not ideal for learning or independence of movement. If you are looking to provide enhanced facilities for temporary or permanent traveller families, suffering poor health and low attainment in school, having them so remote from their GP practice and primary/secondary schooling is not a way to achieve this.

This first criteria point also includes convenient access to public transport. Baginton’s bus service is just about acceptable for those whose needs are totally flexible. It is very limited and does not provide timely access to places of work, further study or wider facilities – it is isolating rather than connecting.

Provision for parking, turning and servicing on site will clearly be possible if the available site is large enough. However access to the site is a different matter. For many years the few families living along Stoneleigh Road have felt isolated from the village, not because of distance but

because of the speed and frequency of traffic along this hedged and confined road. This is a potentially dangerous road for pedestrians and anyone locating here needs to be prepared to make a special effort to link to the village; it is not an easy spot from which to integrate. Equally, parking in the village itself is limited for those accessing by vehicle.

The fourth bullet point mentions the need to avoid areas where there is a potential for noise or other disturbance. Theoretically this is a country area, a Green Belt area, yet heavy goods traffic to premises along the adjacent Bubbenhall Road and aircraft associated noise from the airport have long been part of its character and disturbing to current residents. However, the recent planning approval for the Coventry and Warwickshire Gateway project will radically change its 'rural' nature. Aside from the noise and disturbance associated with the road and building works servicing this promised project, there will be the inevitable rumble of heavy vehicles accessing the logistics depots in close proximity to this site. Because of the proximity of the airport there is little tree cover to mask noise or give visual shelter to this very open area. This is not background noise as invariably found in urban areas, this often is, and increasingly will be, harsh and intrusive. Currently also there are no utility facilities in this area. These will have to be brought in at considerable expense – given that this is presumably not envisaged to be a profit generating venture. These are on-costs which the District Council should be seeking to avoid in this current economic climate.

The final two criteria speak of 'avoiding areas where there could be adverse impact on important features of the natural environment' and integrating the site into the landscape 'without harming the character of the area'. As previously mentioned, there are a limited number of trees in this immediate area. Certainly there is nothing which would give privacy to the site. There are areas of trees beyond the edge of the land outlined but either too far away or at a lower level and therefore not helpful in integrating a site into the landscape or reducing noise – from without or within. But, more important, this area of land is currently home to at least two thriving, long term businesses. Oak Farm and Russell's Nursery are integrated parts of our village, valuable and valued as part of our village. The effect on them of any land take would be serious indeed. Both provide services and work which are totally in keeping with the rural nature of the village and both allow the Green Belt to be maintained. Any reduction of their land for this or any other purpose would be counterproductive. Having recently had the Green Belt adjacent to Baginton reduced for concerning reasons we would be most alarmed to see more valid rural occupations being sacrificed.

Whilst fully understanding the need for dedicated sites to be made available to those wishing to maintain their historic way of life, we genuinely feel this would not be an advantageous setting for the settling and integration of travelling people. The criteria should be met and are not met. Equally, from the village perspective, we stress the importance of recognising the rural and historic nature of our village and the importance of maintaining the Green Belt between it and development. Neither oversized housing projects nor the development of sites such as this should encroach upon the rural nature of our area, especially in the light of the recent planning intrusion into the Green Belt with the Gateway Project.



Roger and Jean Fawcett