

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

9949.

21<sup>st</sup> July 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Gypsy and Traveller site options

We understand that local authorities have a legal obligation to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The government's National Policy Framework aims to ensure that its policy is "fair and effective (*in the*) provision of authorised sites for travellers to facilitate the traditional and nomadic way of life of these groups whilst respecting the interests of the settled community"<sup>1</sup>

Warwick District Council have been fair in respecting the needs of the settled communities in and around the proposed sites by ensuring that their voices can be heard in the consultation process. However, we are concerned that the voices of the travelling community have not been heard. The Commission for Racial Equality recognizes that prejudice against Gypsies and Travellers is the last socially acceptable form of racism in the UK<sup>2</sup>. The Commission also notes that "The majority of the 15,000 caravans that are homes to Gypsy and Traveller families in England are on sites provided by local authorities, or which are privately owned with planning permission for this use. But the location and condition of these sites would not be tolerated for any other section of society. 26 per cent are situated next to, or under, motorways, 13 per cent next to runways. 12 per cent are next to rubbish tips, and 4 per cent adjacent to sewage farms... Overt discrimination remains a common experience – There is a constant struggle to secure the bare necessities, exacerbated by the inability of many adults to read and write, by the reluctance of local officials to visit sites, and by the isolation of these communities from the support of local residents"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk> Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/your-rights/law/harassment-and-discrimination/>


<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

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Whilst we understand that there may be sound and reasonable objections to the proposed sites it is difficult to follow the government's aim to be "fair and effective" if knowledge and understanding about the Gypsy and Traveller way of life, and the particular problems that their community faces, are based on media interpretations and hearsay.

Therefore as part of the consultation process would it be possible for the Council to facilitate a visit to one of its four sites by the people of Harbury who have worries and concerns? The aim of such a meeting would be to give people the chance to meet representatives of the travelling community and to hear their stories and also to meet members of the local settled community to learn how the presence of a traveller site has impacted their lives. This would enable a more informed consultation that can focus on the practicalities rather than on some of the vitriol and outright prejudice that has been bounded around our village.

Yours faithfully,

  
Craig Grocock and Su McClellan