

Discussion Document: In
objection to the traveller site
plans for GT19. (DRAFT 1)

12560



Overview

This document will focus on 3 main areas of objection around the traveller planned site GT19 at Oaklands Farm.

- 1) Correcting miss information and re-aligning the incorrect perception drawn on text outlined in the Warwick District Councils "Sites for Gypsies and Traveller, Preferred Options for Sites." March 2014,
- 2) Addressing objection aligned to WDC's selection criteria
- 3) Addressing "other" areas of objection that are not covered areas 1 and 2.

"Sites for Gypsies and Traveller, Preferred Options for Sites." March 2014,

The following extracts were presented in the publication "Sites for Gypsies and Traveller, Preferred Options for Sites." March 2014, as supporting information for the preferred status of site GT19 for hosting the traveller site.

I have inserted comments into the below text for consideration as I believe it reflects an unrealistic perception and unbalanced view. What I wanted to ensure was a "real picture" as depicted by a local resident.

Land off Birmingham Road, Budbrooke (Green):

"The land is in the Green Belt but part of a larger use making it previously developed land."

Indeed, this land is in Green Belt. From my understanding a great deal of planning requests have been entered to WDC for a variety of plans to develop parts of this site to further its agricultural use, and a great deal of these plans were rejected due to it being Green Belt as well as a plethora of other reasons (See later on in document).

As for the land being "previously being developed", this visually does not appear to be the case for the plot outlined in the council proposal, nor can I find any reference to planning applications made for this area of the land. This piece of land is maintained grassland, as with lots of similar types of field land in green belt. The wording "making it previously developed land" gives an incorrect perception to any reader.

"It is located adjacent to a petrol filling station and other houses and although faces open countryside currently, has an urban feel on this side of the Birmingham Road."

Again, the way this piece is written is purely down to someone's perception and it paints completely the wrong perception. According my English dictionary, the word urban is described as meaning:

urban

in, relating to, or characteristic of a town or city.

synonyms: built-up, town, city, inner-city, densely populated, townified, citified, metropolitan, suburban, non-rural;

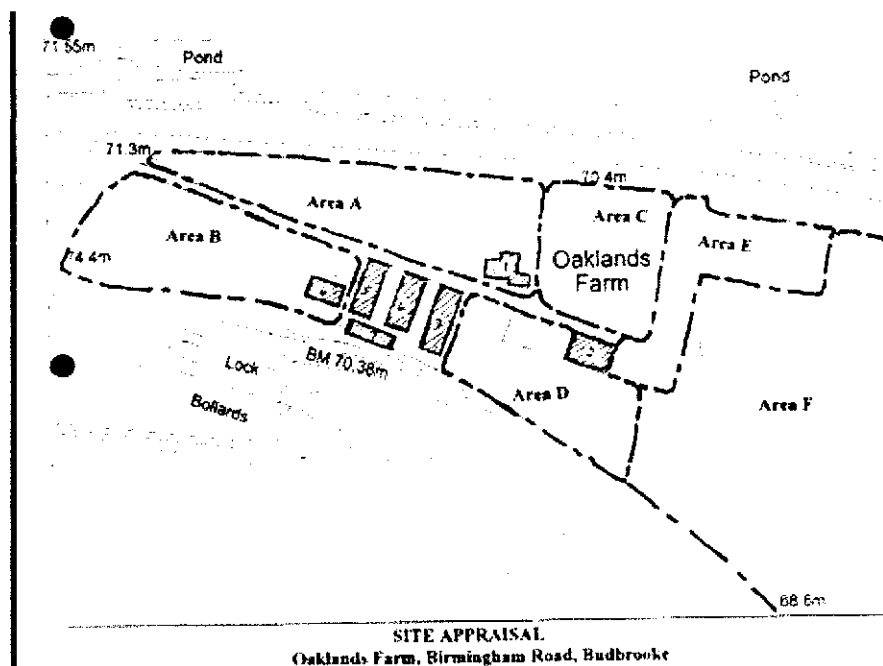
I have no idea, how anyone could be of the opinion that this location could have an "urban feel" the whole area on the drive from the A46 through, is completely green. With so few houses it is neither densely populated, townified, citified, metropolitan, suburban and is 100% definitely rural. Again, the author of this document is potentially creating a perception that is not consistent with reality. In fact, in previous planning applications, it has been described as a Hamlet.

"Currently this part of the land is used as a site for the Camping and Caravan Club so services are already available."

According to the plans available on the WDC portal (W_02_0744—192346) written by case officer M.Duffett, the planning for the approval of 5 caravans that was granted for camping use, is for a different area of the land at Oaklands farm, **NOT THE AREA** that has been listed for site development.

The current planned area of land (from my understanding and searching the council online plans), has never had any planning agreed for anything. It is also worth noting that every planning application I have found for other areas of Oaklands Farm have been for agricultural use or diversification.

Area D on the below plan is the area currently meant for use for caravan club use. The proposed site for the traveller plots are a section of Area B and A.



Again, if I had not have been living in this areas for years, and drive past this site several time every day, it paints a picture of high levels of caravans and camping use. The reality actually is that in all my years of driving past this site, there have never been any more than 1 or 2 caravans camping, and never there for more than a few days restricted to bank holidays. I am sure Oakland's farms declaration of income can validate this. It is also worth noting that there are only 2 reviews on the caravan club website showing how little the site is used.

"The site area has been reduced from that originally considered to avoid other existing uses and retain the viability of the remaining unit."

This may well be accurate, but I think there should be some hard consideration around the business that the owner of this site runs that would seriously question the viability of the

remaining unit. There is currently a kennels onsite, and a caravan servicing businesses. The impact that travellers moving in alongside these businesses, will have a negative impact on the business. I cannot imagine anyone wanting to leave a £30,000 caravan with a company that is sighted next to a traveller site, nor could I imagine people will leave their dogs there. Whether there is evidence or not, mere perception alone will perceptibly destroy these current businesses.

“The existing access points are already used for the Camping and Caravan Club caravans and fewer movements of large vehicles would take place on a permanent site.”

Again, it looks like huge assumptions are being made here relating to the number of caravans that use this site for camping. The numbers are actually miniscule compared to what one would assume a caravan club caravan site would host. Have WDC done any due diligence at all on the actual numbers? Again, the perception when reading this is that the writer is trying to paint an inaccurate picture. The coming and going of frequent daily users from this site, on a road where there has already been 5 fatalities and 23 serious injuries (recorded) in recent years will present a severe problem. The speed limits have already been changed based on how dangerous this road is and speeding is still a major problem.

“This site could connect to the existing foul sewer. A habitat buffer would be required along the line of the watercourse which flows along the southern boundary.”

Due to the topography of the site, is hugely visible, to a point where you can clearly see right the way through to the locks on the canal. A Habitat buffer would be needed around the entire site. Which would remove the openness and views to the historic locks. These locks bring a huge amount of tourism to the area and local businesses (especially the café at the locks)

The effect this site would have on tourism, would be hugely negative.

These Locks are part of Hatton heritage. It has been drawing thousands of people in to enjoy it for many years. This will all be in danger should the plans move forward as well as in violation to paragraphs 80 and 81 as set out in the government planning guidelines on green belt land.

“The land is Grade 3 agricultural land and therefore not of the highest quality.”

I am not sure what relevance this brings. There are no crops being grown there. In fact, a lot of the green belt land in the area of lower quality, is perfectly suitable for raising and keeping livestock. Poor grade land is no reason to assume it should be developed.

“The Priority area school would be Budbrooke Primary School where numbers are falling. The school does currently take children from Warwick which is out of its catchment area. A bid has been made for funding to expand this school based on the knowledge that there could be more ‘in area’ children in the future when new village housing is developed.”

A very serious point to consider on this, is that numbers often fall in schools when Ofsted score them as being **“Inadequate”** and put them into **“special measures”**

to quote Ofsted:

Following a recent OFSTED report that has seen Budbrooke Primary School move into "special measures",

The report highlighted problems with the leadership and management of the school as reasons for the measures.

☒ The headteacher and governors have not done enough to maintain or improve the quality of teaching or the standards the pupils attain.

☒ They have failed in their statutory duty to ensure procedures for safeguarding meet current requirements.

☒ The governing body has not been effective in holding the school to account.

☒ The headteacher has not managed the performance of teachers properly. The annual appraisal of teachers is not yet complete.

☒ The deputy headteacher is currently leading the school with others who are also inexperienced in leadership. Although they receive external support, the school is not yet demonstrating sufficient capacity to improve.

☒ Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not always make enough progress in Key Stage 2.

☒ Progress is inconsistent across year groups. In addition, in 2013, standards at the end of Year 6 fell.

☒ Over time, standards in writing have been lower than those in reading and mathematics.

☒ Teachers' judgements about the levels pupils are working at are not always secure. They have not all received sufficient training in this aspect of their work.

☒ Some activities are not matched closely enough to pupils' needs for them to make rapid progress.

☒ Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good in some classes, particularly in the afternoons when taught by different teachers.

With the level of statistics around the issues that traveller children have in schools around their educational development and needs, it would be totally irresponsible in setting in a site where their catchment school will be completely inadequate to facilitate their developmental and educational needs.

In addition to this, the school is already oversubscribed with an average of 31.5 student per class. The planning request is actually to bring in 1 additional class room and teacher to bring the average class size back down to 30 per class. The plan is based on the intention of NOT INCREASING the number of pupils, but instead to better facilitate the student they have.

Objections have already been lodged for the planning from the local parish council as there are current issues with traffic numbers. As this school is also too far for the proposed site, additional children from the traveller site would only add to this current issue.

“There is a GP surgery located at Hampton Magna (1.1 miles) and public transport is provided by the 68 bus service, the 60 bus service (irregular) and the 511 bus service (irregular) all of which pass the site.”

There is a Surgery, but I want to point out here are some more facts around the transport.

- The 511 has no scheduled stop near the proposed site, and it only has ONE SERVICE on a Wednesday and Saturday.
- The demand will never be high enough with the proposed number to make a commercial impact to increase the regularity.
- The 60 is actually an inter campus bus for Warwick college students and runs Monday to Friday, once in the AM, once in the PM on college operation days only.

Based on this, I would suggest that the public transport is not sufficient enough and the limited numbers that the site would bring is not enough to stimulate a change in the current transport routes.

“Subject to agreement with the landowner, this site could be delivered within 5 years.”

As mentioned above, the current land owner would suffer major negative impact on his caravan service and dog kennel business should the planned site go ahead.

In Summary

The inaccurate and misleading perception delivered in document should be cause for the council to re-assess this site. It has been misleading to any member of the public reading it. WDC should have an obligation to offer a more accurate set of information that portrays a more realistic outlook based on fact. My belief is that the statement made in this document should be retracted, and consultation process be restarted.

Objections based on the WDC's selection criteria.

For the next section of my objections to the plans, I wish to address the outlined selection criteria point by point:

Criteria as outlined by WDC:

1 Convenient access to a GP surgery, school, and public transport

We have already discussed above, there are issues with public transport. With only 3 buses that pass the road, none of which stop near the proposed site.

- The 511 has ONE SERVICE on a Wednesday and Saturday.
- The 60 is actually a inter campus bus for Warwick college student and runs Monday to Friday, once in the am, once in the PM on college operation days only.

Based on this, I would suggest that the public transport is not sufficient enough and the limited numbers that the site would bring is not enough to stimulate a change in the current transport routes.

The other point to consider is that that road is dangerous to cross with the speed of the current traffic flow which would be necessary to use public transport.

2 Avoiding areas with a high risk of flooding

According to maps on the Environment agencies website, the land in question looks to be located near (if not in) in a flood zone 3.

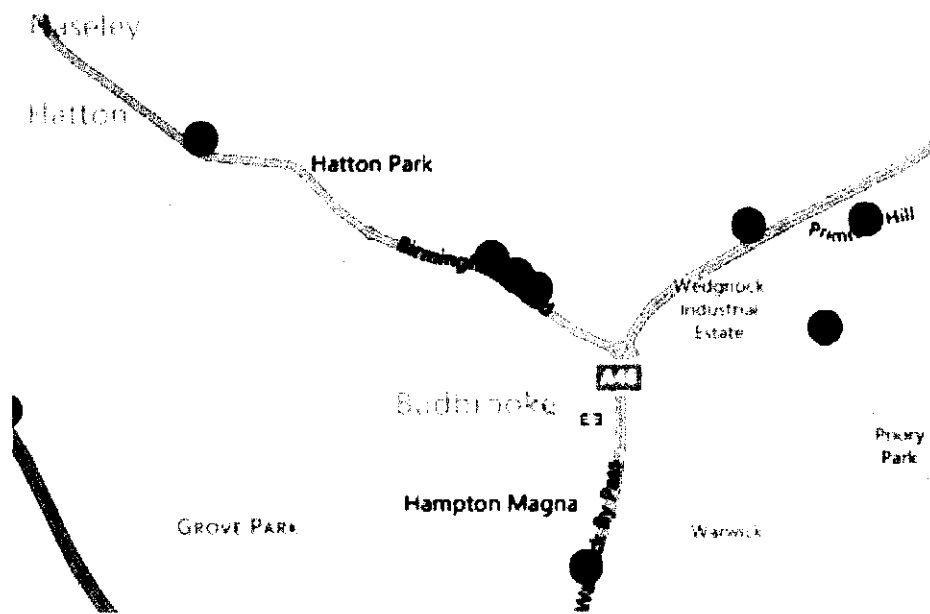
There is also a review on Tripadvisor.com from a caravan owner mentioning they could not stay at that particular site due to how flooded it was.

3 Safe access to the road network and provision for parking, turning and servicing on site

This is a very small site, with the very rare occasional that there is a caravan pitched. The level of fatalities on this road in recent years suggest how dangerous and busy it is. Having a set of dwellings there, with the size of the vehicles and regularity that would me pulling in and out on a daily basis, would severely add to the level hazard.

Other previously developments at Oakland farm have been rejected due to speeds and the bend in the roads causing difficulties to the traffic and the safety issues that would arise from lack of visibility for cars entering and exiting the site. The highways agency supported this view. In fact, the HA noted to say that visibility was such that I would only be safe if the carriage way had a maximum speed of 30 MPH.

The diagram below shows **fatalities**. The 3 prominent red dots right by the planned site shows the reason why this site is dangerous. The below stretch of Birmingham road has had **5 Deaths** and **23 injuries**. (Serious enough to be recorded)



4 Avoiding areas where there is the potential for noise and other disturbance

No Comment

5 Provision of utilities (running water, toilet facilities, waste disposal, etc)

No Comment

6 Avoiding areas where there could be adverse impact on important features of the natural and historic environment

According to the Canal River Trust, the site is one of the most picturesque spots on the grand Union canal that has been in place since 1799. It is also part of this areas heritage. As result generates a huge level of tourism into the local area. This tourism also aids local business, like the Hatton Arms and the Cafe on the locks. To have a permanent travel site backing directly onto these locks would be sacrilege.

This site would be visible from the locks, impair the view of the locks from the road and completely deter people from going, not to mention the safety and hazards in question for the local traveller children living so close.

The canal is also classified as a local wildlife site and just south of the site is classified as an Eco-site 30/26.

There is a natural and historic environmental landscape document DP3 that is also relevant to these points.

7 Sites which can be integrated into the landscape without harming the character of the area. Site development will accord with national guidance on site design and facility provision

The proposed site faces directly onto a major road in and out of Warwick. Its also major route linking Warwick to Solihull, Shirley and Balsall Common of which all of these routes are carved through a beautiful rural landscape. To have a traveller site directly on the frontage of this road is will cause a huge amount of harm to the character of the area and environment. It will also remove close down the "openness" that currently exists. (One of the reasons Kits Nest was rejected for traveller development)

It will also obscure the view of the Locks as mentioned previously with or without steps to mask the site from view.

The topography of the site is very low to the level of the road also making screening very difficult.

8 Promotes peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community

For the last few years, the residents local to this site have been putting a huge amount of energy to work with the council for the moving on of a traveller site just up the road at Kites Nest. This has aided the high level of negative feeling around the current plans. This is not the basis of a laying a successful foundation of integration into the local community.

It would severely irresponsible for WDC to try and force this.

There are also some residential dwelling very close to the proposed site whose numbers would feel very overwhelmed and threatened by the proposed numbers of pitches by comparison. Again, this would not aid peaceful integration and co-existence.

9 Avoids placing undue pressure on local infrastructure and services

As above, in previously responses. The infrastructure simply doesn't bend to accommodate the needs

10 Reflects the extent to which traditional lifestyles (whereby some travellers live and work from the same location thereby omitting many travel to work journeys) can contribute to sustainability.

As above, this site is very visible due to its proximity. It a site of rural greenbelt with views to the historic locks in the background.

In Summary.

Based on the selection criteria outlined by WDC, this site should no go ahead based on the reason outlined above.

Other points of consideration:

1) Previously developments for this site have also been rejected.

- Application number w10 / 1663 refused use due to the green belt and planning policy guidelines NOTE 2 that states within the green belt, the rural character of the area will be retained and protected. It also contains general presumption against “inappropriate development” in green belt.

Making a decision to place a permanent travel site would lead to significant harm to openness.

- Another planning proposal was refused based on:

Location in a prominent with the green belt and special landscape area. Close proximity to the grand union canal, a popular tourist location. The use of a significant part of the land is deemed in appropriate development and harmful the green belt. It would be seriously detrimental to the visual amenity of the landscape area

- Other previously developments at Oakland farm have rejected due to speeds and the bend in the roads causing difficulties to the traffic and the safety issues that would arise from lack of visibility for cars entering and exiting the site. The highways agency supported this view. In fact, the HA noted to say that visibility was such that I would only be safe if the carriage way had a maximum speed of 30 MPH.
- There have also been previous enforcements made on the locations around the caravans on the site

All of this is should be taken into consideration as it is hugely relevant. Continuity should be expected from WDC on this based on recent and historic decisions made. There should also be a view on of public perception and reputational risk on WDC being perceived to be changing its rules to suit its needs.

2) Policy DP3 – Natural Historic Environment.

This policy states that development will only be permitted which protects important natural features and positively contributes to the character and quality of its natural and historical environments through good habitat / landscape design and management.

Development proposals should be expected to demonstrate that they protect and enhance features of historical significance.

The current plans for the site will not do this.

3) Planning Policy Framework / Guidelines – Protecting Green Belt Land

http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/9-protecting-green-belt-land/#paragraph_79

To quote the government guidelines:

“The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”

Paragraph 80

Green belt serve to assist to:

- assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The current planned site goes against these.

Paragraph 81 - Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

The current plan goes against this.

Paragraph 82 - New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions.

The current plan goes against this.

Paragraph 87 - As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances

I do not believe the current site plan is “very special circumstances” and as such would be in violation to this

Paragraph 89 - A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

The current plans do not adhere to this policy

Overall Summary

Based on the poorly presented, inaccurately portrayed and misleading information that has been published to date, along with the facts outlined in objection to this and the factual objections aligned to selection criteria;

Then added to this how many times the proposed plans go against the government guidelines for development of green land;

And compound this further with the amount of objections to planning over the years for the same and other similar sites in the locality;

There is only one view that is for **the plans for proposing a traveller site on GT19 should be revoked.**