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### **Opposition to Gypsy & Traveller Site at Stratford Road, Warwick**

I am writing to express my wholehearted opposition to the proposed Gypsy & Traveller site at Stratford Road, Longbridge, Warwick. As the owner of a property that lies directly adjacent to the proposed site (The Barn House, Longbridge Farm CV34 6RB) I would ask you to consider the following facts which I feel prove conclusively that this site is totally unsuitable.

#### **Major Access Problems**

The proposed site can only be reached via a privately-owned, narrow, farm track which is subject to substantial drainage issues. The driveway is single carriageway and has no passing places. It is barely adequate to accommodate the small amount of vehicles that currently use it to get to and from the three residential properties it serves (Longbridge Farm, The Barn House & Stable Cottage). **In fact, the condition of the drive is so poor that Warwick DC refuses to send its own refuse and recycling collection vehicles down it, and residents at the aforementioned properties are forced to take their rubbish and recycling the ½ mile up to the main road in order to get it collected (even though we pay our Council Tax for this service just like everyone else!)** Furthermore, the condition of the drive is so poor in the winter months that it is only traversable by 4-wheel drive vehicle, and we have had several instances of Royal Mail, delivery vehicles, couriers and taxis refusing to use it due to potential damage to their vehicles from the 'crater-like' potholes that regularly appear. The Government's guidelines for planning Gypsy & Traveller Sites



state quite clearly that: 'In designing a site, all routes for vehicles on the site, and for access to the site, must allow easy access for emergency vehicles and safe places for turning vehicles'.

**How can a narrow, rutty farm track which Emergency Service vehicles cannot even access possibly be suitable to serve a residential site of 15 dwellings?**

Making the track in any way usable for the volume of traffic that it would be required to carry, would necessitate obtaining the consent of the owner (who is **not** the same person who owns the land designated for the proposed site), costly and disruptive ground works, road laying and the laying of service pipelines and cables, plus immeasurable damage to local wildlife.

At the point of writing the proposed method of access has still not been fully explained in the Council's Consultation Document which was published on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October (despite this document stating that this information would be forthcoming from WCC) which has resulted in what I believe to be an incomplete proposal being put out to consultation.

**Failure to meet Government Guidelines for Gypsy & Traveller Sites**

The Government clearly sets out its requirements for traveller sites in its March 2012 document 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites'. The proposed site fails to meet these requirements in a number of areas including the following:

*Policy B Planning for Traveller sites, Point 9 (d); "Sites should relate the number of pitches or plots to the circumstances of the specific size and location of the site and the surrounding population's size and density" & Policy C: Sites in rural areas and the countryside, Point 12; "When assessing the suitability of sites in rural or semi-rural settings, local planning authorities should ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled community" -* The proposed site will sit directly adjacent to just three dwellings – a farm house and two small barn conversions which will be swamped by its size.

*Policy B Planning for Traveller Sites, Point 11 (e); "Sites should provide for proper consideration of the effect of local environmental quality (such as noise and air quality) on the health and well-being of any travellers that may locate there" –* the site is sandwiched between a Sewage Treatment Works and the M40 motorway. WDC's Sustainability Assessment identified this as an area of significant concern (flagged as red) with a 'potential major negative effect'. They have suggested that these issues could be 'mitigated' but the Council have failed to elaborate further on this. Clearly a site located very close to a sewage works and a busy motorway is likely to have significant noise and air quality issues and therefore is not suitable for a permanent residential development, particularly one where children will live.

*Policy B Planning for Traveller Sites, Point 11 (g); "do not locate sites in areas at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplains, given the particular vulnerability of caravans."* The designated land lies within Flood Zones 2, 3, 3a & 3b (Zone 3's being high risk of flooding) which speaks for itself.

**Road Safety Issues**

Reaching the site from the main Stratford Road (heading in the direction of Warwick town centre) necessitates a dangerous right hand turn across oncoming traffic on a blind bend. There have been several accidents here, and plenty of near misses and the increase in traffic using it should the site go ahead can only make this problem worse.



The 'no through road' spur road (old Stratford Road, now part of the National Cycle Network) that lies between the entrance to the farm track and Stratford Road is narrow and has parked cars along both side on a daily basis. It is hard to imagine how caravans and unwieldy large mobile homes on trailers will be able to navigate this tight space without mayhem ensuing.

### **Unnecessarily Destroying 'Green' Land & Impact on Wildlife**

The site and surrounding farmland is one of the last remaining areas of 'green space' that can be seen on the drive into Warwick. Despite erroneous information given at one of the Council's Chase Meadow Drop-in Surgery sessions (that the designated site has had previous industrial usage), it is, and has been for at least the last 35 years purely arable, agricultural land. The only industrial usage has been in the neighbouring Seven Trent Sewage Works Site.

The farm track is flanked with 51 mature trees and hedgerows that are home to various birds and small mammals. It would be impossible to make this track meet the access standards required without destroying this valuable wildlife habitat.

Given that Government guidelines state that Brown Field sites are preferable to Green Field for Traveller sites, it seems criminal that Warwick DC are considering destroying this small oasis of green, when other sites that would be far easier to access and significantly less disruptive to develop, have been dismissed.

### **A Costly Solution**

The Council has intimated that, should it go ahead, this plan will be delivered at no cost to the taxpayer, but it is hard to imagine the gypsy community will be willing/able to cover such a long and expensive list of requirements merely to facilitate a site for 15 dwellings.

These are just a few of the likely costs involved:- connecting services to the site over a substantial distance (the Consultation document states that the proximity of the site to other dwellings should make this 'relatively easy'. What it has failed to realise is that the three neighbouring properties all have water from one shared supply which is already prone to low pressure due to volume of usage, so certainly cannot serve any more properties!), making the farm track into a usable highway that meets the required standards, laying pavements, laying large areas of hard standing, connecting to mains sewerage or installing septic tanks, erecting street lighting, erecting landscaping to cut down on noise etc, etc, – I hate to use clichés, but the list really is endless!

### **Safety**

Situating a residential site that will be home to children beside the banks of a fast flowing river is, by anybody's standards, a recipe for disaster. To make the perimeter secure would necessitate erection of a substantial structure that would spoil the open outlook of the site and be at odds with the appearance of the surrounding countryside.

Pedestrian access along the rough farm track would also be dangerous given the increased volume of vehicle usage. The only way to solve this would be to include pavements and street lighting, at yet more expense.

### **Eleventh Hour Inclusion**

Unlike the other two proposed Traveller sites, Stratford Road did not appear on the Council's short list until August 2014. Its inclusion came at the "eleventh hour" and as a complete surprise to many. The first most people knew of it was an announcement in the Warwick Courier.

The Consultation Document is vague in a number of areas and the extra information we were promised would be added to make these grey areas clearer, has failed to materialise. Therefore there are a number of areas I have been unable to comment on as exhaustively as I would have liked due to their being insufficient information available.

There are so many factors pointing to the fact that the plan is fundamentally flawed and fails to meet the required criteria on cost, health, safety, accessibility and environmental grounds.

I sincerely hope the Council will now acknowledge that the site is wholly inappropriate, before this unrealistic proposal is permitted to go any further.

Yours faithfully

