

When I sat before you for the first time on May 9th, I was one of 14 people who gave 3 minute presentations in respect of the site in Stanton Wick. As you will no doubt recall those presentations offered great detail on the planning reasons why this site should not be on your list of Preferred Sites. The presenters also posed many questions regarding your acquisition, appraisal and selection process.

In addition you were handed a petition representing an overwhelming majority of the residents in Stanton Wick, Stanton Drew, Pensford and Publow.

In addition you and your officers have now been presented with over 150 questions.

It is important for me to note here that none of the presentations made or questions asked related to any matter concerning race, inequality or comment on the Gypsy and or Traveller communities or way of life. This was not deliberate, it was natural. Our concerns are around the choice and process that brought this clearly inappropriate and undeliverable site to your preferred list. You will understand why I feel the need to make this point.

Following the May 9th Cabinet meeting and in the absence of any real response from the Council, we presented at the Scrutiny Committee on 15th May. You are aware of the resolution that was made at that meeting. It was disappointing for us that no member of the Cabinet attended the meeting.

Following the lack of any response from the Cabinet to the resolution, our complaints we think, encouraged a number of members of the Council to call a special meeting of the full Council for next Monday 18th June.

In the ensuing period we and many residents have attended two presentations or exhibitions in Stanton Drew and Pensford and have had the opportunity of engaging with officers and with, in part, Paul Crossley, Tim Ball and Cherry Beath.

We have also had some of the 150 questions answered, many which give rise to further questions.

We have also had the opportunity of residents discussing directly with Paul Crossley at a very well attended public meeting in Pensford. Unfortunately no Councillor attended the two similar public meetings in Stanton Drew.

None of these meetings or discussions has left any resident with any confidence in your ability and intent to ensure an open and honest appraisal of sites or to really consult with them

You have seemingly ignored the 69 tolerated pitches in BaNES within your appraisal – those very pitches where Gypsy and Travellers want to be.

You are already aware of all the discussions and the questions and answers and you are I hope, now fully aware of your residents very serious concerns.

You are aware of the serious flaws in the process and in the selection of the sites in Stanton Wick, Keynsham and Radstock. Your own Officers, on multiple occasions, have stated that the selection process is flawed.

You are aware of the breach of Government Guidance and of your own policy statements that has occurred during this Preferred Site Selection process. Your Councillors and Officers have provided contradictory comments implying an imprecise and inconsistent understanding of planning regulations

You are aware of the serious harm caused by the process that you have commissioned and managed

And, you are aware of the real possibility that claim could be made against the Council for the consequences of negligence.

We realize that there is political motivation behind your urgency with this process. We the residents of Stanton Wick, Stanton Drew, Pensford and Publow ask you not to allow this to get in the way of good planning, open local government and the proper attention and care deserved by your ratepayers.

We urge you to consider the recommendation of your own Scrutiny Committee and call a temporary halt to this process, to re asses, to re set the criteria and scoring matrix, to extensively advertise for possible sites and to openly re-engage in the consultation process.

We urge you not to be focused on easy solutions at any cost, but to engage with all of your communities and with your adjacent authorities to find an open, honest and lasting solution that will not bring harm but will bring harmony.