

My name is Mary Walsh I am joint chair with Jill Britten of Whitchurch Village Action Group we have been active for five years and our aim is to safe guard the Green Belt.

The Council and Planners knew that the parcel of land 7100 Woollard Lane was a Greenfield in the Green Belt but failed to score correctly on the original proposed list of traveller and gypsy sites. The site was referred to as a Brownfield site . The outcome was that when the list of 23 was slimmed to 6 Whitchurch was included although this huge error was brought to the attention of all concerned from the Chief Executive to the planning officers by letter emails and in conversations. The next stage seemed even more blatant was a press release issued by the Liberal Democrats that from the list of 6 sites Stanton Wick, Radstock and Keynsham sites would be removed. Whitchurch was still included as there were only a few reasons against site. The people of Whitchurch had sent over 300 letters but these counted as very little. The fact that the site was included due to gross negligence stood for nothing. The site must be removed from all proposed Traveller and gypsy sites lists without delay to avoid legal action.

The road show which gave local residents information about proposed sites came to Whitchurch but it was an afterthought we did not appear on the first list with Stanton Wick Keynsham Radstock etc. I rang the planning office and the local councillor to ask why Whitchurch had not been given a date to show the residents .I am sure the staff will remember my annoyance it took several weeks but they rushed a show only days before the dead line for objections. So Whitchurch was let down again by the people who should give information to the public.

Is B&NES council sending out this message “Buy a field in the Green Belt put a caravan in the corner?” Apply for planning permission stating concrete standing so call it brownfield site the outcome will take years before even the threat of removal is issued. Then the Appeal system takes over. Even if the Inspector over rules the appeal. The orders will not be carried out .Now I ask why rate payers’ money is being used to employ educated trained staff that are not carrying out procedures do they need more direction? I am reminded of this when I ask questions and am constantly told “Not correct procedure”. Perhaps I do not understand how the system should work please tell me as we may be wasting time and money. We must protect the Green Belt and get fair play for the people of Whitchurch.