

Ref Item 14 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development
Plan Document (DPD) – Statement by Jennie Jones

My name is Jennie Jones, I am a member of Stanton Wick Action Group.

I cannot understate the stressful and damaging process that has brought us to this point today.

You recorded at your meeting on 9th May that the group delivered 8 statements, each covering separate aspects of your process and your assessment of the site at Stanton Wick. These statements were comprehensive and provided advice to the Cabinet, pointing out the obvious errors in the process.

We urged the Cabinet to remove the Site from its list of preferred sites and to urgently amend its proposals.

The Cabinet Members responses were, evasive, patronising and in one particular instance, offensive. These responses showed that this most important issue has become immersed in emotion, race equality and political positioning.

We have taken every opportunity available to both question and advise officers and members. There have been 2 Scrutiny Panel Meetings, a further Cabinet meeting and a Special Meeting of the Council. None of the outcomes from these meetings have given us cause to consider that BaNES is listening or indeed has improved its administration of this process.

In addition we and the local communities have attended consultation meetings, provided over 1,000 responses, a petition of over 1,300 signatures and an e- petition of 471 signatures. The settled communities have told BaNES loud and clear, that they have failed in their administration of this process and in their selection of Stanton Wick as one of their Preferred Sites.

To say that these BaNES citizens who rely on its elected members for fair, open and competent local government are dismayed is an understatement. They have been exposed to the chaotic world that is BaNES planning office, which appears to have de-motivated officers who are in some cases, emotionally attached to what clearly requires an unemotional, unbiased and fair output. This performance is not good enough.

You are all aware of the many instances where we have had cause to complain regarding the misleading information published by BaNES, all of which we have recorded, two examples are;

- The incorrect advice that stopping the DPD process and re-starting afresh would have a seriously damaging effect of the progress of your Core Strategy Plan. This is not true and

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- The confusing and misleading Press Statements issued by your Lib Dem press office and BaNES that three sites would be removed from the list of Preferred Sites at this meeting.

We hope that the Cabinet will now stop this chaotic and flawed process and ensure that officers set out fully considered, open, fair and efficient process of allocating sites and that you learn by past errors and ensure that your communication and consultation with settled communities is both professional and sensitive.

We hope that you will ensure that all the government guidelines are fully incorporated into your criteria.

We hope that you will ensure that your new assessment criteria is incapable of manipulation and not dependent on interpretation.

We hope that you will not continue to rush but will find a pace that works for the best outcome, will refuse to allow the reference to race or deprivation to be used in defence of your actions or response to criticism and will stop, once and for all any reference to the failings or policies of the previous administration.

We hope that we can say, BaNES listened and they were not afraid to admit their mistakes – and that they put it right.