

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

My name is Simon Whittle and I am a member of the Stanton Wick Action Group. My statement concerns the Officer's report to Cabinet, specifically Section 5.3, which discusses the revised site selection process.

The reason for reviewing the use of the scoring matrix is listed as "confusion". From my discussions with many people in my local area, the "confusion" is not due to the matrix itself, but to the bizarre and inconsistent way it has been used by the Council.

Using a matrix is simple:

- Apply coarse screens at the start, not the end.
- Ensure that all of the relevant parameters are included and appropriately weighted.
- Ensure that the information is correct and that third parties' inputs are taken into account. In this case, the best way would be to work with the relevant Town or Parish Council. **Was this ever considered or can't they be trusted?**
- Publish a discussion clearly explaining the links between the matrix and the recommendations.

A properly implemented matrix is of immense value, but to my amazement, the recommendations in section 5.3 of the report propose that a matrix is not used, and is replaced by a "more analytical and discursive" methodology. Without scores, the process becomes much more subjective. **Could you please explain how an open-ended discussion is more analytical than a carefully-weighted scoring system and not just an easier way to create the desired result?**

It would appear that although the decision to use an alternative process, which if democratic processes are to be followed, should be made tonight after the Cabinet debate, has already been made, since to quote from my correspondence with Mr Trigwell on 07-Sept:

"Use of the site scoring matrix resulted in some public confusion and so will not be used at the next stage. There is therefore little merit in revisiting the scoring".

At the Scrutiny Panel, Cabinet and Special Council Meetings, Councillors Crossley and Ball insisted that the process be followed through until the September Cabinet, but it

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now appears that part of the process has stopped and a new one has already started. **Please reconsider this “decision”?**

The reluctance of the Council to avoid issuing a revised version has contributed to mistrust.

- Errors were pointed out in formal consultation responses, but to my knowledge, the matrix has not been updated. With corrections, the Old Colliery site would not have a sum of scores of 10, but a score of -7, pushing it even further down the list. **Why won't you update the matrix?**
- Some errors, such as the incorrect Green Belt designation for the Whitchurch, were acknowledged in the Cabinet report, but even this significant error required months of lobbying before it was implemented. **Why has it been so hard to correct basic information?**
- Council Officers were aware of many of the “big problems” relating to Stanton Wick prior to the Cabinet Meeting on 09-May-2012, but chose not to highlight them in the matrix. **Was this because it affected the “desired” result?**

The use of additional “screens”, such as World Heritage City designation, once the matrix was completed, made people suspicious that the results were being manipulated to meet predetermined requirements.

In the Sustainability Appraisal Report from April 2012, which recommended the allocation of the Stanton Wick site, there are comments about the benefits of its large size, making it suitable for a large-scale living environment with on-site education, healthcare, business activities and enabling the traditional Gypsy and Traveller way of life. Further input from the Gypsy and Traveller community was recommended, but there was little or no consideration for the needs of the settled community.

So this is why the matrix was ignored? Councillors Crossley and Ball have both commented publicly that the main of attraction of the site has been its size, so had they had predetermined that a large site, well away from Bath, which met half of the needs was ideal, even if it was contrary to planning policy? The fact that it didn't fit with the scoring matrix was a mere irritation, which they hoped no-one would notice.

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We did notice, and request that you retain the scoring matrix, using the information wisely and openly in selecting preferred sites.