

Address at Cabinet meeting on 12th September

I speak as a resident of Sleep Lane which is in close proximity to parcel 7100 Woollard Lane, Whitchurch.

This is a greenfield site within the Greenbelt and should therefore not have appeared on the original preferred options list. The council have now confirmed that an error was made when it was declared Brownfield.

A few years ago, we noticed that caravan appeared in a nearby field and subsequently received a planning notification of an application for a gypsy pitch.

This was seriously opposed by residents and parish council as we all knew the site to be in green belt and there were concerns about overdevelopment, safety, sanitation and visual impact.

We were relieved to hear that the planning department refused the application but the occupants stayed and built fences, felled trees, put in hard standings and an additional building. As is common with gypsies and travellers the retrospective planning decision was appealed and after another refusal - temporary permission due to run out in 2015 was granted.

Since then further work has been carried out clearing the adjacent field .. and we are very concerned that this site is being considered not only as a single permanent site but also for a second pitch (or is this already a done deal?)

I read with despair that the planning team had "received a small a number of concerns about the Whitchurch site which have been dealt with"

Apparently this relates to the number of specific issues rather than the number of responses.....what the cabinet needs to appreciate is that the Whitchurch residents who came out in force, "speak" as one" about the main issue namely the overdevelopment of the greenbelt and the law that applies to it.

It is well known that gypsies and travellers apply for planning permission retrospectively. The lack of public sites responsible for this and councils have an obligation to find suitable sites.

These sites should be on brownfield, NOT in greenbelt, NOT on a blind bend which connects a main trunk road out of Bristol and a busy rat run out of Keynsham where there are no kerbs or safe crossing areas.

The sites should be somewhere where there is access to economic opportunity, healthcare, schools, shops and promote true integration into society. The site at Woollard Lane ticks none of these boxes.

Allowing small permanent pitches in open countywide will lead to further sites peppering our rural landscape.

The residents of Whitchurch village feel let down by Banes and the planning team.

We live in an area that we love and we respect and abide by the strict planning laws that govern Greenbelt Land.

It seems that the goal posts are moved in favour of the minority group time after time. There is little point carrying out a public consultation if decisions have already been made or people feel that they are being ignored - unless you are threatened with solicitors or a judicial review.

Its all very politically correct but very democratic.

Now is the time to put things right, listen to the local community, act lawfully and remove the site from the preferred options list.

Thank you.