

Statement to BaNES Cabinet in relation to Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople DPD

My name is Simon Whittle. I am a resident of Stanton Drew and a member of the Stanton Wick Action Group.

I am here to raise further concerns about the Bath and North East Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment prepared by Opinion Research Services (ORS) in December 2012.

Our group made statements, and submitted questions, both to the April and May Cabinet meetings and to the May Planning Transport and Development Scrutiny Panel, and our Chairman has engaged in detailed correspondence with Councillor Ball. Some of you may remember that, at the last Cabinet meeting, Councillor Crossley claimed that responses to our questions from 10-April been sent and must have “gone missing”. Responses were finally provided by 16-May, but are wholly inadequate.

I will now address some specific issues:

1. The Stanton Wick site, which was removed from the DPD list last September, is referred to multiple times in the document. After previous requests, one reference was removed, but several remain. We have searched through many other GTAAs, including those from ORS and have been unable to find an instance where a specific site is identified. Your justification that CLG guidance suggests *location preference* is very weak and open to claims of bias, undue influence, or predetermination, as it surely refers to the general area within a district, not a single site.

We welcome your comments and request for a third time that all references to the Stanton Wick Site are removed.

2. Although the report is dated December 2012, you have now advised us that multiple revised drafts were received after this and that the final version was not received until February 2013 and not published until early March (immediately prior to the Special Council Meeting). The publication date is therefore misleading.

Could you please advise us when the final version was accepted, whether there was any additional cost incurred, and comment on whether you think that a 3-month delay in finalising a report is acceptable, given the haste in which the tender was released and preferred supplier was instructed (just 5 days)?

3. Some of the very detailed comments in the report were made by a member of the Gypsy community who is based on her own well-publicised private site on the far side of Glastonbury, and is well-known to Planning Policy Officers. This person provided consultancy services to the Council during the DPD and has, in her own words, acted as an agent for the Stanton Wick site. **Can you please ask ORS whether they consider it appropriate to publish comments and site-specific preferences from a person with a potential conflict who is not actively seeking accommodation within BaNES?**

The continued naming of the Stanton Wick site in a document which informs the DPD, and therefore forms part of the draft Core Strategy continues to cause great stress in our community.

Can you please confirm that no weight will be placed by officers in respect of site-specific comments in the ORS report when determining planning applications?

Please also confirm that there are no circumstances under which the decision made at the September-2012 to remove the Stanton Wick site from the list of sites in the DPD will be reviewed or reversed.

As the Parish Council has no doubt made clear, we have a frustrated and angry community, and they are still looking forward to receiving satisfactory responses.

Thank you for your time