

My name is Doctor Chris Ree and I speak on behalf of Stanton Wick Action Group

At the September 2012 cabinet meeting you resolved to do a number of things, which are noted in the report before you this evening.

In respect of the report and annex 1, the review of the site assessment criteria is key as this is the strand of work that ultimately underpins site selection.

I note that in item 5.7 under 'review of site selection criteria' it states that 'in response to concerns over site assessment process and the scoring matrix, the method of assessment has been amended. The revised approach uses criteria closely based on National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Policy for Traveller sites (PPFTS)"

The resulting document, somewhat briefer than previous iterations is striking. Unfortunately not for its content but for its brevity and complete lack of any substance. It is simply a list of headings taken from NPPF and PPFTS documents.

It adds nothing and could have been written in half an hour any time after March 2012 and certainly after Sept 2012. But this is presented 9 months later.

The issues are indeed complex and difficult with many interested parties and we are told there have been delays due to complexity. Yet we have the site assessment criteria reduced to a side and a half of A4. There is no detail on the key issue of relative scoring and no clues as to how the various and sometimes competing factors will be weighed or balanced. Its lack of detail and objectivity will render it useless and will provoke tension and stress in communities. If it were a pizza it would be a margherita; simple and no meat.

The transparent, tried and accepted approach to complex comparison (a scoring matrix) is abandoned on the banner of causing confusion, to be replaced by a lazy, loose and fuzzy process which will bring questions and complaint on every decision.

Maybe, the being found for the blatant manipulation of the Scoring Matrix last year hastened its demise?

So, why are we here looking at this unsatisfactory progress report almost 10 months from your resolution to press on and complete the process you had started. I see 3 possibilities;

1. It is rushed and unfinished and the real document will be presented next month; in which case this update is embarrassing.
2. It masks the truth of real progress which for political reasons is being held back. If this is the case then transparency has evaporated and this update is misleading.
3. This is it, up to date and a true reflection of progress. In which case we all in trouble as it is manifestly inadequate.

It is I am sure, tempting to have a vague site selection criteria open to multiple interpretations, providing wriggle room. However pursuing such a criteria will leave your officers and you open to suspicion of pre-determined outcomes and will not stand scrutiny.

The progress in this progress report looks either arthritic, illusory or meaningless or all three and with the evidence so far it is hard to see how this will command the confidence of the public.