

My name is Karen Abolkheir and I am a member of the Stanton Wick Action Group.

My representations today cover the status of the Council's Gypsy Traveller Development Plan Document.

Cabinet will recall that on 9 May 2012 6 sites were listed in the Council's Preferred Options DPD to go forward for consultation. 3 sites were subsequently removed at the September 2012 Cabinet meeting leaving a 17 pitch provision for a 42 pitch requirement. Last year's DPD for Stanton Wick provided for 20 pitches, nearly 48% of the requirement for the district.

Cabinet will be aware that a planning application was received in January seeking permission for 12 pitches on the shale & tip of the Old Colliery Stanton Wick – nearly 43% of the current requirement for the district on an area that can accommodate 72 pitches.

We have serious concerns over the pre-application consultation and the fact that the application, which does not meet the required levels to be registered, was registered and with a substantially lower application fee than should be applied. We ask that the Cabinet fully investigate the circumstances of the pre-consultation process together with the registration and fee calculation of this application.

Since the Cabinet meeting last September there appears to be very little progression of the Gypsy Traveller DPD. Cabinet were due to debate an updated DPD last March, postponed subsequently to this coming May and we have recently learned that the DPD will now not be debated until the June Cabinet meeting.

Following any resolutions from Cabinet there is a requirement for consultation with communities on the proposed Gypsy Traveller sites and we understand that the DPD will be adopted in Spring 2014, some 16 months later than the Council's target date.

Members of the community are extremely concerned regarding the lack of progress and the possible appeal grounds this may provide to the owner/applicant at Stanton Wick - namely lack of provision for the identified need.

We question why progression of the Lower Bristol Road site has not been reported back to Cabinet, especially as at the September Cabinet, resolution (5) proposed as an amendment by Councillor Allen stated:

' AGREE that whilst the Council is progressing the DPD in light of the absence of any authorised permanent sites within the District the Council should progress a planning application at Lower Bristol Road for gypsy and traveller pitches. '

Thus there is no reason to wait for an update on the status of Lower Bristol Road – please can you provide a formal update at the next Cabinet meeting especially in light of the deferment of the DPD.

We also request that Cabinet provides for a full and detailed update on progress of the DPD together with a definitive timetable for the resolution of site provision in such time as may be required to ensure that any planning appeal may not rely on the lack of progress with the DPD.

We question the dramatic increase in the number of yards required for Travelling Showpeople and request a statement as to the Council's proposals to identify and authorise yards to meet this need.

We trust Cabinet will understand our concerns and the need for investigation into the process surrounding the Planning Application, for a statement on the progress of the Lower Bristol Road site and an update on the DPD.

Thank you.