

My name is Karen Abolkheir. I represent the Stanton Wick Action Group

I make representations to you regarding your Gypsy Traveller DPD and our concerns over its management and progress.

8 members of the Group spoke at the 9th May 2012 Cabinet meeting, setting out the flaws to the process and in particular to the proposals for a very large site in Stanton Wick. The Cabinet did not respond and treated us to a lecture on the failures of the previous administration, their responsibility to a minority group and their consideration that our representation was racist.

We continued to make representation through Cabinet, Scrutiny Panels and to individual members of the Cabinet.

We employed planning consultants and provided the Cabinet with detailed and extensive information and argument as to the deficiency of the process and the serious concerns as to the justification of including the Stanton Wick site as one of 6 “preferred sites”.

At a Full Council meeting on 18th June this Administration, despite our providing one of the UK’s leading planning barristers and detailed information, passed a resolution stating that you had listened to the speakers and proposed an amended resolution. Laudable – but the proposed resolution was typed, printed and handed out BEFORE the Full Council Meeting started.

You will understand why the 3 communities affected had no option but to seek a Judicial Review of the DPD process and the inclusion of inappropriate sites on the Preferred Options list.

On 12th September 2012 members of the Group spoke again but Cabinet failed to remove the Stanton Wick site on valid planning grounds, choosing instead to use reasons of viability.

Consequently, we now await a resubmission of a planning application for 12 pitches but this time on a site capable of accommodating 72 pitches.

We have made representations to the April and May Cabinet, as well as to the PTE Scrutiny Panel and the H&MD Scrutiny Panel, raising serious concerns and asking for:

- 1) An explanation as to why a planning application with 37 errors, some very misleading, could be registered.
- 2) An explanation as to why a site measuring 6.8 hectares can be registered as 0.6 of a hectare with the consequent under calculation of application fees.
- 3) An explanation as to why the updated Needs Assessment Report had no less than 4 references to the Stanton Wick site, 2 of which were by the agent for the Planning Application.
- 4) An explanation of the procurement process for the report, which appears not to have followed best practice

- 5) An explanation why the report completed in December 2012, was published on the weekend before the Special Council meeting to approve the Core Strategy on 4th March
- 6) No report on progress on the Lower Bristol Road site – which was to be brought forward for a planning application as a traveller site 8 months ago
- 7) No report on progress the DPD which is now nearly a year late

Our questions remain unanswered.

Officers say there was no resource available for the DPD due to the priority of the Core Strategy yet an external consultant has been working exclusively on the DPD for 3 days per week.

Please learn from the mistakes of last year and put open and constructive effort into the DPD. It is part of the Core Strategy and both the travelling and settled rural communities deserve real attention and effort if we are going to protect them from opportunistic and inappropriate development in the green belt.