

My name is Phil Townshend and I speak on behalf of the Stanton Wick Action Group and many rural residents of BaNES

As Karen has pointed out, despite our best endeavours to engage in and encourage an open and progressive DPD process by making representations at Cabinet and various scrutiny panels many of our questions remain unanswered. There appears to be an unfortunate chain of events which at its best can be the result of incompetence.....

The communities of Publow, Pensford, Stanton Drew and Stanton Wick have been forced to provide their own consultation and have provided extensive responses to a deeply flawed planning application for a 12 pitch, 6.8 hectare gypsy and traveller site. This application has subsequently been withdrawn but not before large sums of taxpayers money has been wasted. The application was so flawed it should not have been accepted even with your officer responsible for the DPD giving planning advice!

We note today however that this application has been resubmitted and revalidated free of any application fee despite there being a significant change to the planning red line. Surely this must be considered a new application subject to the appropriate planning fee ?

You will understand that we cannot and will not sit by whilst this chain of unfortunate events continues. There are clearly questions that must be answered openly and fully and we hope that as a result measures will be put in place to ensure a high level of openness and competency and that rapid progress is made with the DPD.

Our community and neighbouring communities have lived with their very own "Sword of Damocles" hanging over their heads for the last 12 months. The whole process of integrating the travelling communities with the settled communities has been bungled, with vitriolic statements of blame and righteous anti-racist bigotry, replacing open and inclusive discussion and hard work. There is a thread of scheming, politicking and I am sorry to say departure from open and honest reporting which runs through this whole sorry affair. It has served no one and has damaged many.

We have lost any faith in you to manage an impartial, open, transparent and timely DPD process.

We will continue to challenge and seek openness and performance. There are many taxpayers and good citizens of BaNES who want answers and to understand what is happening in your Planning Department. We hope that the questions can be answered and the reassurance demonstrated without the need for external scrutiny.

Please expect the best performance from your officers, do not condone favouritism, hidden agenda's or lack of respect for your taxpayers,

And please take the politics out of the DPD and the Core Strategy, there is no time and you will not be forgiven if it fails again.