22 APR 2009

THE NATIONAL FOREST

SE/BF

20 April 2009

Development Services
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Council Offices
Argents Mead
HINCKLEY
Leicestershire
LE10 1BZ

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
22 APR 2009
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Gypsy family sites – Bagworth/Barlestone area

Thank you for consulting the National Forest Company (NFC) on planning applications for gypsy sites at Heath Road, Bagworth and Garland Lane, Barlestone. I am also aware of recent press coverage in the Leicester Mercury about a further travellers site next to Costalot, between Bagworth and Barlestone, which was quoted as being built illegally.

In view of there being a number of current development proposals in this area, the NFC is concerned about the potential impact that new building may have upon the rural environment and National Forest setting.

The area in general around Bagworth and Thornton is developing as an important location for recreation in The National Forest, following the creation of extensive new woodlands and other habitats. It is therefore important that new development does not detract from the recreational appeal of the area.

Development proposals in the open countryside also appear to run counter to the Local Development Framework (LDF). This favours modest development within the existing villages, but generally not in the open countryside where all of the current proposals are located. The LDF should provide the policy lead for identifying the most appropriate locations for gypsy sites. Given that the LDF Site Allocations consultation has only just finished, it seems that all of the current proposals are premature and should only be judged when the outcomes of the consultation are properly assessed and the final LDF produced.

In addition the NFC thinks that an environmental impact assessment is needed on the suitability of each of the sites and their cumulative impact upon the area should also be assessed. In particular the NFC would request that the following factors are addressed before considering any of the proposals:

- landscape impact and visibility of each development.
- impacts upon recreational amenity, including public rights of way.
- ecological, archaeological and water quality considerations.
- the need for appropriate tree planting and other landscaping to offset the potential impacts of development in their countryside settings.

Yours sincerely

Simon Evans
Chief Officer Land Use