TECHAPPR

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**F.A.O. Mr R Wright**

21 September 2010
E/V//7069/4

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Dear Mr Wood,

**PLANNING CONSULTATION 10/00649/COU (Amended Description)**

I refer to your letter dated 8th September, 2010 concerning the planning application for:

**CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FOR THE PROVISION OF 4 PERMANENT GYPSY PITCHES AND 4 TRANSIT GYPSY PITCHES**
**Whitegate Stables Caravan Park, Copt Oak Road, Copt Oak, Markfield, Leics**

I have visited the site on several occasions and have spoken to Mr Smith who gave me permission to provide the following information:

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- It is Mr Smith's intention to widen the access road to the site to accommodate passing traffic.
- It will be site policy that animals will not be allowed.
- Should more land be required to accommodate this number of pitches, the south east boundary fence could be moved back several metres.

**THE PROVISION OF 4 PERMANENT GYPSY PITCHES**

- The proposed site would have a residential site manager; this is in line with government guidance (Draft Guidance on the Design of Sites for Gypsies & Travellers) published by Communities & Local Government. The site manager would be Mr Smith himself.
- The site would be open to all Gypsies & Travellers regardless of their ethnic origin or family background and Mr Smith has indicated that he would be prepared to take families that are in receipt of housing benefits.

Site provision will significantly improve the access to services such as health and education for any families residing on the site and will provide a more stable environment for their children's development.

I would also point out that the nearby Aston Firs Caravan Site, which is owned and managed by the County Council and provides accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, is currently full with an extensive waiting list (14 families), also there are a number of families living on site that have grown up children who would like to start there own families with no where to move to.

My general observations are as follows:

The Housing Act requires Local Authorities to take account of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and to create strategies for meeting those needs in the same way as they do for the settled community. The Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Gypsies' and Travellers' Accommodation Needs Assessment was published in April 2007 and the recommendations for Site provision within the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough area are to provide 26 additional 'pitches' before 2011 and a further 16 before 2016 the definition of a pitch being:

- Area of land on a Gypsy and Traveller caravan site developed for a single family.

It also defines that the average number of caravans per family is 1.9 and identified that families would like to have more space if they could, large families may have 3 or 4 caravans, many are overcrowded and families have a need to separate boys & girls sleeping arrangements.

These figures are an estimate of need where it arises and not necessarily of need where it should be met, but consideration should be given to suitability of locations and an element of choice for the families seeking accommodation.

In the Black and Minority Ethnic Communities Housing in the East Midlands: A Strategy for the Region', recommendation 8 states that "It is imperative that local authorities make immediate progress in site identification to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers rather than relying on the development of policies through the local development framework."

The Good Practice Guide entitled "Managing Unauthorised Camping", issued jointly by the Home Office and DETR, advised local authorities to build planning aspects into their overall Traveller strategy and avoid setting criteria that, in practice, might prove too

difficult to meet. The Housing Research concluded that site provision is an essential corollary to tackling unauthorised encampments.

Guidance on homelessness from the DETR advises that homeless Travellers should be treated equally with homeless members of the settled population, without removing their freedom to live outside conventional housing if they should so wish. It reminds local authorities that they have statutory duties to travelling people under homelessness and other legislation.

As you are aware the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister launched Guidance, Circular 01/2006 - Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Sites, which replaces Circular 1/94, which did not result in the provision of adequate sites for Gypsies and Travellers.

Its main intentions are:

- To increase significantly the number of Gypsy and Traveller sites with planning permission in order to address under-provision;
- To recognise, protect and facilitate the traditional lifestyle of Gypsies and Travellers;
- To identify and make provision for the resultant land and accommodation requirements;
- To help or avoid Gypsies and Travellers becoming unintentionally homeless;
- To reflect the status of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation as a part of wider housing provision;
- To create and support sustainable, integrated communities where Gypsies and Travellers have equality of access to suitable accommodation, education, health and welfare provision, and where there is mutual respect between all communities for the rights and responsibilities of each community and individual;
- To promote more private Gypsy and Traveller site provision in appropriate locations through the planning system, while recognising that there will always be those who cannot provide their own sites;
- To underline the importance of assessing needs at regional and sub-regional level and for local authorities to develop strategies to ensure that needs are dealt with fairly and effectively;

- To ensure that DPDs include fair, realistic and inclusive policies to ensure identified need is dealt with fairly and effectively; and
- To reduce the number of un-authorised encampments and developments and the conflict and controversy they cause and to make enforcement more effective where local authorities have complied with the guidance in this circular.

The recent independent report of the Task Group on Site Provision and Enforcement for Gypsies and Travellers 'The Road Ahead' published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in December 2007 recommends

'Communities and Local Government should monitor the pace of delivery by local planning authorities. The Secretary of State should be prepared to direct local authorities which are not making adequate progress to prepare Gypsy and Traveller DPD's.

The report also recommends a mixture of private rented sites such as the one proposed alongside local authority/registered social landlord run sites and the GTAA recommends that, in Leicestershire as a whole, around 75% of the identified need should be met by Gypsies and Travellers developing there own sites.

**THE PROVISION OF 4 GYPSY TRANSIT PITCHES**

The above planning application also includes eight transit caravans and Mr Sykes has given me permission to provide the following information:

- The proposed site would have a residential site manager; this is in line with government guidance (Draft Guidance on the Design of Sites for Gypsies & Travellers) published by Communities & Local Government. The site manager would be Mr Smith himself.

- The site would be open to all Gypsies & Travellers regardless of their ethnic origin or family background.

- There have been a number of privately owned 'transit' sites across the county for many years and all of these have proved successful.

- The site would accommodate Travelling families in need of a place to stay as they travel across the county rather than the unauthorised roadside encampments that, at present, is the only option.

- Transit site provision will significantly improve the access to services such as health and education for these families as it would provide a short term stable environment.

- Transit site provision is important as families will always need accommodation when moving around the country for work or visiting relatives.

My general observations are as follows:

The Housing Act requires Local Authorities to take account of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and to create strategies for meeting those needs in the same way as they do for the settled community. The Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Gypsies' and Travellers' Accommodation Needs Assessment was published in April 2007 and the recommendations for Transit Site provision within the Hinckley & Bosworth area is to provide 1 site with a caravan capacity of up to 10 caravans. The GTAA established clear evidence of the need for transit accommodation in this area and granting permission for this site would meet 80% of its requirements.

The definition of a Transit Site being:

- A site intended for short term use. The site is usually permanent, whilst its residents are temporary and a maximum period of stay is usually imposed.

National policy is clear that there should be provision to facilitate the lifestyle and cultural tradition of travelling among Gypsy and Traveller communities. Transit or stopping place sites are needed to address this need and to minimise the disruption travelling can otherwise cause through unauthorised encampments.

I trust that the above will be of assistance to you in determining the application.

Yours sincerely

**Jacqui Green**
**Travellers Sites and Liaison Officer**