

# Oakley Green, Fifield & District Community Association



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June 5, 2014

Cllr D Coppinger  
RBWM Lead Member for Adult Services and Health

Cllr M J Saunders  
RBWM Leader Member for Planning and Property Services

Simon Hurrell  
RBWM Head of Planning and Property Services

Town Hall  
St Ives Road  
Maidenhead  
SL6 1RF

Dear Sirs,

## **Provision of Gypsy Sites in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

We have had two Public Enquiries about Gypsy Sites in the Oakley Green and Fifield area in the past 3 years and 5 months:-

1) Brayfield Stables, Windsor Road, Water Oakley, Windsor.

Application: 10/00461  
Public Enquiry: 2 Days on December 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
Decision Notice: February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011  
Decision: Allowed - Temporary Permission granted for 4 years for 2 Gypsy Pitches  
Main Reason: Because RBWM had failed to provide enough Gypsy Pitches

2) Land rear of Skippets Lodge, Forest Green Road, Holyport, Maidenhead.

Application: 13/00702  
Public Enquiry: 3 Days on April 1<sup>st</sup> to April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014  
Decision Notice: On or before September 24, 2014  
Decision: Pending - Applicant asked for Temporary Permission for 4 years for 8 Gypsy Pitches  
Main Reason: "To allow RBWM time to get their act together on provision of Gypsy Sites"

I was a Witness appearing on half of Bray Parish Council for the first Enquiry and an Observer for 2 days, representing our Community Association at the second Enquiry.

What was quite depressing was that the arguments used by the Barristers representing the Applicants on both occasions were substantially the same – even though the Enquiries were 3 years and 4 months apart. It looked like nothing had changed, and both Cases for the Appellants relied heavily upon the fact that RBWM had failed in their duty to provide enough Gypsy Sites and were causing harm to the affected Gypsy Families. The first Appeal was successful and in all likelihood, the second will also be allowed for the same reasons as before.

In the most recent Enquiry, RBWM relied heavily on their Plan that up to 10 Gypsy Pitches may become available in Datchet in September 2014, subject to the Secretary of State's Approval. And we have heard since that this may reduce to 9 given the provision of a Wardens Office.

But the RBWM Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment conducted in September 2012 and considered by Cabinet in January 2013, reported that 21 additional Pitches were needed in the period up to 2017 and a further 25 pitches in the medium to longer term, up to 2027.

However, in the second Enquiry we heard

- “Doubling up” of Gypsies on Sites is very common practice and thus constitutes an additional “Demand” which may not be recognised as, being an “illegal” practice, it is kept out of sight
- Existing Gypsy Sites have significant “Waiting Lists”
- RBWM is currently and has in the past pursued Enforcement Action on a number of Illegal Sites in the Borough
- The 4 year Temporary Permission for 2 Pitches at Brayfield Stables runs out on February 1, 2015
- All in all, the total current “Demand” now may be as much as 47 Pitches

In the past three years in Oakley Green and Fifield we have also seen Enforcement Action by RBWM in Oakley Green Road (Marshall Place) and just off the A308 (Water Oakley).

Failure to fix this ongoing problem of lack of Gypsy Site Provision is:-

- A huge drain on the stretched resources of the RBWM Planning Department - reviewing Planning Applications for Gypsy Sites in the Green Belt, pursuing Enforcement Actions against Illegal Sites and preparing for and appearing at Public Enquiries.
- A Financial drain on RBWM – employing very expensive external and specialist Agents and Lawyers pursuing Cases in the Courts for Enforcement Actions and against Appeals in Public Enquiries.
- A Financial drain on adjacent Landowners who are employing Agents and Lawyers to protect their interests in the Green Belt. (Bray Parish Council granted the Forest Green Landowners £5,000 in support of their Campaign which is estimated to have cost over £20,000).
- Creating much stress and frustration for Residents and Communities worried about illegal encampments and inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

RBWM is currently deeply involved in developing a Local Plan which is primarily focused on identifying potential Sites for Housing Development for the next 15 years. This effort is highly commendable and we have supported it fully. However, very worryingly, under Section 7.5 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople of the Preferred Options Document – it refers to Preferred Policy Option HOU 6. This says that only 7 Gypsy Pitches need to be provided in the period April 2012 to March 2017, 7 Pitches from 2017 to 2022, and 6 Pitches between 2022 to 2027 (20 in total). Yet another set of numbers and ones

which appear to wildly underestimate the real demand and in any case much less than what is in the Needs Assessment document of 2012.

During the Local Plan Consultation Events recently we have heard that RBWM know about every parcel of land which is potentially available for development.

Given the issues described above and the timing of the Local Plan:-

1). We urge RBWM to focus heavily and quickly on the Provision of Gypsy Sites as part of the important Local Plan exercise. Clearly the potential delivery of 10 (or 9?) Pitches in Datchet in September 2014 is not enough to satisfy immediate demand, and Preferred Policy Option HOU 6 is in no way appropriate and needs immediate revision.

2). We urge RBWM to target delivering

- 50 Gypsy Pitches as soon as possible - granting Temporary Permission on Sites if necessary made up of
- 4 or 5 Sites of 10 to 15 Pitches - so Cultural and Familial requirements of Gypsies can be accommodated

Delivering such a Target would solve what is becoming an increasingly expensive, problematic and frustrating situation across the Royal Borough.

Yours sincerely,

Grenville Annetts  
Chairman

Copies to:-

Bray Parish Council Oakley Green and Fifield Ward Councillors - Nick Pellew and Chris Yates

Bray Parish Council Planning Committee Chairman - Louvaine Kneen

Bray Parish Council Clerk - Janice Eden-Bagley

Bray Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Chairman - Chris Graham

RBWM Bray Ward Councillors - David Burbage and Leo Walters

Down Place Residents Association Chairman - David Short

Oakley Green and Fifield Residents Association Chairman - Rod Ball

Tarbay Lane Residents Association Chairman - Martyn Kilmister

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Oakley Green, Fifield and District Community Association Limited by Guarantee.

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