



RAYLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL
The Pavilion, King George V Playing Field, Bull Lane,
Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 8JD
Tel: 01268 741880
Email: clerk@rayleightowncouncil.gov.uk
www.rayleightowncouncil.gov.uk
VAT number: 830 7558 23

14th August 2018

Dear Mr Scrutton,

Allocation of Traveller Sites in Rochford District

I am writing on behalf of Rayleigh Town Council regarding Traveller Sites in Rochford District, following a recommendation for approval on planning application 17/01240/FUL, Land opposite 2 Goldsmith Drive, Rayleigh. The Town Council is also aware that RDC has recently lost two appeals (one being in Rayleigh, the other in Rawreth) regarding Traveller sites and that RDC officers had recommended approval for another Traveller site in another part of the District, which was refused by members of the Development Committee last month.

It appears that the reason for the loss of the two recent appeals and the subsequent recommendations by officers to approve Traveller sites within the District on green belt land is that RDC has failed to adopt a policy for the allocation of a Traveller site for 20 pitches. This failure of policy was clearly identified by the Inspector in the recent appeal for Land adjacent to Woodville, Hullbridge Road, Rayleigh (paragraphs 42 – 45)

In your response dated 8th August 2018 to the recent letter sent to you by the Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils on this same issue, you mentioned that Rochford District Council does have a site identified in the current local plan but you confirmed that it has not been possible to bring this forward for development. The site to which you refer is I assume Michelins Farm. The Inspector clearly states in the same appeal decision notice (paragraph 36) that the Hearing was told that there is no programme for development at this site and there were no known alternate sites. Therefore, the identified site to which you refer is not viable.

This situation has left Rochford District open to Travellers to purchase low cost green belt land on which to settle. This is causing harm to the green belt and concern to members of the settled community who live adjacent to sites that Travellers have chosen to purchase. This is also causing unfairness to the settled community who would not be allowed under planning law to turn green belt land into habitable space for their families.

I am aware that the Inspector has given 'temporary 5 year' permissions to Travellers on the appeals and these are now being routinely recommended by RDC's Planning Officers, however, realistically RDC is fully aware that a 'temporary' site would become permanent, particularly with children of Travellers being registered at local schools etc.

The residents of Rochford District who are now being affected by this situation as a result of potential reduction in the value of their homes and having to live side by side with Travellers through no choice of their own, have been seriously let down by Rochford District Council's lack of drive and determination in

fulfilling its obligations. Rochford District Council has prevaricated for far too long on the Michelins Farm site, which it has known for a long time is not viable, and has failed to take any action at the appropriate time in finding another suitable Traveller site. It is surprising that, given the appeal decision, you are continuing to say that RDC does have a site identified in the Local Plan when you know that this site is not viable.

The Inspector's summary in the appeal decision notice from February 2018 (paragraph 43) for Land adjacent to Woodville, Hullbridge Road, Rayleigh states: 'I find that the shortage of available sites and lack of allocated land with realistic prospects of imminent development relative to housing provision being made for the Borough's settled community would indicate a degree of inequality of housing opportunity in that regard for Romany Gypsies'. It is disappointing therefore that you stated at a Town Council meeting on 30th July 2018 that this problem is 'really quite minute' in comparison to the number of new homes that are required within the Rochford District in the next 20 years.

This cannot wait until the next Local Plan and is an urgent matter for resolution now without delay before further applications are received for Traveller sites on green belt land in Rochford District and further appeals are submitted. It is not acceptable for Planning Officers to recommend approvals for applications such as these in the face of resident's objections, RDC's own Local Plan, Government Policy on Traveller Sites and at the cost of the Green Belt.

I would be grateful if you would explain to Rayleigh Town Council how RDC intends to take measures to immediately address this situation.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs K Cumberland
Town Clerk