

Response from Karen Taylor 010620 re G&Ts consultation

27.5.20

Dear Mr. Blackburn,

Thank you kindly for your letter regarding the progress of the Rossendale Borough Council's local plan, concerning their proposals for a Gypsy & Traveller Transit Site.

Particular questions to be posed are of great interest to me and I so look forward to the responses of the Council.

The Inspector's Question Issue 2 d)

What consideration was undertaken with the travelling community to identify locational and other requirements for a potential site and to allow options to be assessed?

In my first letter, I emphasised my support for the rights of travelling people and gypsies to receive fair and equal treatment in the Rossendale Valley. The Rossendale Council, have not in my opinion (I have tried to justify my argument through quotes taken from relevant Rossendale Council documents) valued the human rights and have not fully considered other site areas that would satisfy the health and welfare needs of the travelling community.

The council acknowledge in their reports that, "***As a community they have very poor educational and health indicators***" and recognise that

Gypsies and Travellers are one of the most socially excluded groups in society and are particularly susceptible to a range of inequalities relating to health, education, law enforcement and quality of accommodation..

(Rossendale G.T.A. Final Report September 2016)

so was confused when I read:

1.5

As Futures Park is no longer available, Council Officers have reconsidered land which would be deliverable and achievable for a Transit Site and now propose the former Little Tooter Quarry site at Sharneyford. This is after thoroughly re-considering all sites which have previously been identified as having potential as a Transit Site in the 2018 Gypsy Topic Paper and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Of all the alternative sites that have been identified previously this land at Sharneyford is considered to be the most appropriate.

(Consultation on Proposed Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site 2020)

The Council say that they have thoroughly reconsidered so you would expect that they have respected all needs of the travelling community. For now, I will just give one example: Did they consider that The Tooter Hill Quarry site, Sharneyford, is extremely exposed to the elements? Only last week there 50+mph winds in Sharneyford, which lasted over 4 days, making life very unsettling and doing damage to property and trees. The travelling community have illegally camped in January and February at Future's Park so why didn't they choose a high moorland site like Tooter Hill Quarry for their stop over? To be honest, it isn't just the winter months that bring the 'difficult weather'! Surely, the Tooter Hill Quarry site isn't the most appropriate!

On further reading of the consultation, onwards to The Appendices, I was enlightened by 'some initial thoughts' of the council regarding other proposed sites.

Barlow Bottoms is an attractive area and some houses close by.

Blackwood Road , Stacksteads owner unwilling to use for this use and likely to be local opposition.

Land next to Mayfield chicks is untidy and relatively secluded.

Land at Knowsley Road, Haslingden negative impact on end users.... (many other examples)

Let's compare the Sharneyford site to the proposed sites above. Is Sharneyford not attractive, untidy, relatively secluded...? Will the site have a negative impact on end users? Will there be local opposition? Will the council use its right to Compulsory Purchase the land?

Has the council **fairly** compared sites with the travelling community needs as their focus? What other evidence/ research/data is there to support their choice?

Inspector's Questions Issue 2 b)

Why were some sites in the long list not taken as potential options?

.....

After all the council report, Sharneyford is the most appropriate because:

1.6 The site is regarded as brownfield and with good access to the highway network. The site is in single, private ownership and the Council would be willing, if necessary, to use its Compulsory Purchase Powers to acquire the site. ARC4 have also reviewed the site and found it to be suitable for development as a Transit Site.

(Consultation on Proposed Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site 2020)

It is really confusing to me that the site at Sharneyford had previously been rejected so why the U turn? Just another thought, has ARC4 reviewed other proposed sites? Are there reports and data to be accessed? ARC4 admit in their assessment that, "The guidance recognises that there are challenges in carrying out these assessments, and accepts that while the approach should be as robust as possible it is very difficult to exactly quantify unmet need."

Inspector's Question Issue 2 e)

The site at Sharneyford was previously rejected as a site for transit accommodation and not taken forward in the submitted Local Plan. What has changed in the interim?

.....
Surely if we all would want to promote a peaceful and integrated co-existence between the travelling community and the local community, it is important to respect the views of all parties.

6.9

The majority of unauthorised encampments are of short duration, with 62.5% lasting for one week or less and 37.5% lasted between one and two weeks. Two-thirds of unauthorised encampments have been reported at Futures Park, Bacup. Rossendale.

(Rossendale G.T.A. Final Report September 2016)

The council reported that as a positive, *Futures Park, Bacup is already a preferred site by the Gypsy community.* (Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper 2018) but is no longer available. The dilemma here is since only 4 pitches are to be built, why can't the land still available at Futures Park be used?

Inspector's Question Issue 3 a),b)

Is the lease enforceable, insofar as it applies to land outside the lease? The response to this question will especially interesting as the council have been somewhat vague about the latest position of Futures Park. I would like to know if there is any evidence against the suitability of this land.

1.3

In April 2019, planning permission was granted for an industrial building on one of the plots at Futures Park (application ref. no. 2019/0102). Following the grant of permission, a lease was signed by the Council and the occupier of the building in August 2019 which would preclude the development of anything other than employment use on land owned by the Council at or adjacent to Futures Park. Therefore, neither Futures Park nor any land adjacent, is available or deliverable for a Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site.

(Consultation on Proposed Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site 2020)

I must admit that I am out of my depth with regard to land registry and planning permission so please could the council explain why the land owned by the council at or adjacent to Futures Park is neither available or deliverable as a Gypsy or Traveller Transit Site. Could it then be used as a stop-over site?

.....
The ***Rossendale G.T.A. Final Report September 2016*** reported that:

6.8

In order to establish the potential requirement for transit provision in Rossendale it is important to understand the extent of short-term unauthorised encampment activity across the area. Encampments occur as Gypsies and Travellers pass through an area either for the purposes of visiting or travelling through en route to an alternative destination; they are indicative of a lack of stop over or transit provision... During the 3 year period May 2013 to April 2016 there have been a total of 12 encampments and the need for transit pitches is based on the latest 3 years' data.

6.9

The majority of unauthorised encampments are of short duration, with 62.5% lasting for one week or less and 37.5% lasted between one and two weeks.

According to the report, the reason for the encampments is that the travellers are passing through our area and Rossendale is their stop over point. There have been 12 illegal encampments during a 3 year period. Rossendale Council has based the transit requirement on this 3 years' data but what unauthorised encampments have there been since April 2016?

8.5

Analysis of unauthorised encampment data and contextual information indicates that new transit provision is needed across Rossendale Borough. Is the council using other data and contextual information other than the **Rossendale G.T.A. Final Report Sept. 2016** to make this decision?

The council notes in

6.5

(**Rossendale G.T.A. Final Report Sept. 2016**) that the transit pitches would only be used for some parts of the year and that

6.9

(**Rossendale G.T.A. Final Report Sept. 2016**) the encampments are of short duration. What are the more recent trends (since 2016) and have the council worked and engaged with other areas to find evidence?

Inspector's Questions Issue 1 b)

Why are transit sites recommended instead of temporary stop over places? Could this not be a viable option bearing in mind the evidence at hand? The suitability of the land available still at Futures Park may again be considered.

.....

The questions constructed by the inspector are extremely thorough and hopefully will allow the council the opportunity to fully explain and justify their choice of Tooter Hill Quarry, Sharneyford, as the most appropriate transit site for the travelling community. Especially, does this site provide a place that will be socially, emotionally and physically supportive to the travelling community?

I will be especially interested in the Council's responses to **Inspector's Questions Issue 4 a),b),c),e), f) and i)** which I believe will be recorded and placed on the Council's website.

.....

Kind Regards and thank you,

Karen Taylor

