

PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Written Questions

No written questions were received in advance of the meeting.

Open Forum

- 1. *We experience many different ethnic migrant groups in Wiltshire including those from Eastern Europe – do we differentiate between these people and the Traveller and Gypsy group when making provision?***

No, all non-resident newcomers are treated the same way. As migration fluctuates so will the meetings and consultations that are required to accommodate changing needs.

- 2. *Will this consultation be an end to the provision we must make as a County?***

No, we will always be looking for new sites.

- 3. *The consultation criteria appear to be fundamentally flawed as it is not the wish of the Gypsy and Traveller community to be sited near residential areas.***

The criteria was been compiled in consultation with the Gypsy and Traveller community. There is a need to balance a sustainable agenda with the need for fairness.

- 4. *We live in Minety – if we don't provide a site for them more residents' will experience unauthorised uses of land nearby.***

We have lost Appeals because we do not provide alternative sites. It should be understood that the District of North Wiltshire lies on a major route for Gypsies and Travellers, namely the M4 motorway and we also have some major population areas that reflect the increased need for sites.

- 5. *How many legitimate sites and unauthorised sites do we have?***

This information is available on our web-site. It should be borne in mind that this is a snapshot of the situation in 2006.

- 6. *Can we count unauthorised sites in our quota?***

In theory, yes, however, the numbers are not static due to fluctuations in migration. If unauthorised sites are legitimized we can include these numbers in our targets.

- 7. *How much money is available for this exercise?***

NWDC has been awarded a Government grant of £150,000 and committed a further £100,000 towards the provision of permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites.

8. *Has any research been done on the escalation of crime in connection with the location of Gypsy and Traveller sites?*

We have done no specific research as crime is not a part of the planning process. We do, however, consult with the Police. The directive to allocate sites comes from Central Government in the same way as we are asked to allocate land for commercial or residential purposes. We are asked to provide the facilities with no additional funding to fight the directive or to provide the infrastructure to manage the build.

9. *Will authorised sites be rateable?*

Official sites attract both the charges and benefits due. Individual pitches will be rated for Council Tax and will also benefit from the services that Council Tax provides, for example, refuse collection.

10. *While we understand that providing authorised sites prevents illegal occupation of land how do avoid becoming a soft target for the Gypsy and Traveller community?*

The legal allocation of sites allows us to deal more effectively with illegal sites where Gypsies and Travellers can be removed to authorised sites. We are handicapped by our lack of provision.

11. *Surely by definition these communities are nomadic and do not require settled areas?*

There is a legal requirement to provide nomadic communities with static pitches to accommodate such issues as ill-health, aging and education. It is around these issues that the Bill of Human Rights takes precedence.

12. *It is a myth that the Gypsies are poor.*

By providing sites that meet the criteria we will restrict the unauthorised use of privately purchased land.

13. *The recent report doubling the number of required pitches seems to indicate that the government arbitrarily moves its goalposts?*

This is because of the following three reasons:

- a) We need to take into account the hidden need for pitches for those Gypsies and Travellers currently living in housing.
- b) The criteria for site provision can change – again having authorised sites puts us in a stronger position.
- c) The number of sites required was raised because our survey did not include the community of 60 Irish travellers at Chiseldon.

14. *Should we be checking the immigrant status to ensure it is legal before supplying sites to Travellers?*

Immigrant status is not a planning issue and therefore should be raised elsewhere.

15. If a site is selected as an authorised site can residents still object to the planning proposal?

Yes.

16. Can anyone take a pitch or is it restricted to locals over immigrants?

Government policy does not distinguish by ethnic origin.

17. Will sites be sold as a whole site or by individual pitch?

It would be advisable to sell the site as a whole for the purposes of Gypsy and Traveller community cohesion. Additionally, the market would have to be much bigger to be able to sell by the pitch in order to treat it in the same way as residential housing.

18. If the Gypsy and Traveller community decide to buy their own site, what would the £250,000 be used for?

The money would be used to improve facilities such as water supply and sewerage handling.