

187 Broughton Road
Coppenhall
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 4NP

19th December 2011

To Cheshire East Council,

Proposed Gypsy/Traveller Site – Coppenhall, Crewe, Cheshire.

Please find a petition of 5,543 signatures accompanying this letter.

These people have signed the petition to protest against your proposal to build a Gypsy/Traveller site off Parkers Road / Kents Lane in Coppenhall, Crewe, Cheshire.

By the presenting of this petition we request a debate at full Council level on this matter.

I would like to make it perfectly clear that we are a non-racist organisation and are fighting the proposal on the grounds of it's improper use of tax-payers money, existing housing deficit, failure to follow a transparent, fair and proper process, size of proposed site, traffic hazards, ecological environment, school provision, culture and integration.

Since forming the C.A.T.S. group we have made several 'Freedom of Information' (FOI) requests to CEC and spent many hours researching the subject of Gypsy/Traveller sites.

The following are the main points that make the building and location of this site wholly inappropriate :

- **FINANCIAL** - Within the last fortnight, CEC announced a forecast budget deficit of £16.2m for this financial year. The Council's own figures estimate that the cost of the traveller site will be approximately £1.345m and whilst we understand that they have applied for a grant to assist with the funding of this project, it cannot be justifiable that such a large amount of money (whether it be local Council tax payers money or tax payers money from which the grant money will come) can be spent to the benefit such a small number of families – a maximum of twelve and now most likely less.
- **HOUSING WAITING LIST** – There is currently a waiting list in the region of 7,000 households about which the CEC appear to be doing little to resolve. It cannot be right to invest in the proposed site when those already resident in Crewe are not having their housing needs addressed.

- **PROCESS** - CEC's site selection process is seriously flawed. Again, FOI requests have revealed that either £18,050 or £25,000 (two figures supplied on the same day from the same dept – which adds to our concern that the Council haven't got a firm grip on current spending) has been spent to date on the proposed site in external consultancy fees. The grand total spent on the eleven alternative sites, which CEC maintain have been 'seriously considered', is Zero. It is important to re-iterate that it is evident that CEC have not followed a fair and proper process.
- **SIZE OF SITE** - The proposed site is the next smallest of the 12 sites 'supposedly considered'. Originally there were to be fifteen pitches on the site. This has subsequently been reduced to twelve and is thought to be being reconsidered to be reduced further as the Council initially failed to take into account the need for a turning circle and the hazardous junction on which the proposed site is located. The Council's estimate of pitches required in the next five years is well above this figure. There is no room for expansion at the proposed site as all land surrounding it is privately owned. As such, when CEC needs more pitches in the not too distant future it will have to find another site and start from scratch with the costs of establishing such a site. This is a short-sighted approach, a poor investment strategy and a scandalous waste of public money.
- **TRAFFIC HAZARD** - The road immediately adjacent to the proposed site is well known locally as an accident black-spot. There have been numerous accidents in recent years, including two fatalities. The corner of the proposed site is on a blind bend and a four way junction. This would make it hazardous to all users of this stretch of road if there were to be the movement of caravans, large vehicles and vehicles with trailers at this junction.

Traffic surveys were carried out on this stretch of road by CEC during the summer months. Three weeks ago they granted outline planning permission for another 400 houses, 0.4miles along Parkers Road and 650 houses, approx 0.5 miles away. The Council do not appear to have taken account of the extra traffic that will inevitably pass the proposed site once there are 1050 more households located within 0.5 miles of it.
- **PROTECTED WILDLIFE** - The proposed site has a wealth of wildlife on and around it. Whilst an ecological survey has been carried out by CEC, a copy of which we have obtained, it contains many flaws and is at great odds to the residents knowledge bordering the proposed is site who can testify to all manner of protected species on and around it.
- **SCHOOL PLACES** - The local primary school is already oversubscribed, even without the extra planned 400 houses, 0.4miles along Parkers Road and 650 houses, approx 0.5 miles away. There does not appear to be a plan in place to deal with this.

- **CULTURE & INTEGRATION** - Inevitably the existing local residents and the travellers will need to understand and tolerate each other's cultural differences. CEC does not appear to have developed a plan to help integrate the existing local community with the new residents of this proposed site over the next five to ten years. There will also no doubt be an additional cost associated with any plan.

You appear, whilst saying that local residents will have a chance to oppose this application at the appropriate time in the planning application, so far to have brought the proposal to its current status by stealth and without proper process, as when enquiries were made in 2010, local councillors were assured that the now proposed and preferred site would not be part of the future selection process.

The strength of opposition from local residents is obvious by the size of the petition being submitted to you today.

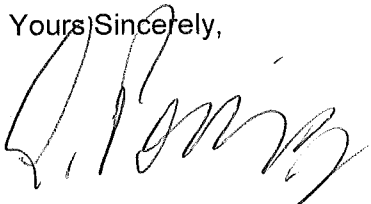
From the points above I am sure that you will see that there are many questions to be asked of your handling of this matter.

Our Freedom of Information requests have raised a number of very serious concerns relating to the conduct of yourselves and not least the management of your financial affairs.

The local residents are very angry and, as no doubt you can see from the way we are formulating our opposition to the proposal, we fully intend to put up a very strong counter argument.

I look forward to receiving notification of the date of the debate at full Council.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Perris', written over the closing 'Yours Sincerely,'.

Mr Glenn Perris

Chairman of the C.A.T.S. group.