

Traveller Site Consultation – Middleton Public Meeting

Councillor Steve Flitter, Leader of the Council, opened the meeting with introductions and an explanation of how the meeting would be conducted. Councillor Marilyn Franks, Chair of the Gypsy and Traveller Working Group, then presented some background to the process being followed by the Council.

A representative of Middleton by Wirksworth Parish Council made representations which included the following points:

- The proposed site is unsuitable due to its rural nature.
- The area is inhospitable in winter and there is no shelter from the harsh weather.
- There are health and safety concerns in relation to the proposed site.
- The proposed site has no adequate water supply or other facilities.
- There is lead contamination of the area.
- The existing site in Matlock Bath has a negative impact on tourism.
- The Arc Leisure Centre or Rowsley sites would be better alternatives.

Councillor Peter Slack, District Councillor for the Wirksworth Ward, made the following representations:

- The site is inhospitable during the winter, it's icy, cold and windy.
- There is lead contamination in Middleton, there would be costs involved in remediation of the land.
- The site is not fit for purpose, especially for the elderly and vulnerable members of the group of Travellers.
- This proposed site needs to be removed from the list for consideration.
- The Arc Leisure Centre or Rowsley sites would be better alternatives.
- The site in Matlock which is currently being used isn't perfect, but it is at the bottom end of the car park and could be better shielded to make it more suitable as a temporary site.
- Within Matlock Bath, business owners are not happy with the reduced numbers of coaches visiting the area, the site in use at the station car park is very dense and not fit for people to be living there.
- The proposed site at Wirksworth is also not suitable as it had dangerous overhanging cliffs and a footpath which cuts through the site.

Councillor Susan Hobson, District Councillor for the Chatsworth Ward, made the following representations:

- All of the proposed sites have been previously decided to be unsuitable.

The Chair of the meeting then opened the floor to representations from residents and others present.

Local Resident: The proposed site in Middleton is next to a working cemetery. A recent funeral was referred to, this would not be a good setting for people to live. In Matlock Bath, there had been human faeces around the site and dogs barking. When the site in Rowsley was previously in use, the toilets provided were not used and were thrown down the adjacent banking. The site assessment refers to safe pedestrian and vehicular access, there are narrow roads and speeding traffic, this is unsafe. The Homesford site should be investigated further.

Local Resident: The traffic in Middleton poor, we don't want it to increase. There are no pavements, and the site is not viable.

Local Resident: I don't agree with any of the proposed sites, it is a waste of time and resources. House prices will decrease, and house insurance will go up, you need to compensate us. This will attract anti-social behaviour to the area.

Local Resident: Temporary sites are a waste of time.

Local Resident: I rent the land from the Council, I have cattle grazing on the site and a land agreement with the Council. The proposed site is not suitable, it has been in my family for 56 years, what will happen to my cattle and where will the access be.

Local Resident: If we are talking about a single group, what is the total number of units for this group?

Cllr Franks: We are talking about 15 people in total, we are not allowed to discuss details of the individuals.

Local Resident: The focus should be on safeguarding these vulnerable people, therefore the Middleton site cannot be used.

Local Resident: That land has been earmarked for an extension to the cemetery.

Local Resident: The adjacent land has unmarked mineshafts, there is a strong possibility that there are more that we don't yet know about.

Local Resident: Why can't social housing be offered instead of derelict land.

Local Resident: You should look for alternative coach parking in Matlock Bath.

Local Resident: You are moving the problem around, leave the Travellers where they are currently.

Local Resident: We are all in agreement that we do not want the Travellers in this village.

MEETING CLOSED AT 7:15PM