

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning & Townscape Committee
held at the Town Hall, Rye on Monday 10 November 2008**

PRESENT Councillors John Breeds (Deputy Mayor), Jonathan Breeds, Bernardine Fiddimore, Jo Kirkham, Paul Osborne (**Committee Vice Chairman**), Shaun Rogers, Mary Smith, David Wright

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Cllr Ian Potter; 3 members of the public

The meeting commenced at 6.30 and was chaired by Cllr Osborne.

86 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were accepted from Cllr Frank Palmer (**Committee Chairman**).

87 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Cllr Bernardine Fiddimore *prejudicial* RR/2008/2991/P Friend of applicant

Cllr Shaun Rogers *personal* item 91 ESCC depot at end of his road has been used as a temporary travellers' site

The Committee Vice-Chairman adjourned the meeting for questions from the public.

Ms Coleman spoke to her letter to Members concerning planning application RR/2008/3069/P. She believed the change of use had taken place already; suggested the development was not in keeping with the Conservation Area and that access by the Fire & Rescue Service would be difficult.

88 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Planning and Townscape meeting of 27 October 2008 (PT13) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

89 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

90 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RESOLVED That the comments following be submitted to the Planning Authority:

Cllr Fiddimore re-stated her prejudicial interest in the application following and left the Chamber.

RR/2008/2991/P 78 New Winchelsea Road, Rye
(Del) Erection of 2-storey extension to form living room, 2 additional bedrooms, en suite shower room and dressing room.
Applicant: Mr & Mrs Jarvis, 78 New Winchelsea Road, Rye
SUPPORT APPROVAL Subject to the application of a 106 Agreement preventing use as a separate dwelling.

Cllr Fiddimore returned to the Chamber.

RR/2008/3035/L 23 Tower Street, Landgate Cottage, Rye
(Del) Removal of wc to form enlarged kitchen.
Applicant: Mr & Mrs A Guaniere, Landgate Cottage, 23 Tower Street, Rye
SUPPORT APPROVAL

RR/2008/3069/P 9 Lion Street – land rear of, Rye
(Del) To use redundant single storey rear workshop/storage area as independent bed and breakfast.
Applicant: Mr M Bloomfield, 9 Lion Street, Rye
SUPPORT REFUSAL Overdevelopment – the property is considered to be inadequate for the purpose intended; no plan elevations nor access statement provided.

91 GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

Members considered draft responses to SEERA's partial review of the SE Plan in relation to accommodating gypsies and travelers, prepared by Cllrs Fiddimore and Smith (*attached*) - and both spoke to their papers.

Cllr Smith suggested addressing the issue when the Council considers its response to the LDF Core Strategy public consultation (commenced); however, it was considered generally that the Council should endeavour to make some form of response to SEERA by its deadline (18 November).

The discussion ensuing included the points following: the consultation document focused on site allocations/need within counties; it was concerned with local authority rather than private provision; one of the main objects of the review was to reduce incidences of unauthorised encampments; the Parish contains a number of unauthorised sites (on private land); consultees are being asked to comment on geographical areas with which they are unfamiliar; (compared with Kent, West Sussex and Hants) there are not significant numbers of travellers passing through the county; East Sussex is fortunate to have a large temporary site at Lewes and the facility at Robertsbridge.

7.10 Cllr Kirkham left.

**RESOLVED To ask the Clerk – in consultation with the
Committee Vice-Chairman – to complete the questionnaire on the
Council's behalf. Clerk**

The meeting ended at 7.11

Date.....

Chairman.....

Consultation Document
Gypsy, Traveller Accommodation SE England

Summary of Document

The purpose of this consultation is to identify the number and location of new 'camping spaces' necessary for this community in SE England.

Current advice to SE Regional Assembly suggests a need for 1064 new spaces by 2016.

As a result of two emails and one telephone call, I learn that each space is intended to accommodate one household with an average of 1.7 caravans. There is no set area of land to be used for this purpose- this will be determined by the local council, (for us, RDC). The definition of traveller 'is intended to cover all those whose distinctive ethnicity, cultural background and/or lifestyle may give rise to specific accommodation needs'.

4 options are suggested for the deployment of the accommodation.

- A. All new spaces as close as possible to where gypsies and travellers currently live. **This option would mean extra 3 spaces in Rother district.**
- B. All new spaces in the same general area. Neighbouring councils would have duty of provision. **This would mean 7 additional spaces in Rother district.**
- C. Half of new provision in same general area, half spread across the region. All authorities would have some provision. **This would mean 6 new spaces in Rother district.**
- D. Most spaces would be provided in the same general area. 25% would be spread across the region. All authorities would have some provision. **This would mean 6 new spaces in Rother district.**

Local councils are themselves responsible for identifying suitable locations through their own local development frameworks. Document states: "The Government has asked local councils to find suitable locations as quickly as possible and some have already started."

There is an accompanying Sustainability Appraisal by Scott, Wilson. It notes wide-ranging benefits on the assumption that there would be a corresponding reduction in unauthorised camping. Also says that well-located pitches should have the potential to result in reduction of fear of crime, but adds that this effect is not certain.

My Suggested Response

A multiple-choice questionnaire is included with the document. I have two concerns. Firstly, it is more difficult to articulate a clear response through this medium. Secondly, it asks the respondent to suggest a policy for other areas of the South-East. I suggest that our concerns centre on possible impact on Rye and its inhabitants. Alistair Moses, the PR Executive for the consultation, affirmed that a response by letter would also be welcome. A response after the deadline would also be acceptable. (I explained about the timetable of council meetings.)

I note that RDC has already used one site in Rye as a temporary stopping place for travellers.

I suggest, therefore, that the council may wish to cite the following issues in a short response. Councillors may wish to delete or add others.

Rye is a small, historic town with an economy reliant on tourism. Streets are narrow and main A259 is heavily overused. It does not provide the opportunities that are deemed advisable for the successful establishment of a traveller site:

- It does not have an established traveller community
- It lacks employment opportunities, stated as advisable for successful provision of traveller sites.
- There is evidence of existing educational deprivation. Additional strains would be placed on resources.

I would suggest that any communication is copied to RDC. It is possible that RDC would not wish to place such a site in Rye but I consider that the council should make its views clear at the outset.

**Cllr Mary Smith
6 November 2008**

Draft South East Plan: Planning for Gypsies, Travellers and Show people. Consultation Document.

This document explains and examines the needs in terms of accommodation, education and welfare of the itinerant population in the South East falling into the category of Travellers. The population is roughly divided into three groups, Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people of which Travelling Show people have significantly differing needs from those of ordinary traveller groups.

The South East is home to approx 19% of England's caravan based Gypsy and Traveller population – a relatively high proportion. To accommodate these, two types of site are required to be provided – static or permanent occupancy sites and temporary sites intended for casual use when travelling. However, a chronic shortage of pitches overall often means that these are permanently occupied. Such shortages can and do lead to illegal camping and occupancy of unauthorised land with all of its attendant problems. It also means, that a large proportion of Gypsies and Travellers are in fact, homeless with no permanent site available for occupancy.

The idea of providing more sites of both types is to reduce the illegal camping on both private and public land, offer a more sustainable facility for education and health/welfare services and to encourage integration with indigenous population, this last probably being the most difficult to achieve.

It is an obligation by law for local authorities to seek to achieve the above just as there is an obligation to address homelessness in other sections of society. Gypsies and Travellers are a recognised Ethnic minority and as such have a right to follow their traditional lifestyles – living in caravans and travelling. This has been established in court.

Travelling Show people are not an ethnic group. They are small business operators who travel to pursue a livelihood. They require a permanent base for out of season periods with storage and accommodation for animals and equipment.

Some £18 million pounds has been allocated from Government Funding to help councils and housing associations find solutions in the form of new camping spaces and upgrading existing sites. This means that more sites can come under Council control, with a decrease in illegal tenures, but in some areas, simply granting permission for camping spaces has led to traveller groups purchasing the land privately and becoming responsible for their own sites thereafter.

What does this mean for RYE?

There are four options on the table at present for the distribution of both temporary and permanent sites.

- A New spaces should ALL be provided as close as possible to where gypsies and travellers currently live.
- B New spaces should ALL be in the same general area where G&T's currently live. Neighbouring councils would share responsibility for provision of new spaces.
- C Half the New spaces should be in the same general areas as above, and the other half spread across the region.
- D Most new spaces would be in the same general areas as above and about a quarter would be spread across the region.

Rye does not currently have a Gypsy or Traveller Population within its environs. Parts of the town have however been used as both an illegal and authorised temporary site during the past year, with very emotive responses from the indigenous population as might be expected. Rye is a Tourist town, heavily reliant on its visitors for its prosperity and this must be borne in mind when making a response to the proposals. However, it must also be borne in mind that illegal occupancy of site such as the Town Salts and other accessible places near to the town cause huge problems and result in negative and damaging publicity for the Town. If more, particularly temporary, sites are not made available, this problem could return to haunt us year on year. It may be that to agree on principle to a small area being provided for a small number of families (each family comprises roughly 1.7 vans) as a standby, (not permanent) provision may be a more sensible, though probably immensely unpopular option. The traveller population is after all, growing, and is likely to continue to do so.

I would propose however, that the council adopts either option A or B for the time being, but bears in mind that the term 'Traveller' means exactly that, and may still result in Rye becoming host on occasion to 'Summer Visitors' I would like to close, not in defence of these people, but just because they are so historically maligned, whether deservedly or not, by stating this truth, that not all Travellers are lawbreakers, and most certainly, not all lawbreakers are Travellers.

Clive Fiddimore