

Hearing Statement from Cllr. Jane Gray.

NHDC Councillor for Codicote, Cabinet Member for Leisure

Matter 11 – Codicote

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This can be very brief as I have previously expressed my views both at various Council meetings and in writing to the Inspector. Furthermore, I have been involved with, wholly support, and am grateful for the efforts and views of the Save Rural Codicote group as well as the Save our Green Belt group. I have read and espouse the views and expert opinions in the various written representations submitted by expert witnesses instructed by these groups. Rather than reiterating them here, please take it that these views and opinions are also mine and I wish to speak to them at the hearing set down for 27th February (2 pm).

Matter 12 – The housing strategy: provision for gypsies and travellers

This is somewhat more challenging as, given the well expressed questions raised by the Inspector in the Issues (paras 12.1 to 12.8), there is currently little with which one can get to grips. I have asked the NHDC planning policy team if they have addressed the points and questions raised by the Inspector (e.g. precisely explaining the site selection process with a flow chart) and they have informed me that they are doing this today. Accordingly, probably the safest course for me now, indeed the only sensible course, is to say that I would also raise the same questions and concerns as the Inspector and beyond that reserve my position to comment at the hearing upon whatever NHDC might now be putting forward to substantiate their case.

Additionally, I have read and wholeheartedly support and espouse the comments recently submitted by Parish Cllr Gregory. I will speak to these on 1st March and at the same time comment upon the Council's inconsistent approach in an application for retrospective permission for development on the green belt by a so-called gypsy and traveller family at the junction of Pottersheath Road and Danesbury Park Road. This saga is ongoing and it will be interesting to see where it has got to by 1st March. For now I will simply say that (i) I do not see how the necessary very special circumstances have been made out and (ii) I am extremely disappointed by the way in which this has been dealt with by the Council.

I conclude for now saying that, among all other concerns, and perhaps ahead of them, I do not believe that the proposals now before the Inspector either;

- protect the local amenity and environment (DCLG, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, Policy B, 10 (e), or

- ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled community (ibid, Policy C, 14). The site both as existing and as proposed utterly dominates Pulmore Water and has a very significant impact on the village of Codicote.