

23rd March 2016

Graham Thomas
Swale Planning Department
Swale Borough Council
East House
Sittingbourne ME10 3HE

Dear Graham

15/510499/FULL – Retrospective – The Retreat, Faversham Road, Newnham – siting of two mobile homes

Ospringe Parish Council would like to make further comments on the above application having now seen the gypsy status report, and the design and access statement.

Gypsy Status Report : This does not in our view demonstrate that the applicants satisfy the statutory definition, and this should be closely investigated and examined by Swale Borough Council.

Design and Access Statement – Access paragraph : We disagree with the comments. Faversham Road has reasonably high volumes of traffic and Elverland Lane is also well used for a small rural lane. The access into and out of the site is unsatisfactory.

Design and Access Statement – the Application Site paragraph: As the applicant correctly points out, the site is in the AONB which is of major significance so far as this retrospective application is concerned. The site has always had agricultural use and it is disingenuous to now refer to it as being 'in mixed use', as this has arisen only through the unlawful encampment which was set up in December 2015.

Design and Access Statement – AONB and Visual Impact : As stated above, the site is in the AONB which is of major significance as far as this retrospective application is concerned. It is fundamentally incorrect to state that 'the impact {visual or otherwise} is minimal – the site is clearly visible from several viewpoints.

We understand that planning application 15/503580 has just been refused and not 'granted by committee' as stated by the applicant.

Reference to the Hilden appeal is misleading, not least because it was decided prior to the Borough Council being able to demonstrate sufficient gypsy and traveller sites.

The other gypsy and traveller sites currently being tolerated in the Elverland area by way of temporary permissions all acknowledge the detriment including visual impact that the sites have on this important landscape area.

Design and Access Statement – Visual Impact paragraph : Given the location of the site it is highly unlikely that it can be adequately screened within any reasonable period of time.

Design and Access Statement – Personal Circumstances paragraph : This is generic rhetoric and contains nothing in support of this spurious application.

Design and Access Statement – Sustainability paragraph : We disagree that ‘the site is sustainable’. In particular, its relative remoteness and its intrusive visual impact render it unsustainable.

Design and Access Statement – Policy and Legislation paragraph : Again, this is general rhetoric and fails to engage at all with Swale Borough Council’s detailed policies for the gypsy and traveller community.

Design and Access Statement – VSCs paragraph: We believe that the applicants overstate the facts in order to seek to justify ‘very special circumstances’. Moreover, we are of the view that there would need to be wholly exceptional medical and educational needs before the planning permission sought for this site could be justified.

Design and Access Statement – Flooding paragraph : The site is at the bottom of an extensive escarpment and so some localised flooding might well occur.

Design and Access Statement – Unmet Need paragraph : Again, this fails to engage at all with the circumstances in the Borough and Swale’s policies relating to gypsies and travellers.

Design and Access Statement – Conclusion paragraph : We believe that we have dealt with each of the numbered paragraphs and disagree with the conclusions reached. Whilst Croydon Council (*sic*) might grant permanent planning permission, there is every reason why Swale Borough Council should not.

Yours sincerely

Liz Melville
Ospringe Parish Clerk