



WOLVEY PARISH COUNCIL

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WMRSS Phase 3 Revision
West Midlands Regional Assembly
Regional Partnership Centre
Albert House, Quay Place
92-93 Edward Street
Birmingham
B1 2RA

Dear Sir/Madam

Wolvey Parish Council wishes to make representation on the West Midlands Phase Three Options Consultation document with regards to the district level allocation of Gypsies and Travellers residential pitch requirements.

The Phase Three consultation document presents three options for the distribution of the pitches over a 10 year period 2007-2017 based upon three different methodologies; it is the view of the Parish Council that this does not represent an effective basis for consultation because the total proportion of redistribution does not exceed 25% of the total residential pitch requirements. It is not considered that this approach is in the best interests of either the settled or the travelling population.

Government recommendations are that sites should be dispersed to reduce the burden on local services. Wolvey Parish already meets the challenges of a large transient community, which means that a large proportion (greater than 50%) of pupils at Wolvey school come from transient communities (either from travelling or military backgrounds). As a result, parents of school age children living in Wolvey are choosing to send them to schools in neighbouring villages. The village school is becoming more and more marginalised and seemingly irrelevant to the local community. Further increases in the numbers of pupils from transient backgrounds will not improve integration between the two communities but will instead serve to alienate them further by effectively creating a 'school for travellers'.

The Parish Council therefore seeks a more comprehensive redistribution option than those proposed within the WMRSS Phase 3 consultation document and suggests that a more effective basis for determining local residential pitch requirements would be to redistribute the total (100%) regional need for pitches using the 'Planning Criteria' methodology outlined at Option 2.

Wolvey Parish Plan identifies brownfield sites and infilling as the preferred areas for development. This does not support the Gypsy & Travellers requirement for Greenfield pitches.

The 'Planning Criteria' should be amended to reflect the actual availability of land for such development and should not take account of land that is significantly constrained by existing planning policy or physical constraints. In particular, land designated as Green Belt should not be considered suitable for any form of residential development. It is considered that this approach is entirely consistent with that taken to identify the availability of land for 'bricks and mortar' housing

development used for Phase Two of the Regional Spatial Strategy review.

The ODPM Circular 01/2006 Planning for Gypsy & Travellers Caravan Sites states that issues of sustainability are important and should consider “the promotion of peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community” Fortunately, under the current situation relations within Wolvey remain relatively stable and calm. However, there must be a “tipping point” beyond which these relations will become unacceptably strained. The parish council believes that any further introductions of new travellers sites within the area will impose an unacceptable impact on the local community and will be socially and economically unsustainable.

I hope you are able to take these views into account and look forward to seeing an appropriately amended policy at Preferred Option stage of this review.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Cartwright
Parish Clerk

