

Brockdish & District Residents
opposition
Brockdish Village Hall
The Street
Brockdish
Norfolk
IP21 4JY

01/05/09

Planning Policy Team
South Norfolk Dist Council
Long Stratton
Norfolk

Dear Sir/Madam,

Opposition document to the proposed site for a permanent Gypsy/Travellers site South of Scole Road Brockdish.

425 Residents of Brockdish and district have signed the enclosed petition opposing the above site and whilst we do not dispute the need for SNDC to address the need for further permanent sites we feel the site proposed in Brockdish is wholly inappropriate for the following reasons.

HIGHWAYS

The approach and exit of the site fall well below the necessary forward visibility requirements as laid down in the manual for Highways Junctions.

On entering the site from the A143 junction there is only 45m distance we believe this would lead to serious bunching both on the A143 and leading into the site particularly with slow moving towing vehicles. This junction has already been the subject of serious and fatal accidents and a site in this location would only add to a potential disaster.

Turning into the site would mean turning onto the 'Angles Way' a very popular footpath for locals and visitors this would be very dangerous indeed
There is no footpath from the proposed site and this would put pedestrians at great risk to fast moving traffic.

The guide for the design of gypsy sites recommends a second entrance and this would not be possible without the loss of mature trees and hedgerows.

ECOLOGY

The Waveney Valley at Brockdish is very green and a place of spectacular beauty. The valley is filled with a wide diversity of wildlife. Some of this is native to England and this area whilst others are annual migrants from sub Saharan countries. The migrants species are mainly birds such as swifts, swallows and spotted fly catchers. The fly catchers are

small dusty looking little bird about the size of the humble sparrow, its breast is pale with small brown circles on it. It is quite amazing to think that this little creature flies so many miles to nest in our part of the Waveney valley.

There upward of 40 different types of bird species nesting and breeding in the Waveney valley. The local farmers in the Brockdish part of the valley have sympathetically farmed the valley and have collaborated with the Upper Waveney Project (an organisation jointly funded by Norfolk and Suffolk councils to maintain footpaths and wildlife in the area) This collaboration has had results and we now see species that had disappeared from the area returning. Such as barn owls, little owls and tawny owls.

There are many species of wild mammals in the valley, these include: Bats, Roe deer, Fallow deer, Muntjac, Voles, Badgers, Moles, squirrels and Foxes.

A recent survey of the area where the proposed Gypsy and Travellers site is to be located has found Great Crested Newts in a pond adjacent to the site. This particular species are protected by an act of parliament.

The River Waveney is a clean river and it is teeming with fish and other wildlife. A testament to this is that Diss and District Angling Club regularly hold fishing competitions along this stretch of the river.

We have all seen David Attenborough wild life programmes on TV and we know when man moves into an area it has a detrimental impact on wildlife causing extinction in a variety of species. This must not happen in Brockdish.

It is important that South Norfolk District Council understand that by carrying out construction of this site through to completion it will have a devastating impact on the area and its wildlife. At the same time take away from the local inhabitants and their children and their children's children a rich wildlife heritage and a place of extreme beauty.

COST OF DEVELOPMENT

We are advised the Harford Site(similar to that proposed at Brockdish) has cost IRO £1.1M,this is to construct the site with 8 pitches. This equates to £137,500 per pitch(excluding freehold purchase costs).The gross income this site would achieve assuming 100% occupancy level and no bad debts would be £22,880 (calculated at £55 p w for 52 weeks per year for 8 pitches (SNDC quote site rents are between £50-£60 p w).

If SNDC were unsuccessful with their grant application from central government and assuming the project comes to fruition, it would therefore be funded direct from their own sources. This means the council would achieve a gross yield of 2.08% on this project before any costs. We actually consider the annual overheads could quite easily wipe out this small return and would then mean this project would cost SNDC every year. After all said and done, we know when completed they state Broadland Housing will be operating the site clearly at a cost to be met from the gross rents of £22,880pa.

On top of this there would always be the high cost of site and premises maintenance too, probably absolute minimum £5k per annum together with the salary of a site manager. We also understand that in the instance of Harford SNDC are only leasing the freehold land off the landowner at an additional cost, which would have to be met from the gross rents. Thus for the example of Brockdish the costs would be £1.1M plus land cost, we also know

that ground works that would be necessary at Brockdish would be considerable. Historically on residential developments a formula of 1/3rd of the land and 1/3rd for the construction cost would be applied but for the benefit of doubt we will assume that land cost would not be in that region, but there would be an unknown cost of say £100k thus reducing the gross yield to 1.19%.

Given that Saffron Housing Trust (the other local reg. social landlord) achieves a gross yield of 30% this hardly appears a financially viable project whatsoever and unless SNDC can radically reduce costs by choosing less expensive sites to develop these non viable projects should not be put forward.

SCHOOL

Pre-school at Brockdish is now full with a waiting list and so therefore could not accommodate any more children.

Parents feel that teaching staff and facilities at the school could not cope with the potential influx of 15 or more children into it's present system. This would seriously undermine the good work so far achieved by the present headmaster.

There is no parent parking facility at the school and there have already been serious problems over resident/parent parking problems that have not been resolved.

We also see serious problems arising over the congestion with cars dropping and collecting children, in the event that an emergency vehicle needed passage past the school it would not be able to do so at peak times and an increase in traffic would make the situation much worse.

EXISTING GYPSY/TRAVELLERS SITE IN THE PARISH.

The parish of Brockdish and Thorpe Abbots already hosts a gypsy/travellers site and has done so since 1992.

We believe it to be grossly unfair to expect us to support another one

AMENITIES

Apart from the village pub, Brockdish does not have the benefit of any other local services. The nearest shops, post office, newsagents, Doctor, Dentist, Petrol station are in Harleston some 3 - 4 miles distance. The GP surgery is already struggling to cope (ask it's patients). There is no NHS Dentist capacity and Harleston does not have a pre-school facility.

We do not like the way the council has asked residents to choose one of the sites, however, we have visited the other two sites proposed on the A143 corridor and the only practicable and sensible site to choose would be The Old Coach Depot Earsham, for the following reasons:

1. It is a brownfield site with services connected , the road surface is already hard this will have an immediate cost saving.
2. It is well screened from the A143,better for the Gypsies and immediate cost saving.

3. There will be little or no effect on wildlife in the area.
4. There will be no loss of valuable productive agricultural land.
5. The Access to and from the site is onto a very quiet road that could easily be made Residents Only. This will make it much safer for pedestrians from the site. It is not a road used as the main access to a village.
6. Access from the A143 onto the access road does not hold any danger because of the lack of traffic using the access road.
7. Site users would not be effected by passing traffic headlights as they would be on a more open location and there would not be the light pollution to the surrounding area for the same reasons.
8. We feel the Earsham school will be better able to cater for an influx of pupils.
9. Being already a site with movement of vehicles on a daily basis it will have no further impact on the environment in the surrounding area.

Finally we feel that the methods used for scoring Brockdish onto a short list site are unsound with serious omissions and lack of understanding of the area and it's ecological make up, that, together with the serious road issues and lack of amenities.

We believe Brockdish should be withdrawn from SNDC short list as a potential Gypsy/ Travellers site. To back this statement up we suggest that the Planning Policy Team of South Norfolk Council visit the proposed site in Brockdish to see the devastating impact this would have on our valley.

For and on Behalf
Brockdish and District Residents Opposition.

Enclosures

Highways objections sketches 1-3
Brockdish Residents Petition