



Alistair Burt

Member of Parliament for North East Bedfordshire
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Dear Constituent

Traveller Sites in Bedfordshire

Much recent concern has been expressed about the process of identifying possible new traveller 'pitches' within our area. I hope the accompanying notes will be helpful in explaining some key issues, and perhaps I can assist with a snapshot of where the process has got to.

The Government, operating through the Eastern Area Regional Assembly and Government Office East, is driving a policy which has identified the 'need' for a number of new traveller pitches. There is much dispute about what constitutes 'need', but in the end the Government has the power to define it, and set the numbers which it has done. The purpose of the policy is to attempt to ensure that illegal encampments are easier to move on, and provide space for travellers who for family and other reasons need a settled place to stay, rather than be on the move all the time.

The democratic problem it seems to me is that your local representatives on Bedford Borough Council have the job not of deciding how many pitches are needed in our area, but where the number assigned to us are to go, a policy I think which is flawed.

There are problems within the area also. As your Member of Parliament I am concerned if the only sites brought forward by Bedford Borough Council, either for temporary or permanent use, are in rural, and semi rural areas like Willington and Cople, rather than within the urban area of the town, where there is some evidence that travellers would prefer to be.

Your Parish councils will advise you as to where the consultation process on possible sites has reached, and the attached notes may help you in framing a letter to express your view.

I hope this is helpful, but look forward to dealing with any questions you might have and representing your interests, and those of our villages, as best I can.

Kind regards

Alistair Burt MP

Letters for the consultation should be sent to:

Paul Rowland, Planning Department, Bedford Borough Council, Town Hall, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SJ

with copies to:-

Alistair Burt as above

and your two Parish Clerks:-

Mr J Squire, 21 Water End, Cople, Bedfordshire MK44 3TY

Mrs D Payne, Sycamore House, Grange Way, Willington, Bedfordshire MK44 3QW

'Serving the people of North East Bedfordshire'