



## Friends of Uddens & Cannon Hill Woodlands

20/03/2012

c/o The Old Thatch  
285 Wimborne Road West  
Wimborne  
Dorset  
BH21 7NW

Dear business colleagues,

Many of you may be aware of East Dorset District Council's proposal to create a site for up to 100 gypsy and traveller families in the woodland opposite Uddens trading estate.

### What could this mean to you and your company.

- Although the proposed site is for 25 pitches, each pitch will hold up to four large caravans. As travellers tend to have large families, this could mean a total of some 400/500 Gypsies plus assorted horses and guard/hunting dogs in the area at peak times.
- This proposed site will be the largest in the south of England. Even the Dorset-wide consultation document states that the maximum size of any traveller site should be 15 pitches. The same document also states that land in green belt should not be used for travellers' sites. Uddens woodland is green belt.
- During peak periods, such as prior to the opening of a temporary travellers site for the steam fair, this proposed site will be full to overflowing. As it is known that travellers like to stay near their friends and relatives, they would obviously be looking the temporary sites in the vicinity. Your car parks would be ideal.
- As all the Gypsies using this site will be transient and have no affinity to this area, many problems could be caused to the business community. These may include fly tipping (once again many of your car parks make a very attractive dumping ground for garden rubbish or the remnants of drives/roofs that these people have replaced as part of their businesses).
- Security will be a major problem. Your costs in this area are bound to rise.
- Your insurance costs will undoubtedly rise. One local company has already reported that their insurers have informed them that the cost of their policies will rise by two thirds, should the site be located at Uddens. Historically there is a perception that incidents of theft and criminal damage increase in the immediate vicinity of Traveller sites. The effect of this on insurance premiums is obvious.
- Local businesses relying upon the public entering their premises are likely to suffer. Customers will not enter areas that are dominated by the travelling community. Due to the number of pitches on this proposed site the travellers **will** dominate your area.
- Contrary to what you may have heard **this is not a done deal**. The council still have many hurdles to overcome before they are in a position to start work on project. Firstly, they have a shortfall of over £1 million on the budget for this development. This has to be found from somewhere! Secondly, even if this site is chosen and they can find the money, they still have to go through the planning procedure where we will have further opportunities to contest their plans.

Our organisation has been created up to fight this proposal. We have representatives from local businesses and residents on the organising committee.

We firmly believe local businesses are vital to the economy of this area, and everything possible must be done to protect them. If it is therefore vital form a united body rather than attempting to fight this proposal individually.

Using the Localism Act 2011, we have forced a debate at the next full county council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> April.

The motion we are putting before the council is as follows:-

*We petition Dorset County Council to spend the £1.75 million that has been awarded by the Homes and Communities Government Agency, for the Uddens site, be instead spent on a more suitable site elsewhere in Dorset.*

As we have a maximum of 10 minutes to put our case for the above petition, we have employed a senior planning consultant to both advise and speak on our behalf. Mr Hirsh was until recently the chief planning officer for East Dorset District Council and is now a consultant to Intelligent Land.

We feel it is vital that the views of local businesses are represented during this debate. Should you wish us to put forward any of your concerns regarding the council's proposed travellers' site, please do not hesitate to contact me. Your remarks can then be used to fine tune Mr Hirsh's submission

Our local County Councillor Mrs Janet Dover JP will also be supporting the above petition at that meeting and will be speaking on our behalf.

To enable us to force this debate we have had to produce a petition of over 1,000 signatures. Such is the feeling locally, this was achieved within the first three days. Since reaching that milestone we are continuing with the petition to ensure the council and the local press realise how seriously the local population oppose this plan.

At present we have in excess of two and a half thousand signatures. It is our intention to try and reach five thousand. This will be by far the largest petition of its type in Dorset and should ensure us further positive publicity.

Our local Member of Parliament, Mrs Annette Brooke MP. It is also supporting our organisation.

We have set up a website, [www.saveuddenswoods.org](http://www.saveuddenswoods.org) where further information, including plans of the proposed site and costing can be found.

Should our petition be unsuccessful on the 26<sup>th</sup>, it is our intention to employ a specialist planning solicitor to advise us. We have, as yet, not found a suitable candidate. Any suggestions would be gratefully received.

Many of you will have responded in negative manner to the "Dorset-wide Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show people Site Allocations Joint Development Plan" document. Unfortunately, this is not enough.

That is why we are asking you all to take time out of your busy schedule to make sure that the attached petition is signed by yourselves and all your staff. Once signed, the petition should be returned to me c/o The Old Thatch at the above address. Collection can be arranged if you prefer. All petitions must be returned by **Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>**, as the completed petition has to be delivered to Dorchester on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April.

***We all remember Dale Farm and the cost involved in clearing up that problem. Please help us to avoid the possibility of this situation arising in this area of Dorset.***

***If we work together we can beat this proposal.***

Yours faithfully

Michael C F Gorse, Chairman

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