



## **HHAG NEWSLETTER NUMBER 13 (18<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2010)**

*Hello Everyone,*

Happy New Year to you all!! I think we have all got over the Christmas rush and finally dug ourselves out of the snow, so it's time to get cracking again on saving our local countryside!!

I think you all know, now, that the two appeals (against the enforcement order and the planning refusal) have been set for a hearing on the same dates, starting 27<sup>th</sup> April.

As a result, we now have until the 26<sup>th</sup> January to get in any further comments on the planning refusal appeal. If anyone didn't get my previous email with relevant details, just let me know and I'll resend to you with the address for comments.

And of course, if you haven't already got your comments in, then **GET THEM IN NOW!!**

### **HEMLEY HILL IN THE SUNDAY EXPRESS**

Some of you will have already read the article in yesterday's Sunday Express. For those of you who haven't, here it is:

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## **GYPSY THREAT TO OUR BEAUTY SPOTS**

The families illegally occupying an ancient site are applying for permanent residence.

Sunday January 17,2010

By Dennis Rice

THE RIGHT of gypsies to set up camp in any of England's most unspoiled natural settings is to be tested in a ground-breaking legal case.

In what has become known as the Battle of Hemley Hill, nine traveller families who have illegally occupied an ancient site since Easter are applying to settle there permanently.

Lined up against them are 600 residents who say the site on the Chiltern Hills, in Buckinghamshire, home to a 10,000-year-old road first laid down by the Romans, is in the green belt. It is also officially classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

More is at stake than Hemley Hill, however, as experts say that if the Government's Planning Inspectorate grants approval for a travellers' site there, the same can potentially apply to any of 39 other AONBs around Britain, or to any other less protected site. Mike Taylor, chief executive of the National Association of AONBs, said: "The consequences of the inspector siding with the travellers don't bear thinking about. It isn't so much that it would be used by travellers to settle where they want, but how could councils then resist developers who want to build a £1.5million housing estate in an area of outstanding natural beauty?"

Counsel for the gypsies is expected to point to new laws passed by the Labour government instructing local authorities to provide them with permanent sites by 2012.

Wycombe District Council, which covers Hemley Hill, has made no provision and has hurriedly commissioned a private £17,000 report that has come up with half a dozen potential sites for travellers. Chris Whitwell, director of Friends, Families and Travellers, a national gypsies charity, said: "I can't comment on this site, but it is fair to say we have been very disappointed by the lack of councils fulfilling their legal obligations for permanent sites. "We have 25,000 travellers being moved from one illegal site to another at an annual cost of £18million. Perhaps the Wycombe case might act as a wake-up call for authorities to get on with it."

John Hughes is one of the 600 residents who will be attending a meeting organised by the Planning Inspectorate to decide the fate of the site in spring. He said: "It is frustrating when you know full well there is no way that anybody would get planning permission for any sort of development of that nature, to find that these things are going on all over the country.

"If it can happen here, then it's a precedent.

"This is the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It was one of the first set up in the country. It ranks alongside national parks and if it happens here, literally anywhere in the country is open for gypsies and travellers to grab."

The Hemley Hill site has become a rubbish-strewn waste land with fumes from fires and accompanying noise morning, noon and night. Traders in the nearby town of Princes Risborough have found human excrement in their recycling bins, testimony to the lack of sanitary facilities.

Wycombe Council agrees that it is not a suitable site for the travellers. But it is already running into opposition over several of the alternatives it has produced. Among them is a section of Britain's oldest road, Icknield Way and its prehistoric pathways laid down by the Romans 10,000 years ago. Another possible site lies above an Iron Age settlement which the council previously refused to allow developers to build homes on because of its precious archaeological heritage.

Mr Hughes said: "The difficulty is the requirement being put on the councils from Government to provide permanent sites. What we would like to see happening is the same law that applies to everybody else applied to travellers and gypsies. We moved here 13 years ago and paid a great premium for the privilege of living here, and it is a great privilege. But here we are now faced with all of this."

Wycombe council is putting its proposals out for public consultation until the end of January.

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That's all for now. More news to follow, as soon as I have it.

Kind regards,



**BOB STREET**

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