



Dear all,

The below is a statement in response to the leaflet produced by Cllrs Mockford and Mountain being distributed this weekend.

Firstly, let us take the time to express our thanks to the councillors for taking the time to reach out to the residents. The Rayleigh Action Group has written to all ward councillors over the past two weeks and until this weekend we had not heard from Cllrs Mockford and Mountain. However, we now welcome their recent communication to residents. Over the past two weeks we have found as a group that pro-active consultation is positively accepted and an extremely valuable medium in gathering opinion while also raising awareness of certain issues.

The Rayleigh Action Group is committed to providing fellow residents complete transparency and to this end, we make the following observations regarding the recent communication from the conservative councillors.

The comments from the councillors imply that the main concern for RAG and its followers is with travelling community, when in fact this couldn't be further from the truth. We have had a great model in place for the past 11 years accommodating our existing resident traveller community. This community maintains clean and tidy pitches, pays council tax and causes no trouble whatsoever. We at Rayleigh Action Group headquarters think that the council are missing the point on a couple of counts. We believe that we have our fair and equitable allocation very well managed traveller sites already. RDC seem to appear blind to such an exemplary model instead opting to repeat mistakes from Dale Farm via a large scale, mixed community of travellers that will be extremely difficult to manage.

Now, on to the question of the proposed traveller site itself. We understand that the preferred traveller site is on the A1245 near the A127 (site GT1). This is clearly marked on the Rayleigh Action Group website. However, what the councillors omitted from their leaflet is a reference to, or explanation of, the following text extracted from the ROCHFORD ALLOCATIONS SUBMISSIONS DOCUMENT ISSUES AND QUESTIONS – final version (Updated 6 & 18 July 2013). Compiled by David Smith, Planning Inspector.

“If Site GT1 is found unsound, would ‘swapping’ the traveller site with the allocated employment site NEL1 (Representation 28693) be sound?” This option for an alternative traveller site referred to above is also known as site GT3 (next to Swallow Aquatics). So, in short, while the recent conservative party leaflet states that the ‘preferred’ option is site GT1, GT3 remains, and always has been, a very real legal possibility. (This option was also notably omitted from Councillor Hudson’s recent piece in the evening Echo.) There are a few other reasons why we should remain extremely concerned about site GT3 in addition to the recent planning inspector’s report. On consultation with the travelling community, we have been informed that site GT1 is extremely unlikely to be agreed due to the lack of pavements on the A1245. Additionally, it is public knowledge that Basildon council has formally objected to the proposed GT1 traveller site on the basis of being too near their border.

So, GT1 begins to look less and less likely. We appreciate that when designing leaflets limited information can be conveyed (you may have heard that we distributed a few leaflets recently) but in this instance we are happy to add some additional transparency to the issued document from Cllrs Mockford and Mountain.

The councillor's leaflet also touches on the mass development of houses. We note that reference is made to the district, but not to the concentration of proposed housing predominately being planned for Rayleigh. The councillors outline that the strategy has been in the public domain for some time. We do not dispute this. However, what we disagree with is the notion that everyone knows about the developments. Residents simply have not been pro-actively contacted and canvassed for their opinion on the proposed plans by the council. Aside from some newsletters from June and Chris Lumley (many thanks for these) the overwhelming majority of residents knew nothing whatsoever of these plans until the Rayleigh Action Group made the effort to contact residents and ask their opinion. Let us also not forget that the required communication from the council should reach further than residents. The businesses currently based in Rawreth had also not been adequately informed that they will face compulsory purchase orders for their land to accommodate the council's plans. We should also spare a thought for the relocation of the Rayleigh sports ground. The current location is easily accessible to all.

We, as residents and businesses should be able to rely on the individuals WE elect to keep us actively informed of proposed developments and to represent our views.

We very much look forward to receiving further communications regarding this matter together with all associated key issues such as the planned heavy industrial sites from the councillors. We will also endeavour to assist our friends in the council where possible to maintain this level of unbiased transparency moving forward.

Overall, we need a strategy that is fair, equitable and proportionate with the entire Rochford district.

Regards,

Rayleigh Action Group.