

**AN OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED UDDENS PLANTATION TRANSIT SITE FOR 25 PITCHES FOR ROMANY/TRAVELLERS AND NEW AGE**

**ACCESS/USE OF THE CASTLEMAN TRAILWAY**

This Trailway is one of the 'flagship' walking and-cycling routes in the Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Green Infrastructure Strategy that is about to be adopted. It effectively runs from Poole via Upton to Ringwood, in the future it will be developed to make it a more coherent track with links both to large recreational areas such as Moors Valley Park and also to the large industrial sites such as Uddens/Ferndown and Bournemouth Airport. There is a commitment to invest up to £250,000 to improve the route/quality and signage.

It is very likely that the proximity to a traveller site will cause people to avoid using this path, particularly those on foot. We accept it is only the public's perception and fear of an encampment but the result will be the same. People will stop using the Castleman Trailway. One fear mentioned in particular by horse riders, is that of guard dogs running loose in the woods. The trailway marked on the OS map is not the one used, it is a more central path that is an all weather track and suitable for push chairs and wheel chair users. If people cannot be encouraged to use this trailway to access work, it will increase the numbers of cars on the road.

It is not just those using the trailway that may find it awkward. Those using the site may find the constant use of the trailway by walkers, cyclists and horse riders rather invasive they may feel it is a potential threat to their privacy and security. It was reported in the Mail on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011, that a group of gypsies and travellers using a site in Wales near a proposed coastal path, objected to the invasion of their privacy. The offer of a high fence was rejected on the grounds that it would make their site look like a prison. They were demanding that the path be relocated away from them.

**RECREATIONAL USE OF THE SITE**

**Those living around Stapehill and Colehill have been free to enjoy this woodland for over four decades, and some much, much longer. We have no recreational grounds or public parks at Stapehill. We have no sports space. We have no children and young people's space. We have no allotments. All we have is our woodlands.**

- The Castleman Trailway passes through these woods, also The Ferndown, Stour & Forest trail.
- There are 4 access points, 2 of which would be lost.
- The whole area is approx 6 hectares but not all of it is accessible.
- There are 1569m of paths of which about half would be lost.
- Loss of peace, tranquillity and the intrusion of the sites would reduce the quality of the recreational experience.

This triangle of Forestry land is the 'gateway' to Cannon Hill for those living to the east of Canford Bottom roundabout. It is used by a regular band of dog walkers (and walkers, cyclists, riders, and is wheelchair friendly too). Other users include some of

the people working on the industrial estate who use the woodland for a relaxing lunch time walk or park up and eat their sandwiches.

It is not just those residents around Wimborne Road West who will be affected. Those residing in and around Bridle Way can use this area both for walking, and to access Stapehill or Ferndown. Some do not walk the Castleman Trailway, they just use the various paths that exist in this piece of land, either to access both sides of the A31, or for the more elderly, the few paths that meander through this triangle. Horse riders also use this area, including those from the various livery stables at Longham. It is the only access to Cannon Hill from Wimborne Road West and Longham. At one time they could use the opposite side of Uddens Drive as well, but this land was made impassable during the last Forestry harvesting. Apart from a small area of heathland (SNCI), the whole of the site surrounding Blunt's Farm has been designated for employment use in the emerging Core Strategy.

### **UDDENS WOODLAND: SURVEY OF USE.**

Dates and numbers surveyed:

20<sup>th</sup> January 2012 = 61

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012 = 121

Total = 182

**Table 1: SHOWING NUMBER OF VISITS AND YEARS OF USE.**

Number of visits		Number of years using woodlands			
Per week	Per year	Up to 5 years	1 to 9 years	10 –19 years	Over 20 years
604*	59	35	24	28	33

61 visitors did not stop, or not all information recorded

**Table 2: SHOWING LOCATION OF USER AND REASON FOR VISIT.**

Home of visitor				Reason for visit			
Stapehill & Colehill	Ferndown	Other	Uddens Trading Estate	Walking/ Dog walking	Horse Riding	Jogging Running	Other (including lunch time use)
68	36	29	15	128	18	4	27

61 visitors did not stop, or not all information recorded

\*604 counts the multiple visits and shows on just 2 days of survey how many visits will be displaced if people cannot use this area. They will have to relocate, possibly using their cars to do this.



**Footnote: We had no time to have a practice run of this survey. It underestimates quite considerably the numbers visiting this triangle of woodland. Next time we shall be better prepared.**

If this site is compromised and informal recreational use denied, there is a real risk that people will have to resort to driving to an alternative areas such as Holt Heath or Ferndown Common. Proposals for the site must demonstrate that there will be no adverse impacts on any such internationally designated heathlands (N2K sites) Shifting informal recreation from this site would also put additional cars on our already overcrowded roads, especially Canford Bottom Roundabout.

*The indications in the write up of the site is that there would be sufficient land left for recreational use. We would seriously dispute this hypothesis.*

### **THE POTENTIAL FOR UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES**

There have been complaints about the state of the Stour Valley path between Canford Bottom and Wimborne. These complaints are of mud so deep in places that wellingtons had to replace walking boots. These complaints were made during an exceptionally dry winter and before any normal wet weather occurred. The only explanation (unproven) is that restricted access to Cannon Hill while the Forestry Commission are working up there has driven people off of Cannon Hill and onto a river walk that is too muddy for many to use now.

If the terrible state of our Stour Valley path is due to restricted access elsewhere, if that access is permanently restricted, and taken in combination with the proposed house building to 2026, what will become of the Green Infrastructure Strategy? What will happen to our heathland? Photos are available for the muddy Stour Valley footpath.

We need more open spaces, especially all weather ones such as our Uddens triangle of woodlands that leads onto the all weather tracks of Cannon Hill. Our only other accessible natural green spaces are:

- Ferndown Common which is too wet and can only be accessed by Stapehill Road that has no footpath. It is also an N2K heathland site so any case people need to be encouraged away from it to Uddens; and
- The other is the Stour Valley as long as it is not under water or excessive mud due to over use. The other problem for dog walkers is the livestock who occupy these fields at different times of the year. It is not always possible to let a dog off the lead.

### **THE DESIGN OF GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES**

**All the following information has been taken from the May 2008 Good practice Guide on The Design of Gypsy and Traveller Sites produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government,**

**CHAPTER 8: TRANSIT SITES** (the numbering is mine as I have just picked out the relevant points)

**The different groups of travellers do not co-exist. In order to accommodate them on this site there would need to be a group of 10 pitches and 15 pitches set apart and isolated from one another. Each transit site will conform to the following:**

The sites should provide visual and acoustic privacy and consider the high number of children there are likely to be. The bridge over the A31 could present a hazard to children playing on it, and bridges do attract children.

1. This is a local and well used recreational space so there will be little privacy if people did continue to use it, and the noise and proximity of the A31 will be problematic. If the sites are located further into this triangle it would fragment what recreational land was left and also be even more intimidating and intrusive if paths went all around the site perimeter. It will certainly not help the integration the Government requires when locals lose their walking space and parts of the Castleman Trailway.
2. No access to schools or shops, only the local pub. (the latter recently taken over by a new landlord who has worked very hard to turn the pub around so that it is now very popular).
3. The nearest bus stop is 600 metres away.
4. Number of pitches: the Government recommends the pitches should not exceed 15 as any more can be difficult to manage. How will this site be managed?
5. Caravans require a greater degree of land usage than standard housing.
6. One mobile home (can be 25m in length), a touring caravan, a utility building containing shower room, washing machine etc, space for 2 cars 2.4m x 4.8m. Space for manoeuvring the above plus a recommended access for emergency services of 5.5m in width. For fire safety every trailer, caravan or park home must be not less than 6m from any other.
7. Favoured layout is horse shoe shape.
8. Fencing or planting as a boundary to the site(s) but a clear gap of 3 metres around the boundary as a fire precaution. The Good Practice Guide does not say what type of vegetation is required in this clear gap, but the use of the word clear, and the fact it is a fire break, would suggest very low vegetation such as grass that would not present a fire risk. This would have a knock on effect of making it necessary to have a larger privacy gap between the separate encampments.
9. Must not be able to overlook adjacent pitches.
10. Must have suitable and safe play areas for children of all ages, preferably in the centre of the site. We notice that the sketch map of the site produced by Dorset County Council when they applied for funding, does not show any play areas, yet each site has a requirement for one.