

I write on behalf of Mr Steven Heron [REDACTED] with regard to the serious safety concerns he and his family have over the proposed relocation of the Brough Hill gypsy site (a larger fair than Appleby) due to the A66 upgrade which would see it relocated right next to their farm businesses, haulage company and family homes.

The gypsy gathering is an annual event that lasts for 4-5 days each September going back to the 1330s. Traditionally, the site has been located to the East of the farm with only an adjoining boundary of 30metre to the field, suitably spaced not to cause a problem.

However, National Highways have come up with a proposal to relocate the event to a site that is adjacent to their businesses and homes, in some cases, just 12 metres away in distance, with an adjoining boundary of 300 metres to the busy Farm Yards, Buildings and large Dairy Complex. Despite serious objections being raised, it has not felt like any of Mr Heron's concerns have been properly understood or even considered. Although members of the A66 team have come and met Mr Heron and his land agent, their concerns appear not to have been taken on board and they are ploughing on with their initial plan which is simply deemed unsafe for Mr Heron, his family, his employees, his animals and the Gypsy community.

Steven is very concerned on a number of fronts, not least because he runs a modern dairy farm and the road into the site is a busy one with milk tanker collections, delivery wagons, tractor and machinery movements at all times of day. Under the proposed relocation, the travellers would use the same access road, which is Station Road, and it only has the width for one vehicle. In conjunction with the people attending this annual event, their caravans and horses, this is likely to cause a high possibility of accidents and serious disruption to their businesses. National Highways solution is to 'put a stop line' and a 'give way sign' this is simply ludicrous and asking for an accident to happen

The traveller representative who speaks on their behalf, Billy Welch, has attended the meetings and has already indicated he feels there will be real safety issues as the children like to run free and it is highly likely due to their inquisitive nature, they will go exploring and get in amongst livestock and machinery. Mr Welch has also conveyed his objections to this site to Highways, again going unheard.

It was not until recently from what I understand that it became apparent that Highways had not considered any safety implications of moving the site to the proposed location, which seems nonsensical when the aim of this whole project is to improve safety. Mr Heron's land agent went to the Examining Authority recently and requested a risk assessment to be carried out. National Highways agreed to this and were met on site. The 'Risk assessor' was not familiar with agriculture and instead of what should have been a fact finding meeting, it became a meeting where the National Highways risk assessor appeared to persistently dismiss Mr Heron and Mr. Welch's serious concerns and said that they could easily be resolved by 'putting signs & fences up'.

Such action is evidence to Mr Heron and his land agent that National Highways not to understand (or wish to comprehend) the severity of what they are proposing.

On the back of this, Mr Heron commissioned an independent risk assessment, undertaken by a specialist Agricultural Health & Safety Advisor. After completing the risk assessment it was concluded that it is not safe or suitable to relocate the Brough Hill Site so close to existing businesses and residential properties.

The risk assessment done by National Highways in the opinion of Mr Heron does not deal with any of these risks that are very likely to happen. The severity could be fatalities and the National Highways risk assessment fails to answer some fundamental questions, such as:-

â€¢ If an incident or fatality were to happen with the travelling community, who takes responsibility for this when clear safety concerns have been voiced at all stages? Can the name of the individual tasked with this responsibility and their contact details please be supplied?

â€¢ Can you also provide the name and qualifications of the person who carried out the risk assessment on behalf of National Highways?

â€¢ If equipment, machinery, or property is damaged during the 4-5 day event, to whom should Mr. Heron direct any loss of earnings or claim for damages?

In conclusion, please can this be revisited and an alternative site identified. Mr. Heron predicts if this is allowed to go ahead then it runs the risk of someone being seriously injured when problems could have been predicted and were clear for all to see and which Highways chose to ignore.

This proposed site location would also have serious implications for the Heron Family's businesses and local employees.

Thank you for your time and assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely

TIM FARRON