

Ref: Sonny William JAMES - EA/20/87572 - Appeal Ref(s)
APP/W1715/C/19/3231762, APP/W1715/C/19/3231763, APP/W1715/W/19/3231764
- Site Land to the east of Little Hatts Recreation Ground Tucker Close, Botley,
SOUTHAMPTON, SO30 2SW

1. I am the Senior Gypsy Liaison Officer (SGLO) for Hampshire County Council.
2. I have been asked by Eastleigh Borough Council planning department to visit the above location with regards to establishing the Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity and planning status of Mr Sonny JAMES with regards to the above application.
3. At 12.00mid-day on Wednesday 24th August 2022, I visited the site and spoke with the applicant Mr Sonny James (59 years) and his cousin Reuben.
4. I discussed at length the planning application submitted to Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) and at the conclusion of the visit I took the opportunity to walk the land in question (consisting of 8.5 acres) to get a better geographical understanding of its situation in relation to other properties in the area. I was not aware that there were other residential properties immediately within the near vicinity of the site but did note that there was a community play area and fields immediately to the right-hand side of the property when entering the land. I formed a view that any development of the site would not have any impact on this social area.
5. I initially spoke to the applicant regarding any proposed development of the site, and he advised me that other than replacing the horse stables which had become somewhat dilapidated over the years it was his intention to retain horses on site and in future to have some chickens and pigs on site. I saw at least four ponies in paddock when I was there. It was his intention to have a mobile home and touring caravan suitably located on the site.
6. On arrival at the site through the main entrance gate I saw that there were three touring caravans on the site one of which I was advised was being lived in by the applicant.
7. We then moved into an onsite open fronted barn and the conversation included his family history, movements, and cultural heritage. During conversation I was advised by Mr James that he has owned the site for about twenty-five years after establishing through a solicitor some years ago that there was no title or ownership registered for the land which he then claimed and registered in his name. He advised that he moved onto the site to live about five to six years ago.
8. I was shown photographs of family members near caravans at horse fairs and advised of books and documents in which the James family is mentioned evidencing their ethnic Gypsy origins. I am advised that documentation and

photographs are available to the planning authority and can be provided to the relevant planning officer and committee through the applicants planning agent.

9. I ascertained that the applicant's family roots were very local having been born, brought up and schooled in Sholing near Southampton in Hampshire. Mr James advised that he had lived his formative years in a wooden shed type of property in the Botany Bay Road, Sholing area with his father a Traveller and his non-Traveller mother. The family have never lived on a Local Authority site or at the side of the road and whilst away from home they predominantly lived on the land they were working on or on private land or with relatives. In keeping with his cultural lifestyle, they visited and continue to visit horse fairs nationally to deal in horses and ponies and all the associated equine tack and paraphernalia.
10. He left school at 13 years of age to assist his father in the groundwork business which he continues to do today offering a licenced service in tarmacking, block paviour driveways / paths and dropped kerb work.
11. In his early 20's he moved down to Cornwall to continue his groundwork business for about ten years before returning to live with his father and then obtaining the land on which he currently resides. He has for years now worked away from home returning every other weekend to visit and stay on his land and then decided some 5 to 6 years ago to live more permanently on his own land. He initially 'plugged' out his horses on the land and then started the legal process to take over ownership and commenced developing the stables and open barn.
12. I was advised that he has a wife Tracey and four children with seven grandchildren. They very much have their own lifestyles and private accommodation but if successful with his planning application his wife would be living with him with family members visiting on occasions who would be accommodated in tourer caravans.
13. To this day he continues to travel away for economic purposes mostly in the Hampshire and Wilshire areas within a 50-to-60-mile radius of his land. He frequently resides away in a touring caravan and when required stays with family members on private land or on camp sites and occasionally uses bed and breakfast accommodation, but he returns regularly to his land due to the livestock thereon.
14. Due to the lack of Local Authority alternative suitable accommodation provision Mr James is determined to establish a more settled permanent home for himself and his wife. This, to facilitate a home base from where he can travel for economic purpose conversant with his lifestyle and recognised ethnicity as a Romany Gypsy. In keeping with many members of the Gypsy and Traveller community he has an aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation.
15. In my capacity as the Hampshire County Council GLO I am aware that the JAMES family has strong and traceable Romany Gypsy and Traveller family roots in Hampshire.

16. Since commencing employment with Hampshire County Council in 2005, I have known of JAMES families in general including various members of the Gypsy and Traveller community who have been related to them either directly or by marriage living on permanent residential council sites.
17. The question of Romany Gypsy ethnicity is without question with regards to Mr James and his family and during conversation I informed the applicant that Hampshire County Council now has responsibility for one council site in the north of the county near Fleet and currently there are no pitches available with six applicants on the waiting list.
18. As mentioned previously, having walked the site in question I am of the considered view that the land in question would more than accommodate the needs of the applicant and any consideration of any future planning permission should be subject to conditions that the land in question is for the applicant having satisfied his Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity.
19. I enquired about local facilities in the area which would allow easy access for shops and medical facilities and was informed that the Gypsy and Traveller community are well used to travelling for the purposes of accessing facilities and in any case all they currently required was within a short distance of the site in question.
20. Due to the lack of local, regional, and national pitch and transit site availability I was informed that the home base would not solely be used as a place for Mr James to commute for work and return home daily but would be somewhere for the family to establish a more settled lifestyle and medical facilities, as and when required.
21. During my visit I did inform the applicant that any evidence he could produce to prove a traveling lifestyle and if possible, to show for economic purpose would be beneficial to this application. I advised that the planning officer having site of such documents / letters prior to any planning committee meeting would be beneficial.
22. Based on the interview and evidence thus far, the applicant has a cultural lifestyle of living in a traditional caravan and a history of travelling for economic purpose but would like to settle down to establish a more stable lifestyle and I conclude that after consideration of all the facts, my balanced view is that the applicant Sonny James is of Romany Gypsy ethnicity and satisfies the status required for current planning purposes.
23. I am not by any means and do not profess to be an expert in planning and case law, but I do have a limited knowledge of these matters and also practical expertise attained having dealt with matters and issues relating to the Gypsy and Traveller community over the last twenty years.



Property Services

Barry P. Jordan-Davis

Dated: 1st September 2022