# Suspected travellers occupy illegally excavated site in South Downs during Bank Holiday



A significant event has unfolded in the South Downs National Park where a group of suspected travellers has occupied a recently disturbed field at Blind Lane, near Petworth in West Sussex. This takeover occurred after developers allegedly began significant excavation work without obtaining the necessary planning permission during the Bank Holiday weekend.

Local residents reported shock as industrial diggers and machinery began to clear the land on Friday morning, transforming an open countryside area into what resembles a building site. The excavation was reported to have continued throughout the Bank Holiday, despite officials from Chichester District Council and Sussex Police visiting the site to address the situation. The residents expressed their concerns, with many taking to social media to voice their discontent.

By Sunday afternoon, an increasing presence of motorhomes and caravans was noted in one corner of the site, indicating a potential long-term occupation by the travellers. At least ten vehicles, including seven caravans and motorhomes, were observed. This situation has particularly caught the attention of local MP Andrew Griffith, who shared the concerns of residents. He stated, “I completely share the outrage and concern of residents about this illegal breach of all respected planning standards and behaviour,” asserting that the developers' actions undermine the planning laws designed to regulate land use.

In response to the emerging crisis, a female council planning officer placed a second notice on the site gate on Monday, highlighting a failure to comply with an earlier stop work order. Local authorities admitted to serving a Stop notice on Friday after the initial illegal activities were reported, but the work continued unabated.

Chichester District Council is pursuing further legal action, including seeking an injunction, following the breach of the stop notice. A spokesperson from the council emphasised, “We take these matters incredibly seriously,” reaffirming their commitment to enforce planning regulations that protect the countryside, particularly within the South Downs National Park.

As the situation develops, Sussex Police are coordinating with local authorities and the South Downs National Park Authority. They have stated that the matter is civil in nature and are involved in discussions regarding the appropriate steps forward.

The events have drawn attention not only from the local community but also from those monitoring planning and environmental issues across the region. As concerns over illegal developments persist, both residents and officials continue to navigate the complexities of land use and local governance.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.chichester.gov.uk/article/37649/Midhurst-fire-update-from-South-Downs-National-Park-Authority-25-April> - This article discusses the South Downs National Park Authority's involvement in addressing issues within the park, highlighting their role in planning and enforcement matters.
2. <https://www.chichester.gov.uk/gypsiesandtravellers> - This page provides information on how Chichester District Council handles unauthorised encampments, detailing the responsibilities of landowners and the council's enforcement actions.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv2gl015vd9o> - This report details how Sussex Police have utilized new powers to address unauthorised traveller encampments, including arrests and equipment seizures.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2004/sep/29/localgovernment> - This article covers a significant legal case where Gypsies won a human rights appeal, impacting planning permissions for traveller sites in Chichester, West Sussex.
5. <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Council-disappointed-by-decision-to-grant-traveller-camp-planning-permission/49952> - This article discusses a council's disappointment over a planning inspector's decision to grant permission for a traveller camp, despite the council's objections.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cl404v0zd6ko> - This report details Chichester District Council's plans to prevent travellers from staying in car parks by installing barriers, highlighting ongoing issues with unauthorised encampments.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14683831/Travellers-fleet-caravans-huge-field-South-Downs-National-Park.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data