# Travellers rapidly transform Burtonwood greenbelt land amid council probe



With its verdant fields and picturesque countryside, Burtonwood, a quiet village near Warrington, Cheshire, offers a serene escape from urban life. However, this tranquil setting faced unexpected turmoil as a group of travellers swiftly established a camp on six acres of greenbelt land, leading to profound distress among the local residents. The community's idyllic landscape was transformed considerably over a single Bank Holiday weekend, leaving many grappling with feelings of disbelief and anger.

On the evening of May 23, the stillness of the village was shattered. Residents of Tan House Lane and Farmer’s Lane reported a relentless procession of machinery illuminating the night. “They came in en masse, truck after truck after truck, all through the night as they got to work,” recounted one long-time local. The rapid transformation of the once-peaceful site into a chaotic construction zone – replete with bulldozers and heavy trucks – felt overwhelming. “The noise was unbearable – you couldn’t sleep,” another villager lamented.

The efficiency with which the site was converted into what now looks like a gravel parking lot, enclosed by a towering wooden fence, astonished many. Reportedly within just 72 hours, the land had undergone intensive alteration, with estimates suggesting that up to £50,000 was spent on the operation. This type of operation appears part of a broader trend, where travellers capitalize on holidays to initiate construction, knowing that local councils are often minimally staffed during these times. This brazen method has become a familiar narrative across England’s greenbelt landscapes.

The land, purchased for around £100,000 according to local speculation, was previously listed for £85,000 with intentions for agricultural use. Villagers expressed frustration not at the previous owners, who vacated the property two years prior, but rather at the new occupants for their flagrant disregard for local planning regulations. Planning laws designed to protect greenbelt areas, which safeguard the countryside and limit urban sprawl, have been overlooked in this instance. Despite the apparent legitimacy of the land purchase, many residents fear this aggressive development will secure the travellers' long-term presence in the village.

Warrington Borough Council is currently investigating what they are deeming a potential breach of planning control. They have issued an enforcement notice and stated that retrospective planning applications can be made by developers, which is causing additional anxiety within the community. “Similar council investigations have dragged on for months,” noted a resident. “And if the retrospective planning application is refused, the travellers can always appeal and drag it out even longer.” This drawn-out process leaves many in the village fearing they may be a permanent fixture in their previously quiet surroundings.

The emotional impact on the community has been profound. Many attended a local council surgery, visibly shaken and expressing their vexation. “We’ve worked so hard to get where we are… and then somebody just comes and annihilates everything we’ve strived for in life,” voiced one upset local.

Burtonwood is not alone in facing this issue. In recent years, various councils have dealt with the complexities of unauthorised encampments and the broader implications concerning council planning laws. Recent findings indicate a rise in similar developments across Cheshire, with planning approvals and refusals drawing sharp reactions from neighbouring residents. The juxtaposition of traveller developments and strict zoning regulations creates a community rift, as seen in other incidents across Warrington, where local properties have experienced similar vulnerabilities, leading to fears related to property values and societal impact.

Local sentiments about property devaluation have surfaced, with some residents estimating potential losses of £200,000 on their homes. With fears of a lingering stigma associated with living near traveller camps, the perception that property values could plummet adds to the community’s distress. Esteemed local councillor Stuart Mann has urged the council to take prompt action to mitigate the situation but has also acknowledged the procedural limitations surrounding such developments.

Moreover, the discussion around fairness in planning regulations, particularly concerning traveller communities, is becoming increasingly contentious. Recent proposals by policymakers may open the door for further developments on greenbelt land, raising concerns among communities that they will continue to contend with overlapping interests that may disregard locally imposed regulations.

As tensions continue to rise, and with the possibility of extended negotiations, it appears that Burtonwood residents must now navigate the complex interplay of property rights, community identity, and the pressing need for equitable planning practices. For many, the fallout from this recent upheaval may redefine their experience of rural living, turning what was once a haven into a source of anxiety and uncertainty.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14789067/Travellers-villagers-bulldozing-Green-Belt-field-caravan-camp.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.cheshire-live.co.uk/news/chester-cheshire-news/travellers-set-up-unauthorised-camp-11721070)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14789067/Travellers-villagers-bulldozing-Green-Belt-field-caravan-camp.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/18544555.plans-traveller-camp-agreed-despite-objection/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14789067/Travellers-villagers-bulldozing-Green-Belt-field-caravan-camp.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/20290125.travellers-set-caravan-camp-great-sankey-parish-field/), [[4]](https://www.warrington-worldwide.co.uk/2021/08/28/green-belt-caravan-site-plan-is-thrown-out/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14789067/Travellers-villagers-bulldozing-Green-Belt-field-caravan-camp.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/08/17/traveller-sites-on-green-belt-under-angela-rayner-shake-up/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14789067/Travellers-villagers-bulldozing-Green-Belt-field-caravan-camp.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/18544555.plans-traveller-camp-agreed-despite-objection/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14789067/Travellers-villagers-bulldozing-Green-Belt-field-caravan-camp.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/20290125.travellers-set-caravan-camp-great-sankey-parish-field/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14789067/Travellers-villagers-bulldozing-Green-Belt-field-caravan-camp.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/08/17/traveller-sites-on-green-belt-under-angela-rayner-shake-up/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14789067/Travellers-villagers-bulldozing-Green-Belt-field-caravan-camp.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/18544555.plans-traveller-camp-agreed-despite-objection/> - In Burtonwood, Cheshire, plans for a small traveller camp comprising two static and two touring caravans on former timber yard land were approved by Warrington Borough Council, despite objections from neighbours concerned about increased traffic and potential devaluation of property. The council stated that the development would not conflict with Green Belt purposes, as it would improve the land and reduce built development. The site is adjacent to another traveller site, and the developer argued that the proposal would not harm the Green Belt.
3. <https://www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/20290125.travellers-set-caravan-camp-great-sankey-parish-field/> - An unauthorised traveller encampment consisting of seven caravans and associated vehicles was established on Great Sankey Parish Field in Warrington. The group arrived on a Saturday, and the parish council reported the situation to the relevant authorities, who are addressing the issue. This incident adds to a series of unauthorised encampments in the area, including those on Dallam Playing Fields and Atlanta Gardens, prompting legal actions and concerns about public hygiene and environmental impact.
4. <https://www.warrington-worldwide.co.uk/2021/08/28/green-belt-caravan-site-plan-is-thrown-out/> - Warrington planning authorities rejected an application to develop a caravan site on a Green Belt land in Burtonwood, which was previously a colliery site. The council determined that the proposed development was inappropriate for the Green Belt and would cause significant harm to its openness and visual amenity. The site, now improved grassland enclosed in a paddock, contains three disused mine shafts and a wooden-framed stable building. The proposal included laying out caravan pitches and associated works, but the council found it unsuitable for residential use.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/08/17/traveller-sites-on-green-belt-under-angela-rayner-shake-up/> - Labour's plans, under Housing Secretary Angela Rayner, propose allowing travellers to establish permanent sites on Green Belt land where councils cannot guarantee a long-term supply of available land. The consultation suggests that councils may need to release Green Belt land to address unmet needs for traveller sites. Critics argue that this could lead to a two-tier planning system and allow unauthorised encampments, potentially undermining the protection of Green Belt areas and affecting community relations.
6. <https://www.cheshire-live.co.uk/news/chester-cheshire-news/travellers-set-up-unauthorised-camp-11721070> - A group of travellers set up an unauthorised camp off Shelley Road in Blacon, Cheshire. The camp consisted of seven caravans on green space, leading to concerns among local residents. The situation was reported to the relevant authorities, who are addressing the issue. This incident is part of a series of unauthorised encampments in the area, including those on Blacon playing fields and other locations, prompting legal actions and community concerns about environmental impact and public safety.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-61084458> - Michael Maloney, a member of the traveller community, lost his appeal over setting up an unauthorised caravan site on Green Belt land in Mobberley, Cheshire. Maloney had moved onto the land in 2020 and received a suspended prison sentence in 2021 for breaching an injunction to stop developing the site. The planning inspectorate dismissed his appeal against Cheshire East Council's decision to reject the development and enforcement action, citing significant visual harm to the countryside and health impacts due to proximity to Manchester Airport.