Dear Terry

DALE FARM G/T SITE - CRAYES HILL - WICKFORD

You will no doubt be aware by now that the Council has served the ‘28 day’ notice on the occupiers remaining at Dale Farm in breach of planning control. For clarification, the Council has in fact given the travellers nearly two months within which to leave the site in recognition of:

- the size of the site
- the difficulty with which it is known they will be able to find alternative authorised locations to move to, and
- the status of many of the homelessness applications and that some have still yet to engage with the Council’s homelessness service.

The reason for me contacting you now is that you have previously indicated that if there was anything that you could do to assist then I should get in touch.

I have been speaking privately with representatives of the families at Dale Farm who are showing a genuine desire to leave the site peacefully but say they have nowhere else to go. Part of their thinking is that if the Council could give them money, in return for the land they own at Dale Farm, they would leave and have the money to set up elsewhere. Quite clearly the Council cannot begin to negotiate unless we are confident that they would have somewhere lawful to relocate to. Officers of my Council are not aware of any such sites.

However, I thought that you and/or your officers may do, having such good relationships with councils across the country, maybe having offered land and/or being aware indirectly of previous grants offered by the DCLG or now directly by the HCA. I am aware anecdotally of sites constructed using Government grant that remain empty due to unduly restrictive conditions (e.g. Bristol and Norfolk). Is it possible that these could be offered for the travellers to relocate to, even if for a ‘temporary’ period such as two years? The traveller representatives have indicated that they will go anywhere; they simply want to avoid putting their children and elders through another ‘eviction’, as they see it.

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I recognise the position the travellers find themselves in and have never underestimated the impact that a forced removal would have on them. Now that the travellers have come to realise this, albeit very late in the day, I feel I have a duty to explore every opportunity to avoid a forced eviction. I would appreciate your thoughts on this and would therefore ask that you contact me as soon as possible to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Councillor Tony Ball
Leader of the Council