

REPORT OF THE CABINET

HAVERING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK : GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT – PROPOSED SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

The Council has a legal responsibility to plan for the housing needs of all residents, including the Gypsy and Traveller community. Havering's statutory Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy states that sites to meet the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers will be identified by the Council in a separate Development Plan Document (DPD).

Cabinet has considered a report on the preparation of this and now recommends approval for consultation of the Proposed Submission Document (the draft of the DPD which is submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination).

In summer 2011, the Council undertook public consultation on an Issues and Options report for the Gypsy and Traveller Sites DPD. The report included a needs assessment and set out proposed criteria for deciding whether pitches are suitable for use by gypsies and travellers. It emphasised that gypsy and traveller pitches were inappropriate development in the Green Belt and should only be permitted in very special circumstances under national planning policy. It noted however that many of the existing sites in Havering had not given rise to local planning objections and had been occupied by the same families for several years.

The report identified 74 existing pitches at the time of the needs survey in 2010 on which the report was based. 12 pitches had permanent planning permission; 48 had temporary permission or expired temporary permission and 14 pitches were unauthorised.

The Council's preferred option for meeting the housing needs of gypsies and travellers was for 14 additional authorised pitches to be provided so that, taken together with the number of pitches which had or previously had had permanent or temporary permission, the total number of authorised pitches would be sufficient to meet the needs of the gypsy and traveller households who were living in Havering at the time of the needs assessment. The report made clear however that not all of the 48 pitches with temporary permission or expired temporary permission would necessarily be granted permanent planning permission and that this would be the subject of careful assessment on a case by case basis. Nevertheless, this was considered the right number of pitches for which to plan.

The responses to the consultation were generally positive. In the light of this, officers had prepared the Proposed Submission Document (PSD) for Member approval. It would then be the subject of public consultation and submission to the Secretary of State for public examination.

The PSD proposed that 45 of the 48 existing pitches with temporary or expired temporary permission be considered acceptable, given the importance of meeting the needs of gypsies and travellers so far as possible while protecting the Green Belt.

The two pitches with temporary permission at Maylands (the former Brook Street service station adjoining the A12 Trunk Road) were the subject of significant objections from Brentwood Council and local residents. Cabinet noted that staff considered that, in the light of the planning issues associated with this site and the representations received, the Maylands pitches would be unsuitable for permanent permission. In addition, a single pitch with temporary permission at Prospect Road was considered unsuitable for permanent permission as a result of planning issues associated with the site, including its location within a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and it being visually intrusive within the Green Belt.

The PSD proposes that 17 further pitches be authorised – 14 to achieve the Council's preferred option for the number of pitches and 3 to compensate for not making the Maylands and Prospect Road sites permanent. The report to the Cabinet gave details of the sites to accommodate these pitches.

Subject to the Council's approval, the PSD will be published for a six week period of consultation and then be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. For those purposes, the Cabinet delegated:

- (a) Approval of the Final Sustainability Appraisal for the Gypsy and Traveller Sites DPD to the Cabinet Member for Community Empowerment.
- (b) To the Head of Regeneration, Policy and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community Empowerment, authority to make minor amendments to the wording which did not affect the substance of the Development Plan Document before formal submission, in the event that such changes are needed following consultation.

Cabinet accordingly RECOMMENDS:

- 1 That Council approves the Report on Consultation (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report to the Cabinet of 18 January 2012).**
- 2 That the Council approves for consultation the Proposed Submission Gypsy and Traveller Sites Development Plan Document (as set out in Appendix 2 of that Cabinet report).**