

Public Examination of the Site Allocations Local Plan

London Borough of Lewisham response on the Inspector's Question 6: National Policy in relation to gypsies and travellers

(Note the full text of the Inspector's questions are on the examination webpage and can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/policy/Documents/SA%20Inspector%27s%20queries.pdf>

Planning Policy – 16th November 2012

Council Response

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper responds to the Inspector's initial question number 6 relating to national policy concerning provision for Gypsies and Travellers. It provides an update on the actions taken by the Council since the self assessment of compatibility with national planning policy for travellers sites and background paper (Examination Library reference SALP1.15) was sent to the planning Inspectorate in May 2012. It then considers the advantages and disadvantages of first suspending the SALP Examination and secondly for preparing a specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan. It concludes that the Council's proposed way forward is through a revision of the Local Development Scheme, the preparation of a specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan and continuation of the current SALP Examination.

2. Site search update

2.1 In February 2012 Lewisham's Mayor directed officers to undertake a new site search for Gypsy and Travellers. Following Council's procurement process, consultants were invited to tender for a contract to undertake a comprehensive site search to identify a suitable site or sites to accommodate Travellers in the borough. At the beginning of September 2012 the Council appointed consultants, Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH), to carry out this work. The consultants were provided with a list of council owned property and have undertaken an extensive site search to identify any suitable privately owned sites. The search for suitable privately owned sites was carried out over the month of October, using LSH's databases and searches of property portals. The search looked for privately owned sites located within and immediately around the borough. The next steps of the study will be to analyse the list of sites, both private and Council owned, against a detailed set of criteria based on Government guidance and Core Strategy Policy 2 in order to identify a short list of potential sites. The criteria will be weighted in terms of the factors considered most important to the site selection criteria.

2.2 The consultant's report, including a short list of potential sites will be complete by 31 December 2012. This short list of potential sites will then be reported to the

Mayor of Lewisham to seek approval for public consultation. The earliest this report could be considered by the Mayor is March 2013.

3. Suspension of the SALP

- 3.1 In order to incorporate an identified site or sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation into the SALP, the Council estimate that the SALP examination would need to be suspended for at least two years, until mid-2015 (see Appendix 1: Suspended Site Allocations Timetable). This would allow time to engage with the settled and travelling community and adjoining boroughs; consultation on the 'options' or short list of sites accompanying sustainability appraisal and other documentation; and a second round of consultation on the publication plan, with the selected site(s). After this the selected site(s) would be brought into line with the submission SALP, ready for Examination. Following the Examination and the Inspector's report, adoption could take place at the beginning of 2016.
- 3.2 The Council consider a suspension of the SALP for two years to be too long as the allocations are identified and needed in order to direct development and safeguard sites across the borough, in line with the Core Strategy. The sites selected are available, deliverable, developable and enable the Core Strategy objectives, particularly housing provision, to be delivered. The National Planning Policy Framework states that it is 'highly desirable' that local planning authorities have up-to-date plans in place however it is likely that after a two-year suspension the site circumstances would change. The scale of changes could necessitate a full review of the submitted SALP, along with consultation on new sites and a new sustainability appraisal. The Council consider this would require the preparation of a new SALP, rather than a suspension of the submitted SALP. The preparation of a new SALP, incorporating new sites, will require background research, result in likely additional representations and will therefore take longer than the two-year suspension period.

4. Specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan and revised LDS

- 4.1 The preparation of a specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan, and revision of the Local Development Scheme could be ready for examination at the end of 2015 and ready for adoption in mid-2016. This is six months later than the expected examination and adoption of a suspended SALP and is as a result of allowing time for a revision of the LDS, regulation 18 notification and preparation of a sustainability scoping report (see Appendix 2: Specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan Timetable).
- 4.2 Preparation of a specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan would enable the submitted SALP to progress to Examination in January 2013, followed by possible adoption in Spring 2013, while also allowing time for engagement with the settled and travelling communities and formal consultation on appropriate sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. This approach would allow the timely allocation of development sites and safeguarded sites across the borough and would not necessitate a full review of the submitted SALP.

5. Council's proposed way forward

5.1 The Council propose to take the site search forward in a specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan, resulting in the following steps.

- a. **Continuation of the SALP Examination** in January 2013, which would enable the allocation of sites that are currently ready for development or safeguarding and assist in the delivery of the Core Strategy.
- b. **Revision of the Local Development Scheme** reflecting the proposed timetable (approved by the Mayor in January 2013 and by the Council in March 2013).
- c. **Preparation of a specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan**, involving engagement with adjoining boroughs and with the settled and travelling communities, and formal consultation through to submission in mid-2015. Examination leading to potential adoption in mid-2016.

Appendix 1: Suspended Site Allocations Local Plan Timetable																																																																	
	2012		2013												2014												2015												2016																										
Document key tasks	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D															
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KEY	
Commencement of Preparation	<
Mayor and Cabinet	MC
Full Council	FC
Consultation	C
Preparation	P
Submission of Local Plan (Reg 22)	S
Examination in Public	E
Inspectors Report	R
Adoption	A

APPENDIX 1

SUSPENDED SITE ALLOCATIONS TIMETABLE

Appendix 2: Specific Travellers' Site(s) Local Plan

	2012		2013												2014												2015												2016													
Document key tasks	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D		
Local Development Scheme revision	<		MC		FC																																															
Regulation 18 notification			MC		FC / C	C	C																																													
SA Scoping report				P	P	C	C																																													
Options Document							P	P	P		MC	FC	C	C	C																																					
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**APPENDIX 2
SPECIFIC TRAVELLERS' SITE(S) LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE**

