Local Plan: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD
Issues and Options

March 2016
What are we trying to achieve?

As a Council as a whole:

- Matching housing provision with legitimate local need, whilst encouraging aspiration, employment and contribution to the community.
- Ensuring housing quality provides real choice, contributing to people choosing to stay in the borough.
- Improving community resilience through impacting on factors that influence health and well-being.

Through Planning Policy and Development Management (relevant Core Strategy objectives & policies):

- Transformational change (S1, SP1).
- Successful places where people choose to live, work and stay (S1-S6, SP1-7, H1).
- Quality, healthy neighbourhoods and sustainable communities (S1, SP2, H1, H4).
- Provision of specialist housing where there is local need and it aligns with the spatial vision (H3).

Key Evidence Base Documents

- DCLG (2015) Planning Policy for Traveller Sites
- LB Newham (2016) Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment
- LB Newham, Havering, Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge (forthcoming) Outer North East London Strategic Housing Assessment

You told us:

- Gypsy-traveller needs are significant, should have specific consideration in the Local Plan, and require cross-boundary collaboration to be dealt with effectively.
- Neighbourliness is a key issue affecting the acceptability of a range of new development types.

We know that:

- No planning ‘need’ for new Gypsy-traveller pitches or travelling showpersons’ accommodation (transit or permanent) has been identified within the Borough, up to 2032.
- There is no evidence from in-migration, or the emerging studies of neighbouring borough’s, that suggests a requirement to meet any sub-regional planning need.
• Gypsy-travellers have specialist accommodation requirements such as particular infrastructure and communal spaces, which are best addressed through careful siting, design and ongoing management.
• Romany and Irish Travellers, a protected group under the Equalities Act 2010, live in the borough and require policies for accommodation that recognise and meet their cultural needs.
• As Gypsy and Travellers living within the borough do not currently travel, their accommodation need is factored into the mainstream housing need calculated by the Outer North East London Strategic Housing Assessment (2015).

We are concerned that:
  o Specialist housing need competes for sites that may otherwise be suitable for more flexible conventional housing, for which there is a greater need.
  o As with other types of residential development, new gypsy-traveller accommodation presents a (physical and social) infrastructure burden.
  o Housing quality (in relation to site conditions) can be a significant issue for gypsy-travellers, as with other groups in multiple-occupancy housing with intensively used shared facilities and infrastructure.

Possible Policy Approaches
There are three main areas in which additional planning policy might help to address the identified issues.

Providing parameters within which different needs can be balanced and reconciled
Firstly, there is opportunity to provide further detail on how specialist and mainstream housing needs could be effected, so that provision is made for both, without compromising overarching local strategic priorities. This could be ensured through a combination of a local needs test plus further sub-regional collaboration work.

Spatial and infrastructure strategy to manage impacts and best provide for needs
Secondly, there is the opportunity to add more detail to the spatial strategy set out within the Core Strategy that seeks to manage impacts, both positive and negative, through consideration of a site’s suitability for residential accommodation in terms of environmental quality and accessibility, infrastructure provision, and design sensitivity to local character.

Specifying benchmarks against which quality will be assessed
Another approach is to add to the range of benchmarks against which quality will be assessed, to reflect standards other than those accepted as applicable to conventional, single family housing, which have successfully been deployed across London. There are currently no benchmarks specifically
applicable to Gypsy-Traveller accommodation, however it may be appropriate to cross-reference the new Neighbourly Development policy (SP8, currently undergoing Independent Examination) tests, through for instance, a specification of management plans that reflect them.

**Options**

1. **Do nothing more than what we do already; OR**

   Add to the existing Local Plan Core Strategy and Local Plan Detailed Sites and Policies DPD policies by introducing further housing policy that:

2. **Provides greater detail concerning the reconciliation of needs for specialist gypsy-traveller accommodation, whereby:**
   A needs test is required, comprising robust evidence produced through agreed methodologies, taking the Council’s own independently commissioned Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment as a starting point.

3. **Provides a clearer spatial strategy in accordance with Core Strategy spatial strategies, that seeks to manage (positive and negative) impacts and promote accessibility whereby:**
   a. Sites must be assessed as suitable for residential accommodation in terms of environmental quality and accessibility, and the proposals make provision for infrastructure needs.
   b. Proposals should be sensitive to local character and otherwise in accordance with the local spatial vision.

4. **Provides further detail concerning the application of policy H1 and SP2’s housing quality objectives to gypsy-traveller accommodation, whereby:**
   a. Proposals must meet neighbourliness tests as per policy SP8.
   b. Proposals should demonstrate design quality as per other SP policies notably SP3 and SP2, including designing in appropriate specialist infrastructure provision contributing to housing quality.
   c. Proposals should be accompanied by an appropriately detailed and resourced management plan that confirms that site management practices will ensure development that is ‘neighbourly’.
**Prompt Questions**

- Does the options-scoping reflect the issues we are seeking to address?
- Are there other related issues we should be considering?
- Are options otherwise appropriate?
- Which options should be carried through into a policy?