

Dear Boris

I am a Traveller living in London Borough of Hackney

I have heard about your London Plan. I think it is very good that you are trying to get more pitches built. I am living in a house with my 5 kids and feel very isolated from my family. I moved into a house 6 years ago after all my life as I was living on the side of the road, we were getting moved on so much and it was affecting the health and education of my children. When I first moved into a house I struggled to cope, I was very depressed as I was not used to being closed in. I had never lived in a house before; I was used to living outside and around all my family. My kids struggled, even though a caravan is a lot smaller they felt closed in. They had no choice but to sit in as going outside was dangerous. On a site or camp we can leave our young children out and run around as everyone is keeping an eye on them, It has taken a long time to let me kids go out alone.

It's not our culture to live in a house and my children are growing like settled children, they hardly know anything about our culture and way of life. I take them to family who live on sites as much as I can but it is not the same. I would like my own pitch.

558 will not be enough for London as there are so many families on the waiting lists, squatting and living in houses as they have no choice.

19 pitches are going to be built in Hackney and I know this will not be enough. There are so many of my relatives on the waiting lists and in houses suffering with depression as they are not happy in houses.

I hope you will apply pressure to Hackney council to make them build these pitches, we need them desperately.

I was told you plan on giving these pitches to families already on sites and I hope you will re consider. Housed Travellers need to be included in your plan; so many are feeling very isolated and struggling to cope. It's very important our children grow and understand their culture and the only way they will be able to this is by us living in a site with other Travellers.

Thank you for reading my letter,

15/12/2009

Dear Boris

I am an Irish Traveller living in Haringey. I am 17 years old.

I have heard about your London Plan and that you are asking councils to build more pitches. As well, I have heard that when the pitches are built they should go first to Travellers living in council sites.

I am writing to say what I think about all this in Section 3.9 of the Plan

I think it is very good that you are trying to get more pitches but there are just a few things I would you to consider when making your final decision.

I recently got married and am currently living on the side of the road as my husband has never lived in a house and feels he will never cope. He has type1 diabetes and needs constant care. His family live on a site but have no room for us and my family live in a house and have no room for us. I recently found out I was pregnant and am scared about coping without the support from my family.

It's very difficult living on the road side; we have no water, toilets, and showers. We are abused daily but settled people as they don't understand we have nowhere else to go.

I need a site so I can get registered at doctors, Hospitals etc but more importantly so I can be around people to support me.

I understand you have a lot to deal with but I hope you will see this a priority and ensure all council build these pitches, we really need them. It is not fair we are being forced to live in houses.

Thank you

## LETTER FROM TOWER HAMLETS TRAVELLER

Dear Boris Johnson,

I am writing about your London Plan and to tell you what I think of the section 3.9 on Gypsies and Travellers. I live on a site in Tower Hamlets and I have been an activist for the last 25 years. I have lived in London for 33 years, 25 of these years I have lived on Eleanor Street site in Tower Hamlets. Before this I travelled with my family all around London and other parts of England. I moved on to the site to get education for my children and they all stayed in school until they were 17.

We are very pleased that you are telling the Councils to build new pitches but we feel that 538 across London will not be enough. It is the Travellers culture to have big families; there can be 7-10 children on each pitch so this is only the tip of the iceberg.

I see that Tower Hamlets has to build 28 new pitches. This will only cover the site alone for the next 5 years and won't be enough for any Travellers who are in houses. I have children who were reared on the site but have had to move into houses due to no vacant pitches and a waiting list of 10 years. They spend most of their time back on the site because they can't stick being in the houses. Travellers feel very insecure living in houses and they get depressed. We worry about them because they might get mental health problems and we worry that the children will lose their cultural roots. The younger generation of Travellers growing up in houses are stuck in limbo, they don't know where they belong. They are reared in one world and have to step out into a different world.

We feel that the younger generation are more aware of the social problems in our society. If there were more sites built for the younger generation of Travellers, I believe that they would be more active members of our communities because they are better educated, they are more integrated, they are more articulate and could do a lot for their own community and the wider community. I believe that both integration and strong cultural identity for all ethnic minorities is the way forward for London's multi-cultural communities.

I see that in the London plan you say that priority should be given to Travellers who are already living on sites. I can't agree to this because although it will go in favour for my children who are on the site with me but will go against my children who are in houses and this will divide my family's opinions and will cause conflict in my family and the wider Traveller community. This is another reason why we need more sites.

I would be willing to come and speak and tell you more about why we need more sites at the examination in public.

Yours sincerely

## **LETTER FROM ENFIELD TRAVELLER**

17<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Dear Boris

### **RE London Plan Replacement Section 3.9**

I am a Traveller living in a house I rent, in London.

I have heard about your London Plan and that you are asking councils to build more pitches. As well, I have heard that when the pitches are built they should go first to Travellers living in council sites.

I think it is very good that you are trying to get more pitches built. But 538 is not enough. Travellers have big families. In Enfield the Council closed the site about 10 years ago and didn't build any new pitches and there are many Traveller families round here who are desperate to live on a site.

I need a site because I was all my life Travelling. All my family were all their life travelling we were brought up on the road. I have been in a house for the past 6 or 7 years. Houses don't agree with us it affects our health. We have always been used to being out in the open, we are not used to being in the houses. It gives us a lot of pressure and stress being in a house because we are just not used to it. We would prefer to get a site and to rear our children up in our own way of life.

I have 6 sons and 7 daughters all living in the Enfield and nearby. They all want to be living on sites. The 5 pitches that Enfield are meant to build would not even be enough for my own family and there are more than 20 more families living nearby.

When young Travellers in London get married they are mostly made to live in a house as there is no pitch for them to go to. This really affects them in a lot of ways. Travellers are used to visiting each other all the time. Houses makes people very isolated and causes people to get depressed especially the women because they are left at home with children without their families around them. And the children suffer too because they don't know how they are. We urgently need new sites for our community. 538 across London will not be enough because Travelling people have large growing families.

We see that you say that families already on sites should be given the new pitches before families in houses. We don't think this is fair. A lot of families are in houses because they have no choice. They would love to be on sites but haven't been able to get a pitch. We think that everyone whether they are on sites or in houses should have the same chance of getting a pitch

I would like to thank you for thinking about our need for new sites. It would make us very happy if we could get onto a site. It would be like a new life to us and our families.

Yours sincerely

**17th December 2009**

**Dear Mayor Boris Johnson**

**London Plan new Pitches Section 3,9**

**I writing to you about the plans you have come up with for new pitches in London. This is good for us to hear but we only hope it will happen because it really needs to.**

**I am lucky I am an English Romany Gypsy and I have a pitch. Our council site was hard fought for 30 years ago and Travellers are still having to fight hard for sites even today. Even on our site there are 20 or more youngsters and they will all need pitches over the next years and too there are families in houses who can't get on with being in houses. So 17 in Newham is not nearly enough.**

**Why are Travellers forced into houses? It's either take it or get out of the area. But it's no good for Travellers. It's like putting a goldfish in a dog kennel. If anyone had a lick of sense they would see that is something that will just cause trouble for Travellers and for the authorities.**

**I don't understand why our way of life is not respected. Is there any other group of people in the country whose way of life is not respected? Its right to show respect for different cultures and Travellers surely are part of that too.**

**Can the leopard changes its spots? Of course not and nor can we. We are Gypsy Travellers and we are proud of it. But the way it's going in 50 years we will be extinct.**

**Travellers are part of London's history. You as the Mayor are proud of its history. My niece Tracie wrote a leaflet about the History of London's Travellers. I am sending it with this letter. I hope you will be interested to read it and to see how we are Londoners too.**

**I was brought up with prejudice all around me. It is good that there are going to be more pitches but please Mr Johnson can you try to make more and make the councils deal with their responsibilities.**

**You are welcome to come to my pitch anytime to see how we live and hear from us yourself.**