



Response to the consultation document  
**A new plan for London**  
Proposals for the Mayor's London Plan  
April 2009

**London Gypsy and Traveller Unit**  
June 2009

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In relation to Gypsies and Travellers, the Proposals for the London Plan say:

“112 A recent study produced by the London boroughs has demonstrated that over the next 10 years there will be an approximate doubling in the need for new gypsy and traveller sites across London. The Mayor intends to work with Boroughs to address this and ensure London can meet its statutory requirements to provide appropriate sites for the gypsy and traveller community.

In reviewing the London Plan, the Mayor proposes to: .....

- provide strategic guidance and targets for the provision of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in London;”

The London Gypsy and Traveller Unit particularly welcomes this proposal for strategic guidance, the continued use of the inclusive needs figure<sup>1</sup> and the Mayor's intention to ensure that appropriate pitches are provided. In addition, the Plan should

1. give clear leadership to all stakeholders in working towards the early development of pitches, acknowledging that the need for pitches is “clear and immediate”.
2. call upon boroughs to set up adequate waiting lists as one method of updating the GTANA.
3. require that the Boroughs with low provision, or where lower density development is most appropriate, play their full part in answering the need for pitches.
4. set targets for the development of both permanent and temporary pitches within the Olympic Legacy site. Also, remind boroughs that Gypsy and Travellers sites should count as social housing provision in relation to s106 agreements.
5. continue to adopt the inclusive pan-London target incorporating the needs of gypsies and travellers whether housed or in caravans.
6. use a pan-London target that includes transit pitches, show-peoples yards; discounts conjectural schemes; and avoids untenable migration assumptions.
7. require boroughs to participate in pan-London monitoring that is sufficiently rigorous to track complex changes in the provision of pitches against the targets set.

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**The London Gypsy and Traveller Unit** is both a community development organisation and a regional strategic organisation. It seeks to support Travellers and Gypsies living in London, to have greater control over their lives; to influence decisions affecting their lives; to improve their quality of life and opportunities available to them; and to challenge the discrimination they routinely experience. It uses this detailed local and regional experience to contribute to national consultation and debate, and has done so over the past 20 years. It works directly with Gypsies and Travellers living on official sites, unauthorised sites and in housing.

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<sup>1</sup> In the draft of the London Housing Strategy

**1 give clear leadership to all stakeholders in working towards the early development of pitches, acknowledging that the need for pitches is “clear and immediate”**

Such policy leadership is the necessary framework for timely implementation. It will help to give a climate of certainty to the planning and negotiations of boroughs, housing associations, the HCA and others.

The amount of land needed to answer the pitch needs of London’s Gypsies and Travellers is not large, perhaps 20 ha, but it is needed now. Those Boroughs and RSLs that are prepared to move to implementation need a positive policy framework set by the GLA in order to lessen the barriers to provision (Brown and Niner. 2009). This is supported time and again, in relation to clear and immediate need, in Government policy statements.

The GTAA reveals a need that is clear and immediate: isolation for housed Gypsies and Travellers, ruined lives for those being moved on. On top of this:

- The number of authorised pitches in London has been reduced over the last decade significantly more than other dwelling types. The London Gypsy and Traveller Forum estimate that 80 pitches [12%] have been closed since 1994 (LGTF 2004). This loss of dwelling stock compares with other types (ONS 2008 tables 6.1-2) as follows:

Gypsy and Traveller Pitches	-12%
Social housing [bricks and mortar]:	-5%
Owner Occupied housing:	+11%
Private rented:	+13%

- Unlike these other types of accommodation, no authorised Gypsy and Travellers sites have been developed since 1997 (DCLG 2008b) apart from the Olympic site and Cross-rail relocations.
- Over recent years there has been successful enforcement action against unauthorised sites (now none identified in 23 boroughs) driving Gypsies and Travellers unwillingly into housing.

Brown and Niner (2009) estimate that “it will take almost 20 years to meet the first five year pitch requirements if the rate of progress achieved .... since 2006 is maintained and not increased.” The only new public site proposed recently (for 5 pitches) for London has taken some 5 years to planning permission and building plans have now been put on hold indefinitely by the Borough.

However, the Government consistently advises that boroughs should act quickly where there is clear and immediate need (ODPM 2006 para 43). The Housing and Communities Agency is now reinforcing this guidance:

“Some local authorities are waiting for the Regional Spatial Strategy pitch allocations before considering making more site provision – in many cases this is several years away. Where there is clear, unmet need .. local authorities should identify land .. and, where appropriate, apply for .. Grant to address those needs as soon as possible.” (HCA 2009)

## 2 call upon boroughs to set up adequate waiting lists as one method of updating the GTANA

Boroughs are required to update the GTANA as a part of the Housing Needs Assessments. Properly managed and advertised waiting lists for pitches should be a crucial part of this exercise.

At present Gypsies and Travellers cannot register their needs in many boroughs nor is it clear if they can register on waiting lists of more than one borough. The differences between the boroughs' schemes are a real barrier to effective access and measurement of need. In some Boroughs, it appears that the waiting lists that do exist are only made known to existing caravan dwellers with little or no attempt at informing the housed travellers that form the majority of London's Gypsy and Traveller population.

The design and management of these schemes can draw on the good practice described by the CRE (2006:pp107-9) and the DCLG (ODPM 2002).

The present situation is confusing and points up informal processes operating in many boroughs<sup>2</sup>:

Number of boroughs	Allocations scheme status
9	no council pitch <sup>3</sup> provision.
3	never had a waiting list or say they do not need one
7	no clear procedures or access, effectively run by the site residents
4	no clear procedures or access, council run
4	formal lists, not currently under revision/consultation
4	formal lists currently under revision/consultation
1	no response

The development of pitches across London will require the parallel development of allocation schemes and waiting lists with criteria that do not prevent gypsies and travellers from registering their need. All allocations to new sites should be covered by formal, transparent schemes with a reasonable timetable for extending the policies to existing sites (CRE 2006:p118).

This situation, and its difference from housing waiting lists, is clearly an equality issue.

<sup>2</sup> Telephone survey conducted by LGTU in March 2009:

<sup>3</sup> 6 recognised by GTAA as having no pitches PLUS Harrow (now 0), Lewisham (now 0) and Havering (all private).

**3 require that the Boroughs with low provision, or where lower density development is most appropriate, play their full part in answering the need for pitches.**

When setting targets for the boroughs, the following points should be recognised

Boroughs with low provision should be required to contribute significantly to pitch provision. Gypsies and Travellers report that their current distribution is strongly influenced by Borough practices of eviction and paying residents ('agreeing terms') to surrender their licences. There have traditionally been very strong communities in some boroughs where there is now not a single pitch. The map in fig 1 gives the current pitch distribution.

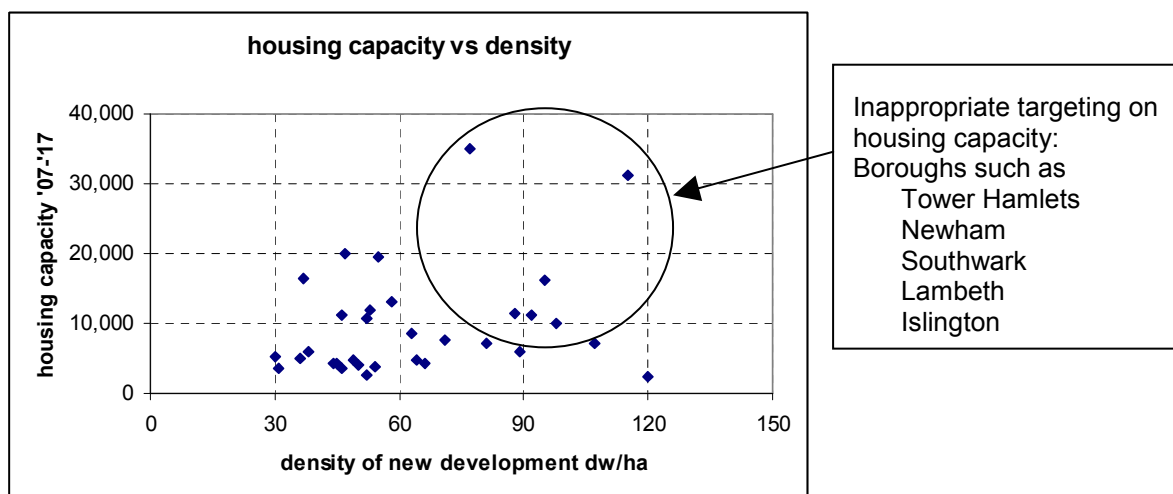
The London Gypsy and Traveller Forum (2004) and LGTU have recorded the following closures:

Pitch closures	5	Lewisham	2009
	3	Camden	2004
	12	Haringey	2004
	10	Hillingdon	2004
	11	Lewisham	2003
	20	Harrow	2001
	15	Enfield	1999
	8	Hackney	1998
	<b>85</b>	<b>Total</b>	

Gypsy and Traveller sites are low density developments. As such they should be developed in boroughs where lower densities are the norm in new schemes and where overall existing population densities are lower. The table (GLA 2005, annex 8. National Statistics) below gives the average densities for new residential developments and overall population densities for each borough:

	new dev. dw/ha	All pop pple/ha		new dev. dw/ha	All pop pple/ha
Bromley	30	20	Barnet	55	36
Bexley	31	36	Brent	58	61
Havering	36	20	Ealing	63	54
Redbridge	37	42	Hammersmith & Fulham	64	100
Waltham Forest	38	56	Hounslow	66	<b>38</b>
Hillingdon	44	21	Wandsworth	71	76
Enfield	45	34	Newham	77	67
Croydon	46	38	Haringey	81	73
Sutton	46	41	Lambeth	88	99
Greenwich	47	45	Camden	89	91
Kingston upon Thames	49	40	Islington	92	118
Harrow	50	41	Southwark	95	85
Lewisham	52	71	Hackney	98	106
Richmond u Thames	52	30	Westminster	107	84
Barking and Dagenham	53	45	Tower Hamlets	115	99
Merton	54	50	Kensington and Chelsea	120	131

In particular, it appears to be inappropriate for borough *pitch* targets to be guided by borough *housing* targets where the latter are achieved mainly through high density development. The diagram below illustrates this



**4 set targets for the development of both permanent and temporary pitches within the Olympic Legacy site. Also, remind boroughs that Gypsy and Travellers sites should count as social housing provision in relation to s106 agreements.**

The Olympic legacy site is a major opportunity for proper development of Gypsy and Traveller Sites. This is especially appropriate in that sites were closed to make way for the development of the Olympics.

The planning and development of a Gypsy and Traveller site is made significantly more protracted and difficult when it is close to pre-existing owner-occupied housing. This significant barrier can be overcome by developing sites before or alongside the surrounding housing and by their proper design within the overall scheme. The Olympic Legacy site will host exactly the large scale developments on a blank canvass that allow the sustainable and inclusive development of Gypsy and Traveller sites to be mainstream from the start.

This is so in the medium term (up to 25 years), using idle land for temporary sites, and in the long term for permanent sites that are fully integrated in the final development scheme.

Gypsies and Travellers themselves favour being considered for inclusion in major developments.<sup>4</sup>

The automatic consideration of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation for inclusion in large developments is an example of good practice in mainstreaming.

DCLG (2008a para 3.7) advises: "As one way of helping to address shortages of site provision local authorities and registered social landlords can consider the feasibility and scope for providing a site for Gypsies and Travellers within their negotiations to provide affordable housing as part of significant new build developments."

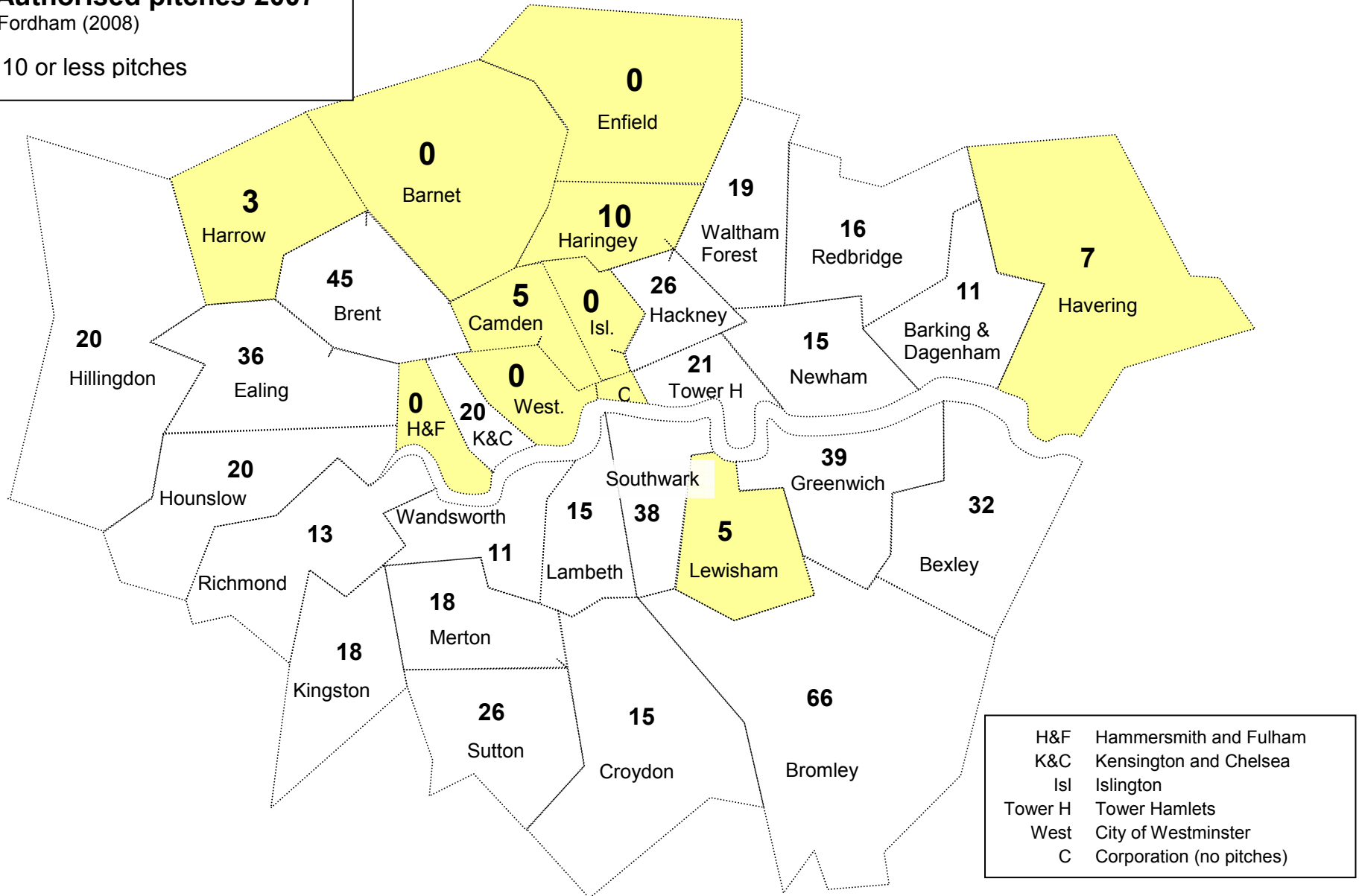
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<sup>4</sup> For example, discussion at the London Gypsy and Traveller Forum (22/1/09).

**Fig 1. Authorised pitches 2007**

Fordham (2008)

10 or less pitches



## **5 continue to adopt the inclusive pan-London target incorporating the needs of gypsies and travellers whether housed or in caravans.**

The GTAA gives a 'maximum' and 'minimum' figure for the need for pitches. The use of the maximum as the inclusive measure for overall London need in the Housing Strategy is welcome. This support should be continued and strengthened in the London Plan. The 'minimum' is an incomplete figure that excludes the needs of those in housing: 84% of London's identified Gypsies and Travellers.

The needs of housed Gypsies and Travellers are well documented and researched. The LGTU, through the advice and support that it has offered them since 1998, can confirm the alienation and deprivation that is suffered by many housed Gypsies and Travellers. A recent review by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (Cemlyn C et al 2009) reported the same.

The problems for housed Gypsies and Travellers are often now exacerbated by the increasing problems for private tenants generally. Rents are always unaffordable for low income households; the limited security, typically only six months at a time, makes secure family life extremely difficult; a significant proportion of the accommodation is not of decent standard; and there are high levels of overcrowding.

Government guidance recognises that this aversion to bricks and mortar is a source of real need for pitches (DCLG 2007a). This is supported by UK and European case law (Fordham 2008 p94, CRE 2006 para 1.5) which requires that this aversion is taken into account when assessing accommodation needs.

It will never be simple to prove psychological aversion, but the London GTAA has used a more stringent test [see the box below] than other assessments.

The method finds that 16.4% of housed gypsy and traveller families are in need of a pitch.

### ***London GTNAA methodology***

#### ***Identification of households needing a pitch due to psychological aversion***

Households considered to need a pitch must:

State a negative psychological effect of living in bricks and mortar accommodation  
AND State they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their current home

Households **not** considered to need a pitch:

State they only live in a house due to a lack of available pitches AND  
do not additionally mention negative psychological effects

AND / OR are in overcrowded or unsuitable bricks and mortar accommodation

AND / OR state they would ideally like to live on a site

AND / OR are satisfied, very satisfied, or are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their home

The following paragraph indicate the lengths the consultants went to be conservative in this regard.

"12.24 It is worth stating that a further 762 families were identified as having a psychological aversion to housing but did not say they were dissatisfied with their current accommodation. Given that 'proven' psychological aversion implies a high level of confidence that the aversion is detrimental to their living standards, these participants were not therefore counted as having a need for a pitch.

12.25 ..... A lack of suitable alternative accommodation may be one reason why many participants did not say they were dissatisfied with their current home yet elsewhere demonstrated a psychological aversion to living in a house." (Fordham 2008)



**6 use a pan-London target that includes transit pitches, show-peoples yards; discounts conjectural schemes; and avoids untenable migration assumptions.**

The GLA should use figures, for London need by 2012, of

718	Residential pitches
40	Transit pitches
80	Show-people's yards

The table below outlines the full calculation for the various figures used.

Need for pitches and yards: London	inclusive figures "Maximum"		
	total	2007-12	2012-17
	2007-17		
Fordham headline total	703	554	149
rounding adjustment	8	2	6
Bexley	57	46	11
<b>London Hsg Strategy headline</b>	<b>768</b>	602	166
① Add offset due to conjectural schemes	27	27	
Pitches per GTAA assumptions	795	629	166
② Zero net migration assumption	120	89	31
<b>Total residential pitches</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>718</b>	197
transit pitches	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	
<b>Total pitches</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>758</b>	197
<b>YARDS</b>			
Show-people's yards per GTAA assumptions	73	48	25
② Zero net migration assumption	60	32	28
<b>Total yards</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>80</b>	53

① ② These issues are taken up below

**Conjectural schemes**

The GLA should ensure that the conjectural schemes for 27 pitches in Havering, Kingston and Waltham Forest (less Lewisham) are on track to take place before 2012 **or** propose an increase of 27 in London's need for pitches.

The London target reported in the GTAA has been reduced because 4 boroughs reported in 2007 that they had plans for 27 net new pitches over the next five years (Fordham 2008 (step 6), para 12.13, pp130, 137, 139, 147). If any of these schemes does not go ahead, the London needs figure has to be re-adjusted: The GTAA says of the figures for Waltham Forest "The council-owned site at Waltham Forest was due to be expanded in 2007..... If the expansion does not take place, the need figures would consequently rise by the same amount" (Fordham 2008 p147).

pitches	Future development plans reported in the GTAA	Additional pitch [max] requirement 2007-2017	
		headlined in the GTAA	based on 2007 provision
Havering	16	23	39
Kingston	9	16	25
Waltham Forest	5	8	13
Lewisham	-3	19	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>		

The first three boroughs appear to be ignorant of, or disagree with, their reported development plans [LGTU telephone survey]. It seems unlikely that any will proceed. The uncertainty surrounding these developments is an example of the need for a robust monitoring system.

### **No out-migration**

The GLA should challenge the implausible assumption that Gypsies and Travellers will go to authorised sites outside London that no-one is building.

The assumption is incompatible with neighbouring regions, who are not proposing pitches or yards for Londoners. Self sufficiency in pitches and yards should be planned.

The figures for assumed net out-migration in the GTAA are (Fordham 2008 pp98-156):

	2007-17	2007-12	2012-17
Gypsies and Travellers	120	89	31
Travelling Show-people	60	32	28

The GTAA assumes that all Gypsies and Travellers that say they wish to leave London will be able to although it accepts that “This does assume that suitable accommodation is available outside London” (Fordham 2008 para 12.11).

But pitches will not be developed for these people in neighbouring regions. The East of England Regional Plan target for pitches in that region assumes that there will be no net migration. (GoEast 2008 para 2.29)

In relation to Show-peoples yards, Ray Smith of the Showmen's Guild reports: “There are also overcrowded yards just outside London, for instance in Thurrock to the East and Hoddesdon to the north, where London Showpeople were moved out of their homes over the years and forced outside the GLA boundary.” (email)

**7 require boroughs to participate in pan-London monitoring that is sufficiently rigorous to track complex changes in the provision of pitches against the targets set.**

Allocating targets in a strategy as contested as Gypsy and Traveller accommodation clearly has little meaning without adequate monitoring. It seems likely that existing data sources will be inadequate. Our main concerns are

- non-reporting of voids as sites are run down
- under-occupation of pitches
- sites being given planning permission but not being developed
- expiry of temporary permissions
- generally, the lack of robust information on private sites

Figures for the number of pitches, even existing authorised ones, are notoriously unreliable (Brown & Niner 2009 p62). The new Core Output Indicator H4 *Net additional Gypsy and Travellers pitches* will help, but it looks to the caravan count and the GTAA for its data (DCLG 2008c). The Caravan Count is flawed (ODPM 2003); the GTAA is not annual and its base data on authorised pitches contains some errors; and they currently disagree significantly in the case of 5 boroughs, which are likely to have some private sites.

It is also surprisingly difficult to monitor new developments. As an example of this lack of transparency LGTU understands that the 07/08 HCA grant of £328,500 to Lewisham for developing the former Watergate School site is the only one made during 06-09 for site development in London (DCLG undated). But it has not been possible to obtain any information on the progress of this development. The way in which the proposals for 27 pitches, now contested, have been built into policy is another example of opacity.

Temporary permissions are a particular concern. The CLG Planning Applications Statistics, which now report separately on Gypsy and Traveller sites, do not give the duration of the permission. A recent approval for some 20 pitches in Bromley is for 5 years only.

Again, keeping track of the pitches that are being lost through closure, refurbishment or poor management requires perseverance.

The GLA has joint responsibility with the boroughs for the new indicator. It should lead on the development of a pan-London system for clarifying current authorised pitch provision (the policy base-line) and monitoring changes.

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