

CABINET

23 May 2023

Title: LBBD Draft Local Plan: Provision of Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Barking and Dagenham	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All wards	Key Decision: Yes
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Summary	
<p>Meeting the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community forms part of LBBD's Inclusive Growth strategy and is fundamental to the soundness of our draft Local Plan, due for Public Examination later this year. At the Preliminary Hearings last July the Planning Inspectors (PINs) raised Gypsy and Traveller provision as a major risk for the Council to address before the Plan can proceed to the main Examination stage.</p> <p>An independent assessment¹ for our Local Plan evidence base identifies a need for 25 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches up to 2037. In order to meet the identified need and the requirements set out in national planning policy, sites at Choats Road, Collier Row Road and the extension of the existing traveller site at Eastbrookend Country Park were proposed as potential traveller sites. This went through formal consultation during the Regulation 19 (2) stage of the draft Local Plan approved by Cabinet² in October 2020.</p> <p>Following the consultation stage, the sites at Choats Road and Collier Row Road were subsequently withdrawn by the landowners, leaving the planned expansion of the existing site, delivering 12 of the 25 pitches required, as the only site currently allocated in the submitted draft Local Plan. It is acknowledged that this site comes with many issues and objections such as its location in the Green Belt.</p> <p>Given the known difficulties with expanding the existing site, significant work has been undertaken since the Preliminary Hearings to identify and assess 60 other alternative sites in both Council and 3rd party ownership, including a formal "Call for Sites" process plus our own enquiries. Sites have to meet clear national planning tests and also be shown to be deliverable, supported by documented landowner agreements.</p>	

¹ <https://yourcall.befirst.london/13753/widgets/39553/documents/21248>

² <https://modgov.lbbd.gov.uk/Internet/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=82751>

This process has not revealed any new sites which would meet the key planning tests for allocation as a traveller site. The expansion of the existing traveller site at Eastbrookend Country park, previously approved by Cabinet and already in the submitted draft Local Plan, is therefore currently the only deliverable option. On this basis a shortfall of 13 pitches remains. Members are therefore provided with details on 47 Thames Road which was the site deemed closest to meeting the tests for allocation as a traveller site. At present this site is deemed not to be available due to a number of financial and community use implications that would arise should it be reallocated as a traveller site.

Suitable sites have to be allocated in the Local Plan to meet the identified need, both for the immediate 5-year need plus a more general area allocation for the remainder of the plan period. As the review described above has not identified a sufficient number of pitches, it is proposed that Castle Green is identified as a broad area where it may be possible to meet the shortfall in the future. Provision in this area would need to come forward as part of wider, strategic proposals which are, as yet, not defined. Only limited certainty on this being a deliverable option can therefore be presented in the Local Plan.

If the identified need cannot be met, Cabinet should note the considerable risks associated with the local plan being delayed or even found unsound. Prolonged absence of an effective Local Plan will hinder:

- Delivery of ambitious regeneration in the Borough, including 44,051 new homes and 20,000 jobs
- New high quality affordable homes that reflect local needs
- Certainty for future investment plans and Government grants in the Borough
- Delivery of the transformation areas
- New supporting infrastructure such as new schools and healthcare

This is now the final issue which is preventing the Plan from moving to the next stage of the examination. The Planning Inspectors have asked the Council to provide a clear endorsement by local members of the proposed approach to meeting the identified need for traveller pitches. Cabinet is therefore asked to consider the proposed approach set out in this report and the key issues and risks that are presented. Following agreement, it will then be recommended to the Planning Inspectors and will support the Plan to the next stage of the examination.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Note that of the three sites previously approved for allocation as Gypsy and Traveller Provision in the draft Local Plan, two have been withdrawn by the landowners and, therefore, the extension of the existing site at Eastbrookend Country Park represented the only site available to contribute to the identified need within the first five years of the Local Plan period;
- (ii) Consider the assessment of all potential sites identified based on their suitability for traveller pitches set out in section 2 and Appendix A of the report and confirm that 47 Thames Road would not be available due to the identified financial and social implications and its future inclusion in the Thames Road Transformation Zone;

- (iii) Note that in view of 47 Thames Road being deemed unavailable and in the absence of any further sites being deemed suitable, a shortfall of 13 pitches remained within the Local Plan period which presented a risk to the soundness of the Council's Local Plan; and
- (iv) Commits to the provision for a state-of-the-art modern Gypsy and Traveller site within the strategic proposals for the Castle Green Transformation Area with the aim being to meet the Borough's future requirements for its Gypsy and Traveller community.

Reason(s)

Being able to meet the identified need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches is a requirement of national planning policy. Failure to meet this identified need in full may mean the plan is unable to move to the next stage of examination, which would significantly impact on the Council's wider regeneration objectives including the delivery of over 44,000 new homes and 20,000 new jobs. However, as it has not been possible to identify suitable sites beyond the initial 5-year period, a longer-term approach has been proposed.

It is important to note that Romany Gypsies and Scottish and Irish Travellers are recognised ethnic groups and all the duties on public bodies under the Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998 and relevant case law apply. Should the Council not put in place adequate service provision for Gypsy and Travellers, there is a risk of failing to provide for all parts of the community and not comply with the Equality Act 2010.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. The draft Barking and Dagenham Local Plan seeks to deliver the Council's key objectives for unlocking regeneration in the Borough, delivering good quality affordable homes, improving open green spaces and mitigating the impacts of climate change. In total, the Plan seeks to unlock over 44,000 new homes and 20,000 jobs along with supporting infrastructure such as new schools and health facilities.
- 1.2. The draft Local Plan is fundamental to ensuring that the Council can shape the location and scale of new housing developments in the Borough and ensure that it reflects local circumstances. The current Barking and Dagenham Core Strategy was adopted in July 2010 and is now significantly out-of-date, meaning that it is less effective at ensuring new developments align with local priorities and is often overlooked by Planning Inspectors at appeal. Although the Council can rely on the more recently adopted London Plan 2021, this looks at the priorities of the London region as a whole and does not accurately reflect the aims and objectives of Barking and Dagenham at a local level. It is of critical importance that a new Local Plan is adopted as soon as possible in order to ensure local Council priorities are reflected in decision-making on the substantial amount of new development that is coming forward in the Borough.
- 1.3. As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan a robust, independent Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment was completed in 2020. This concluded that the Borough has an identified need to provide 25 additional traveller pitches up to 2037. It was intended that this need could be met in full through sites at Choats Road,

Collier Row Road and, as a contingency as Council owned land, the expansion of the existing traveller site at Eastbrookend Country Park.

- 1.4. These sites were allocated in the draft Local Plan which went through the Local Plan formal consultation (the Regulation 19(2) stage) following approval by Cabinet in October 2020. Following this, the landowners at Choats Road (Barking Riverside Ltd) and Collier Row Road (Crown Estate) stated that their land is no longer available for a traveller site, therefore these sites are no longer considered to be deliverable. The draft Local Plan was then submitted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate in December 2021, meaning that the only deliverable site in the draft Local Plan is the expansion of the existing Eastbrookend Country Park, which can deliver 12 of the 25 pitches required up to 2037.
- 1.5. During the Initial Hearing Sessions held in July 2022, the Planning Inspectors identified the absence of meeting the Borough's Gypsy and Traveller need in full as a key risk to the delivery of draft Local Plan³. In order to mitigate this risk in full and for the Plan to be found sound, it must be in conformity with national planning policy, which requires local planning authorities to meet their identified need.
- 1.6. The Inspectors cleared our Duty to Cooperate with neighbouring local planning authorities, confirming that we worked together positively and that the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Havering and Newham do not have any land availability to assist us in meeting our need. Provision for traveller pitches therefore must be met within the LBBD boundary.
- 1.7. The Inspectors asked the Council to conduct the following work prior to the next stage of the examination:
 - a) Assess all allocated sites to consider whether they could meet the identified need for traveller pitches
 - b) Conduct a "Call for Sites" to provide landowners the opportunity to propose additional sites which could be suitable for a traveller site
 - c) Re-consider other Council-owned land to identify sites which could be suitable for a traveller site.
- 1.8. These actions have been completed and this report now sets out the conclusions of that work and seeks Cabinet decision on the way forward.

2. Proposal and Issues

- 2.1. The Planning Inspectors agreed with our conclusion that the 41 existing allocated housing sites that were already assessed in the draft Local Plan are not suitable for the allocation of a traveller site. As part of the search for additional sites, we have now assessed a further 19 sites that showed potential as traveller sites including sites owned by external landowners and by the Council. A full assessment has been provided in **Appendix A** and a recommendation on the most suitable sites is made in this report.
- 2.2. National planning policy requires local planning authorities to consider specific criteria when allocating a traveller site. This includes ensuring it has access to

³ <https://yourcall.befirst.london/11324/widgets/38986/documents/34005>

health services and education, should be a good environmental quality (such as noise and air quality) and should not be in an area at high risk of flooding. Sites also need to be deliverable in order to be allocated in the Local Plan, meaning that they should be available, achievable and suitable for its proposed use. Without confirmation from the landowner that they would be happy for the site to be used as a traveller site, it cannot be considered available or achievable.

- 2.3. 15 of the 19 sites which had been considered for the allocation of a traveller site were located in close proximity to neighbouring industrial uses and other constraints such as flood risk and land ownership. Land within existing industrial uses are in constant operation with a significant amount of noise and poor environmental quality. It is difficult to mitigate these issues for traveller sites compared to conventional housing due to the materials of caravans, therefore it was not considered that there could be any mitigation measures to make these sites suitable.
- 2.4. Four potential suitable sites were identified at Dagenham Hospital, Ripple Nature Reserve, A13 Thames Water Depot and the Essex Water site on Rainham Road South. However, as the landowners are unable to release this land for the use of a traveller site at this stage, or in sensitive environmental areas, they cannot be considered to be available or achievable and are therefore considered to be undeliverable.
- 2.5. A specific additional Gypsy and Traveller Call for Sites was held between 6 March and 17 April 2023. This was advertised via the Council website and social media. Emails were also sent to landowners on our Call for Sites mailing list and to Gypsy and Traveller representative groups to notify them of this process. Unfortunately, no sites were submitted as part of this process.
- 2.6. We have reapproached the GLA and Barking Riverside Limited regarding available land within Barking Riverside or other GLA owned land. A number of potential sites were identified within Dagenham Dock, however it is now understood that these are not within GLA ownership. We are currently working to identify the relevant landowners to understand the sites availability. The property team for the GLA and TFL are currently conducting a search of all land in the Borough within their ownership to consider whether there are any potential sites suitable for traveller pitches.
- 2.7. The expansion of the Eastbrookend Country Park traveller site was allocated in the submitted version of the draft Local Plan, and therefore it will be the Inspectors' decision whether to recommend the allocation as being able to remain as a deliverable site or removed. Its removal can only be done for legal and soundness reasons, although its location within the Green Belt is something that has already been challenged at the Stage 1 Hearings and will be discussed further at the next stage of the examination.
- 2.8. The Council has an obligation to meet the needs of protected groups under the Equality Act 2010 which includes Gypsies and Travellers. Along with meeting the identified future need for traveller pitches, it should be noted that there are already 4 families waiting for a traveller site to become available. There are currently 3 vacant plots, however these are unavailable due to trespassing and abandoned vehicles. The Council is currently working to resolve the issues on the existing site. Despite

this change in circumstances, the Council is still obligated to rely on the needs assessment conducted in 2020. The evidence can only be reviewed should the Planning Inspectors consider it to be out-of-date and direct the Council to update it.

3. Options Appraisal

- 3.1. The analysis undertaken demonstrates that there is no immediately identifiable way of meeting the full identified need of 25 new pitches. However, if we cannot demonstrate a solution the draft Local Plan may not be able to move to the next stage of the examination. The following sections set out further detail on the current site allocated (Eastbrookend Country Park), the site closest to being deemed to be acceptable (47 Thames Road) and a potential broad location for future provision (Castle Green).

A) Eastbrookend Country Park – currently allocated, potential for 12 pitches



- 3.2. The expansion of the existing traveller site at Eastbrookend Country Park was included in previous iterations of the draft Local Plan. It is considered a suitable site as it would ensure that the families within the existing site would be able to stay together and reduce maintenance costs for the Council. As the site is already owned by the Council, there would be no additional costs in buying the land and it could be brought forward early in the Plan period.

Challenges

- 3.3. Although the site is considered to be suitable, available and achievable it is not without other constraints, particularly its sensitive location within a Country Park, its location within the Green Belt and proximity to the Discovery Centre. However, the site does have an opportunity to provide substantial screening and could provide compensatory improvements such as new and enhanced green infrastructure in the local area.

Costs

- 3.4. The cost of delivering the site could be up to £3 million depending on the amount of utilities and landscaping that needs to be provided. The Council recently applied for Government funding of £1 million to support the delivery of the site, however due to the significant amount of bids we were unsuccessful.

Conclusion

- 3.5. The site can only be recommended to be removed by the Planning Inspectors for soundness reasons, which will be considered at the next stage of the examination. At this stage, the site is the only option which can meet part of the identified need for traveller pitches and we are not aware of any soundness reasons that should prevent it from being allocated.
- 3.6. It is acknowledged that the site has a significant number of constraints and local opposition, however it remains a suitable, available and achievable site and can be brought forward early in the Plan period. However, this would not satisfy the Planning Inspectors key concerns that the site by itself can not meet the identified need for traveller pitches in full, meaning that the draft Local Plan is not in full compliance with national planning policy. This remains a key risk to the delivery of the draft Local Plan.

B) 47 Thames Road – currently deemed unavailable but potential for 13 pitches



- 3.7. The site is owned by the Council and is currently an existing warehouse located within the Thames Road Transformation Area, which has ambitions to deliver over 2,000 new homes. The site is currently let to a community group, but they will vacate the site in December 2023 as their funding has expired. Currently, a

peppercorn rent of £5k per annum is paid however if let on commercial terms the unit might command a rent of £185k per annum.

- 3.8. Although the site is currently located within Strategic Industrial Land, the draft Local Plan seeks to release the land for residential use, providing an opportunity for the provision of a traveller site. The implementation of the traveller proposal would require the demolition of the existing building estimated at circa £0.5m together with the cost of hard standing and boundary treatment.
- 3.9. There is already a suitable amount of screening on the site, therefore it would be possible to mitigate any visual or acoustic privacy impacts. It is considered that the site could deliver up to 13 additional pitches. This site is considered deliverable as it is LBBB owned land; however, there are several implications for allocating this site as a traveller site. These are set out below.

Challenges

- 3.10. The potential allocation of this site as a traveller site has several challenges that should be noted by the Council. These are: its implications for the wider vision/delivery of Thames Road; its removal of a community organisation space; and the financial implications relating to a loss of site/income, particularly given the likely rental uplift if the property were let on commercial terms.
- 3.11. The Thames Road Masterplan is based on a future placemaking vision to initiate the transformation of the area. This is currently based on 47 Thames Road being allocated for residential use, therefore the removal of the site for traveller pitches would impact on the wider delivery and place-making strategy as a residential-led development and could impact on wider investment in the site.

Costs

- 3.12. The site was purchased for £3.5m in 2016 with the benefit of GLA grant. It is estimated that the site is now worth circa £6m on the basis that it could be relet for commercial use. The GLA funding agreement requires that sites should be developed for residential uses as part of the housing zone. This policy has now been superseded by the emerging Local Plan and draft masterplan. These documents propose that sites in Thames Road will be developed for mixed uses.
- 3.13. While there is a risk that the GLA might seek to recover its grant (£3.5m), as the site is not be used to secure high density housing, this risk is considered low. However, this would lead to a loss of potential income for the Council of £185k per annum and there is a reputational risk as the proposed traveller use might prejudice the wider Thames Road Masterplan and there are a number of other sites that have in part been funded by GLA grant. The introduction of a traveller site might delay the implementation of the Thames Road masterplan and undermine the investment that has already been made by LBBB in land assembly and the construction of the high-density scheme at No 12 Thames Road.

Conclusion

- 3.14. The site has been assessed as suitable for a traveller site; however, its availability is subject to a number of financial and future commercial considerations given the GLA funding of the site and potential loss of future income should the unit be let out as a commercial property. The use of the site for a traveller site could also have a significant impact on the wider regeneration of the area as the Thames Road masterplan already identifies the site for a future mixed-use development.
- 3.15. Cabinet could agree not to release the site for the allocation of a traveller site given the reasons above, however, in doing so this would mean that the Council is unable to meet its identified need for traveller pitches in full which could risk the draft Local Plan being considered unsound and unable to move to the next stage of the examination. This would have a significant negative impact on the delivery of the draft Local Plan which aims to deliver new homes, jobs and infrastructure to the Borough.

Potential Broad Location – Castle Green

- 3.16. National planning policy allows local planning authorities to identify broad locations which could come forward later in the plan period between 6-10 years and, where possible, 11-15 years, for the delivery of traveller sites. During the hearing sessions held last summer, the Planning Inspectors asked the Council to consider potential broad locations which could deliver a traveller site should no other specific sites come forward.
- 3.17. Castle Green is currently allocated as Strategic Industrial Land with industrial units operating on a 24/7 basis. For this reason, a number of potential sites which had been identified within Castle Green were not considered suitable for the allocation of a traveller site. However, Castle Green is identified as a transformation area in the draft Local Plan with potential to deliver up to 12,000 new homes subject to a decision being made on a potential tunnel for the A13 and a new station.
- 3.18. Subject to this development coming forward, it is considered that there would be a number of opportunities to deliver a state-of-the-art traveller site in this location towards the end of the Plan period given the number of potential suitable sites that have been identified within Appendix A. At this early stage in the Castle Green masterplan development process, there is ample opportunity to secure an appropriate location and to ensure good design of a traveller site. Planning officers will continue to seek out best practice from other local authorities and the GLA with regards to integrating the site well within the area. This is important to developing a wider cohesive community. It is therefore proposed to identify Castle Green as a potential broad location which could provide a suitable traveller site in the long term.
- 3.19. However, it should be noted that there is no guarantee that the Planning Inspectors will accept a broad location that could come forward later in the Plan period. The priority is for specific and deliverable sites to be identified and allocated in order to provide certainty that the identified need can be met in full and be in full compliance with national planning policy. This option therefore still carries a significant amount of risk to the delivery of the draft Local Plan should the Planning Inspectors not accept the proposal for a broad location at Castle Green.

Conclusions

- 3.20. Of the 25 new pitches required the extension of Eastbrookend Country Park can provide 12 new pitches. 47 Thames Road is currently not deemed to be available meaning a shortfall of 13 pitches remains. If this were to be made available this site could accommodate 13 new pitches which would cover the shortfall and allow the Local Plan to proceed to the next stage of the examination in compliance with national planning policy.

	Pitches
Identified need	25
Expansion of existing site at Eastbrookend Country Park (already allocated)	(12)
Shortfall	13

4. Recommendation

- 4.1. The draft Local Plan is fundamental to delivering and shaping the significant amount of development and regeneration that the Borough is seeking to bring forward. Without an up-to-date Local Plan in place, the Borough will be in a significantly weaker position to ensure that new development is designed to a high standard, provides the appropriate tenure of new and affordable homes, ensures that new builds are implementing measures to achieve net-zero carbon and delivers on-site supporting infrastructure such as new hospitals, schools and transport links.
- 4.2. Given the articulated challenges with identifying suitable sites the recommendation is to continue with the existing allocated site at Eastbrookend Country Park with the inclusion of a potential broad location for a longer-term state-of-the-art site at Castle Green, noting that 47 Thames Road is not available due to the financial, commercial and social implications of the site.
- 4.3. Cabinet is asked to note that in the absence of further sites being deemed suitable a shortfall of 13 pitches remains within the Local Plan period and accept that this presents a risk to the soundness of the Local Plan. Details of 47 Thames Road are provided to offer Cabinet an opportunity to consider the relative impacts and benefits of using this site to mitigate the risk to the Local Plan alongside the financial and social impact that doing so would create.
- 4.4. Any future decisions on the delivery and financing of the proposed sites will need authorisation from Cabinet and a report will be presented for a decision prior to any actions being taken.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. The draft Local Plan went through a statutory consultation process known as the Regulation 19 (2) stage⁴ between 11 October 2021 and 28 November 2021, which included the proposal to allocate the expansion of Eastbrookend Country Park as a potential traveller site. This included interviews with the Travelling Community as part of the Needs Assessment. Also, two public events were held online on 18 October 2021 and 17 November 2021. There were also a number of social media

⁴ <https://yourcall.befirst.london/13753/widgets/39553/documents/21806>

posts and newspaper articles. Throughout this process, we have been engaging with the traveller community in order to understand their needs and requirements for a new site and the current issues identified on the existing site.

- 5.2. Following agreement from Cabinet and consideration by the Planning Inspectors, any additional identified sites will be included in the next round of Local Plan Public Consultation this summer, a requisite before the Plan can reach the next stage of the Examination in Public later this year. Be First will hold further engagement with members and key stakeholders during this consultation period in order to inform a new Gypsy and Traveller Topic Paper, which will provide an opportunity to set out the key issues and risks of delivering the identified sites. The paper will be presented to the Planning Inspectors during the next stage of the examination.
- 5.3. There will be an opportunity to submit representations and raise any concerns on the allocation of the site prior to the next stage of the examination, which will be considered by the Planning Inspectors as part of their assessment on whether the proposed sites are deliverable. Members of the public will also have the opportunity to attend the specific hearing sessions on meeting the identified need for traveller pitches.

6. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: David Dickinson Investment Fund Manager

- 6.1 This paper seeks endorsement of the proposals to expand the existing site at Eastbrookend Country Park and 47 Thames Road, as well as opportunities to provide additional sites within the A13 Castile Green, subject to development coming forward.
- 6.2 Currently 47 Thames Road has been purchased by the Council as part of the regeneration of the Thames Road and, as outline in the paper, purchase costs have been incurred, as well as GLA grant used to fund most of the purchase. 47 Thames Road currently sits within the Investment and Acquisition Strategy and a commercial let of the property would provide approximately £185k per year in rent. There would be costs, in addition to the £500k outlined within the report, to redevelop the site. Any future decisions on the delivery and financing of the proposed sites will need additional authorisation from Cabinet.
- 6.3 Eastbrookend Country Park has already been costed as part of a grant bid, with an estimated cost of £3m that would need to be funded. In addition to the development costs, operational cost will also need to be considered with each proposal, including funding sources.
- 6.4 The proposed site should provide income to the Council from pitch fees. The existing site at Eastbrookend provided gross rental income of £82k in 2022/23 or £68k after taking into account running costs. The current pitch fees for Eastbrookend are £94.50 per week for a single pitch and £241.80 per week for a double pitch.

7. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr. Paul Feild, Principal Governance Lawyer

- 7.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out specific matters to which the local planning authority must have regard when preparing a Local Plan. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended by Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 prescribe the general form and content of Local Plans and adopted policies map, and states what additional matters local planning authorities must have regard to when drafting their plans.
- 7.2 It is essential that the Council can show with an evidenced audit trail in that developing the draft Local Plan it has observed the procedural steps and requirements set out in the relevant regulations. These include not only the said amended Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, but also the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programme Regulations 2004.
- 7.3 The Council must show it has had due regard to the current NPPF and the NPPG, as well as creating and maintaining an up to date and proportionate evidence base to inform its policy decisions. The evidence base includes the documents that show objectively assessed need within the borough.
- 7.4 Consultation on the draft plan is essential, nevertheless the decision lies with the Council in formulating its draft plan in its consideration as to priority of selection of sites identified for the use for Gypsies and Travellers. This report identifies potential sites and the reasoning as to why the sites have been identified.
- 7.5 There is also a duty on the Council as a local housing authority to consider the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers from a housing perspective by virtue of an amendment to the Housing Act 1985 by the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 **Risk Management** - As the draft Local Plan is unable to meet its identified need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches in full, this has been identified as a key risk to the delivery of the Plan as it is not currently in full compliance with national planning policy and may not be able to move to the next stage of the examination. In order to reduce this risk, a full review of available land has been undertaken to identify a site which could meet the remaining identified need. Cabinet is now asked to consider and endorse the identified sites to ensure the draft Local Plan is in accordance with national planning policy and can move on to the next stage of the examination.
- 8.2 **Corporate Policy and Equality Impact** – Romany Gypsies and Scottish and Irish Travellers are recognised ethnic groups who have needs relevant to their ethnicity and culture, and all the duties on public bodies under the Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998 and relevant case law apply. Should the Council not put in place adequate service provision for Gypsy and Travellers, there is a risk of failing to provide for all parts of the community and not comply with the Equality Act 2010. By endorsing the recommended sites and meeting the identified need, the Council will

ensure that it is meeting the specific needs of a protected group and would therefore comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998 and relevant case law.

- 8.3 **Property / Asset Issues** – The Cabinet paper makes a number of recommendations on property and assets currently under Council ownership. At this stage of the draft Local Plan examination, the Council is only required to identify potential suitable sites which can be recommended to the Planning Inspectors. It will be for the Inspectors to consider the sites and whether they find them acceptable to be included in the draft Local Plan. Following the examination process and the adoption of the Plan, further reports will be provided to Cabinet to decide on how the identified sites can be delivered and consider the full implications of property and asset issues.
- 8.4 **Parks** - Parks Commissioning understands the challenges associated with meeting the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community in the Borough. However, an extension of the current site into the Green Belt at Eastbrookend Country Park (a designated Local Nature Reserve, a SINC, and Site of Metropolitan Importance) is unacceptable and comes with high level risks and significant environmental, social, and economic impacts.

The plans will have a negative impact on the park and jeopardise the significant investment in the park environment, facilities, and Discovery Centre, and the achievements of the Ranger Service which have transformed the Dagenham Corridor, and especially Eastbrookend Country Park into a destination venue.

The immediate area surrounding the existing traveller site experiences issues with crime and anti-social behaviour including significant fly tipping, quad bike misuse, and incidents involving threatening and abusive behaviour. Extension of the site may exacerbate these issues which could be detrimental to Eastbrookend Country Park's Green Flag Award status which recognises excellence in park management and maintenance.

List of appendices:

- **Appendix A:** Assessment of Gypsy and Traveller sites
- **Appendix B:** Equality Impact Assessment