



GYPSY AND TRAVELLER TOPIC PAPER

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to explain how London Borough of Barking and Dagenham as Local Planning Authority has sought to identify a residential traveller site to meet the need identified in the LBBG Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), as updated in August 2020. The Council is committed to meeting the identified need for traveller sites as part of its objective to ensure that “no-one is left behind” as outlined within its Inclusive Growth Strategy.

Background

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015) and the London Plan (March 2021) requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their area and provide sufficient sites to meet that need.
3. The process that the Council has undertaken to assess accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers and select a traveller site can be summarised as follows.
 - i. **Consult on proposed scope of Plan:** LBBG Local Plan Stage 1 Issues and Options Report (2015) - this set out the Council’s intention to undertake an independent study on Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) to inform the new Local Plan. Following the stage 1 consultation, it was acknowledged that the Council should identify a new traveller site. In 2016, the Council commissioned a GTAA study, which identified a need for 19 additional pitches for households that meet the

planning definition in PPTS (2015). It was noted at the time that the assessed need for new pitches was based on locally identifiable need.

ii. Establish a list of appropriate sites/locations and consult on them:

Officers in the LBBB Housing Team identified a list of small sites of less than 0.25ha in size based on 6 pitches with an average of 400sqm from Council ownership reviewing the Council’s small sites programme and undertaking the Call for Sites in June 2019.

iii. Through the LBBB Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation we proposed 6 potential sites/locations which could be suitable to meet the need of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers. These were:

- Choats Road
- Lane at Collier Row Road
- Roosevelt Way
- Crabtree Avenue
- Keir Hardy Way
- Expand the existing site at Eastbrookend Country Park.

iv. **Identify a preferred site(s)/locations:** No responses on the 6 potential sites/locations were received during the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation, except one from an Irish Traveller household, which was received after the consultation was closed. The comments related to the following two sites:

- Choats Road- acceptable choice for a site.
- Collier Row Road – preferred choice for a site.
- Expansion of existing public site – preferred choice for a site.

4. In June 2020 the Council commissioned another Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) for Barking and Dagenham to inform policies and site allocations in the emerging new Local Plan and to ensure it will be compliant with both the NPPF and the London Plan. Further opportunities to engage with settled and traveller communities were undertaken from 17 July to 1st September, including interviews by phone, an online questionnaire, and separate arrangements to speak to residents on the Council’s existing traveller site¹.
5. The GTAA identified need for new pitches up to 2034 as shown below. This excludes travellers that have ceased to travel permanently. The need for these pitches arises completely from Irish Traveller households and they are all locally identifiable need.

Years	0-5	6-10	11-15	Total
	2020-24	2025-29	2030-34	
	19	2	3	24

Source: LBBB GTAA 2020

6. When considering current household formation rates, this would mean meeting a need of 25 pitches by the end of the Plan period in 2037.

7. **Undertake site assessment** - Prior to the sites being allocated in the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan consultation, the Council assessed each site on their suitability to meet the identified need of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers (see Annex 1). This includes the sites planning and environmental constraints, whether it has access to essential services such retail and education, access to public transport and the deliverability of the site. Conclusions have been made based on the information that has been obtained.
8. Both National and Regional (London Plan) policy has been taken into consideration in assessing the suitability of sites, with further detail set out under the Planning Constraints section below for the relevant site.

Officer's Recommendation

4. Following consideration of all of the sites which were put forward in the regulation 18 draft Local Plan consultation, it was considered that the following sites should be allocated in the draft Local Plan for the regulation 19 consultation:

- Choats Road
- Land at Collier Row Road
- Expand the existing site at Eastbrookend Country Park

The draft policy text was updated as follows:

POLICY DMH 5: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

1. The Council will meet the identified current and future accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in Barking and Dagenham by:
 - a) retaining and protecting the existing Gypsy and Traveller sites at Eastbrookend Country Park
 - b) delivering a maximum of 12 pitches by expanding the existing public site at Eastbrookend Country Park within the first five years of the plan period
 - c) delivering the remaining identified need by the end of the plan period at Collier Row Road and/or Choats Road
2. The Council will consider granting temporary planning permission for proposals that come forward in advance of the allocated sites being developed and will be addressed against the criteria set out below.
3. Development of a site to provide additional short-stay /or permanent Gypsy and Traveller accommodation to meet the long-term needs of these communities will be supported where:
 - a) the site is able to accommodate the number of pitches identified in an up to date and robust needs assessment
 - b) the site is accessible to public transport, safe, convenient walking and cycling environment, essential services and facilities (e.g. water, power, sewerage and waste disposal) and be capable of supporting by local social infrastructure and does not place undue pressure on local infrastructure and services (such as healthcare, schools and shops)

c) it provides safe access to and from the public road network a) the site is a safe location (e.g. not located in an inappropriate area of high flood risk, including functional floodplains, given the particular vulnerability of caravans) b) the proposal would not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of other site occupants and the occupiers of neighbouring sites

d) the proposal supports the health and wellbeing of the occupiers of the site by providing appropriate facilities, layout and design quality

e) arrangements can be put in place at the planning application stage, to ensure the proper management of the site in line with the policy requirements above.

Post-Reg 19(1 and 2) Updates

Following two rounds of Regulation 19 consultation, further modifications to the sites proposed have been required. It is now recommended that the Colliers Road and Choats Road Traveller site options are removed from the Local Plan due to both plots of land being cited as unavailable, and as a result of concerns raised by the Environment Agency on the Choats Road site being located in a Flood Zone 3 area. As a result, 1C in Policy DMH 5 is proposed to be removed.

It is therefore now recommended that only the extension of the Eastbrookend Country Park site should be taken forward as a site allocation in the Local Plan as the only available and deliverable site currently identified. The Council is currently undertaking detailed discussions on the funding and delivery of this site and will seek a formal decision in the summer (2022) following the May elections, including any further consultation.

It is acknowledged that this would mean a change to the Green Belt boundary in order to bring the site forward. The LBBD Green Belt Review (2015) cited the justification for retaining Eastbrookend Country Park as Green Belt was to stop neighbourhoods flowing into each other. Utilising a central part (where the site is located) will not impact on this objective. Furthermore, it is judged that the extension of the current site would not compromise the openness of the Green Belt, or the surrounding views.

The Council has ensured that its overall strategy for delivering new homes and jobs is focused on the regeneration of industrial land and brownfield sites and that the maximum density has been considered for every available site. This has ensured that the Council is able to meet its regeneration objectives. It is not considered that the sites that have been identified for housing in brownfield locations would be suitable for a potential traveller site and the assessment of available sites has been focused on existing residential areas and other available open space, including sites which are currently in the Green Belt.

It is acknowledged that there will still be a deficit in traveller sites over the Plan period and the Council are exploring the available options, including identification of any additional future sites and sourcing additional funding for site provision. This had not been raised with neighbouring local planning authorities as the Council believed it had identified sufficient sites to meet its need for traveller sites at Choats Road, Collier Row Road and Eastbrookend Country Park. However, previous discussions suggest that neighbouring authorities are struggling to meet the Gypsy and Traveller pitch needs in their own areas; if required, the

Council could seek updated relevant Statements of Common Grounds with these authorities to reflect this.

The Council also anticipates and welcomes further work from the Greater London Authority on a London-wide strategic approach to Traveller Site provision, which it expects will aid in the Borough's site provision in the longer term (this is addressed in more detail in the policy amendment below).

Policy DMH 6 of the draft Local Plan is therefore proposed to be amended as follows:

1. The Council will meet the identified current and future accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in Barking and Dagenham by:

- a) retaining and protecting the existing Gypsy and Traveller sites at Eastbrookend Country Park
- b) delivering a maximum of 12 pitches by expanding the existing public site at Eastbrookend Country Park within

the first five years of the plan period

- ~~c) delivering work with stakeholders to meet the remaining identified need by the end of the plan period at Collier Row Road and/or Cheats Road Barking Riverside~~

The London Mayor has committed to initiating a London-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment and will work with boroughs to find ways of making provision for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The Council will work with the GLA to identify a suitable site within GLA owned land at Barking Riverside.

Planning Constraints

Site Name	Green Belt	Local Nature Reserve	Site of Importance	BAP Priority Habitat	Flood Risk	Conservation Area	Listed Building	Loss of Open Space	European Site	Site of Special
Collier Row Road	Red	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
Crabtree Avenue	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Keir Hardie Way	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Roosevelt Way	Yellow	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Choats Road	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Eastbrookend Country Park	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green

Site Name: Collier Row Road

Site and Surroundings: Land has been identified for the allocation of a site north of Collier Row Road, located at the most northern tip of the borough. The area has a mixture of isolated homes and industrial uses to the south of the road and open agricultural land to the north.

Opportunities: This location has good environmental quality. It is located near an existing pre-school and a bus station with links to Romford town centre and train station. Two primary schools located within 1.2km. Existing retail centre located within 1.5km.

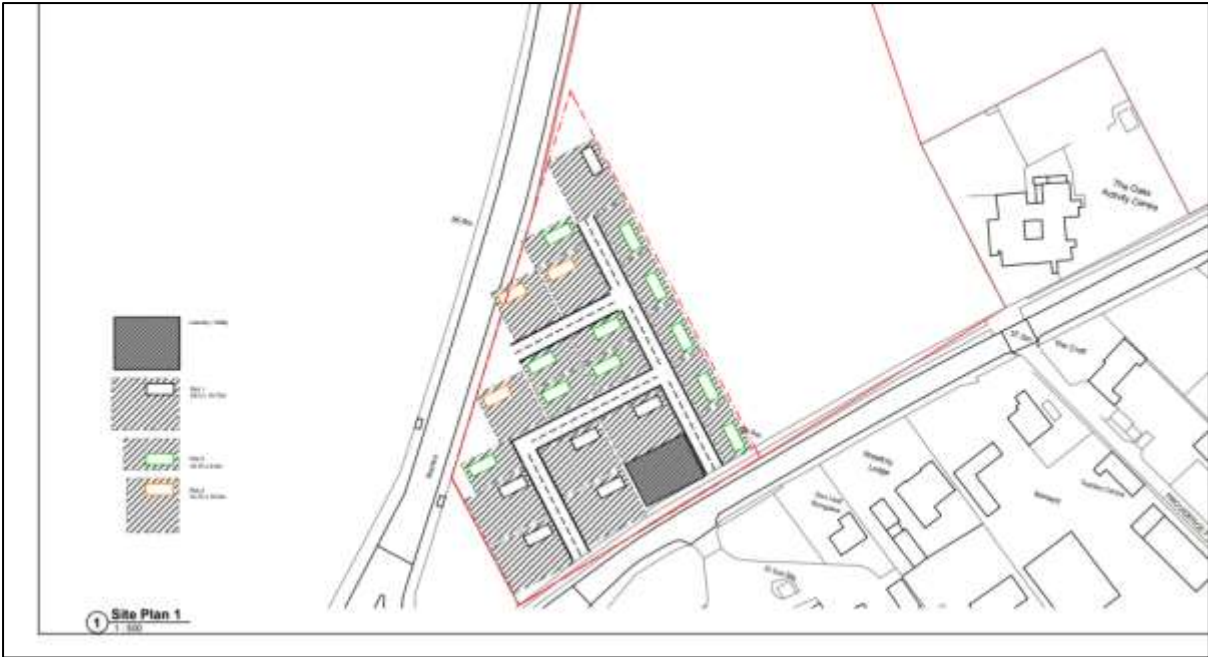
Constraints: Wholly overlapped with Green Belt. 400m within a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Within 400-800m of a BAP priority habitat. Will need to consider the location of a listed building at Maypole Cottage.

Land Ownership: Land owned by Crown Estate

Potential capacity: up to 25 pitches

Conclusions: Although it is considered that some of the constraints could be mitigated, the landowner's responses to the Regulation 19 (2) consultation confirmed that the site is unavailable and therefore its allocation should be removed from the Local Plan.





Site Name: Choats Road

Site and Surroundings: The site is located to the north of the Barking Riverside development on Choats Road located to the south of the borough. To the north of the site is a rail line and the Euro Terminal. Further to the east lies industrial land.

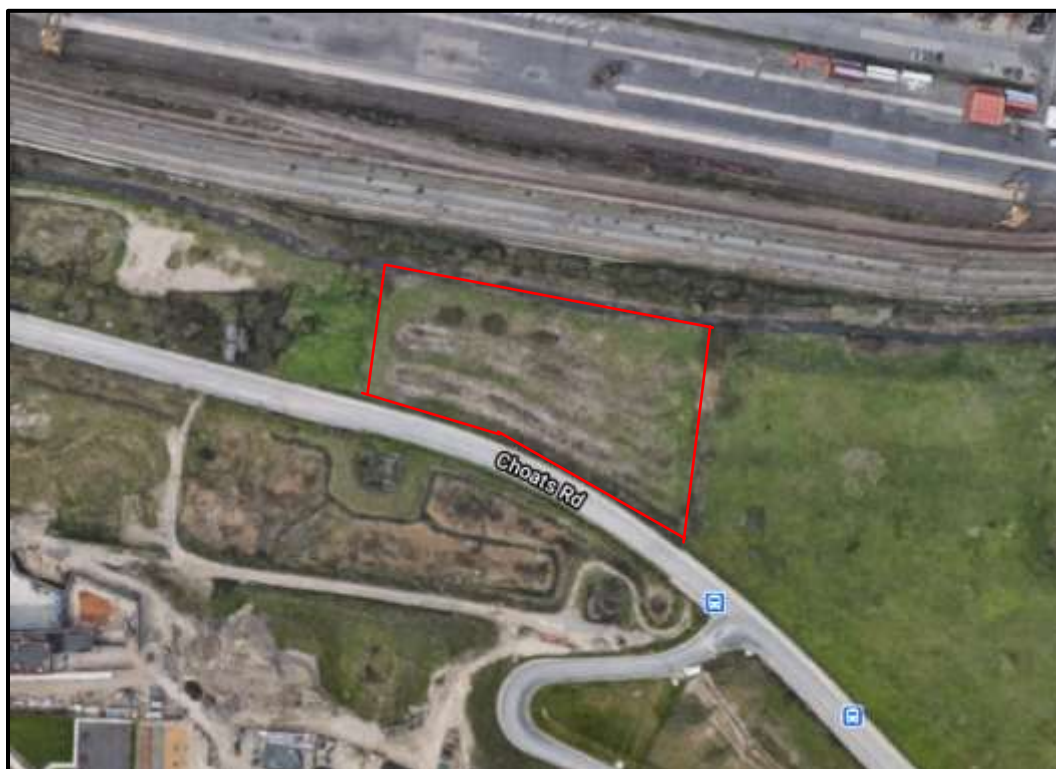
Opportunities: The location near the Barking Riverside development provides an opportunity for access to a range of services including a retail centre, schools and bus routes with links to Barking town centre and train station. Although the site is located near a rail line and industrial uses, there are opportunities for open space and screening which would improve the environmental quality.

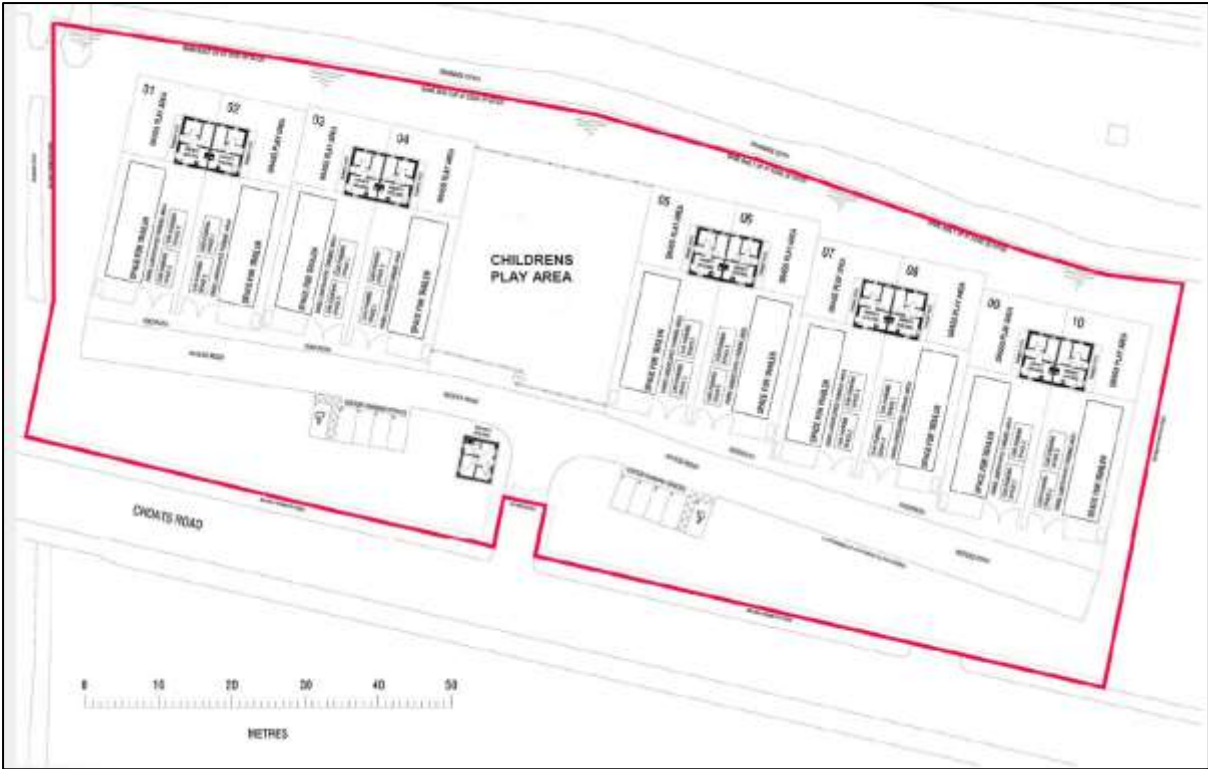
Constraints: Located within 400m of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Within 400m of a BAP Habitat. Less than 50% of the site intersects with flood risk zone 2 or 3. Land ownership a significant constraint as previous approaches for the site to be allocated for use as a Gypsy and Traveller site has been unsuccessful. The wider area is also allocated for significant housing and commercial development in the future. The Regulation 19(2) Local Plan consultation found that the site is unavailable.

Landowner: Barking Riverside LTD

Potential capacity: Up to 10 pitches.

Conclusions: With a resolution to the land ownership constraints this site provides a good opportunity for a Gypsy and Traveller site with access to a wide range of services and amenities. The precise location of the site will need to consider the planning constraints identified, particularly the flood risk zone 2 or 3 and the issues raised by the Environment Agency, although this could be mitigated against. Initial discussions with the landowner are ongoing. However, the landowner has confirmed the site is unavailable and therefore its allocation should be removed from the Local Plan.





Site Name: Crabtree Avenue

Site and Surroundings: The site is located between Crabtree Avenue and Padnall Road to the north of the borough at Marks Gate. The site is currently used for garages and is surrounded by existing residential dwellings. The site is 0.360 hectares.

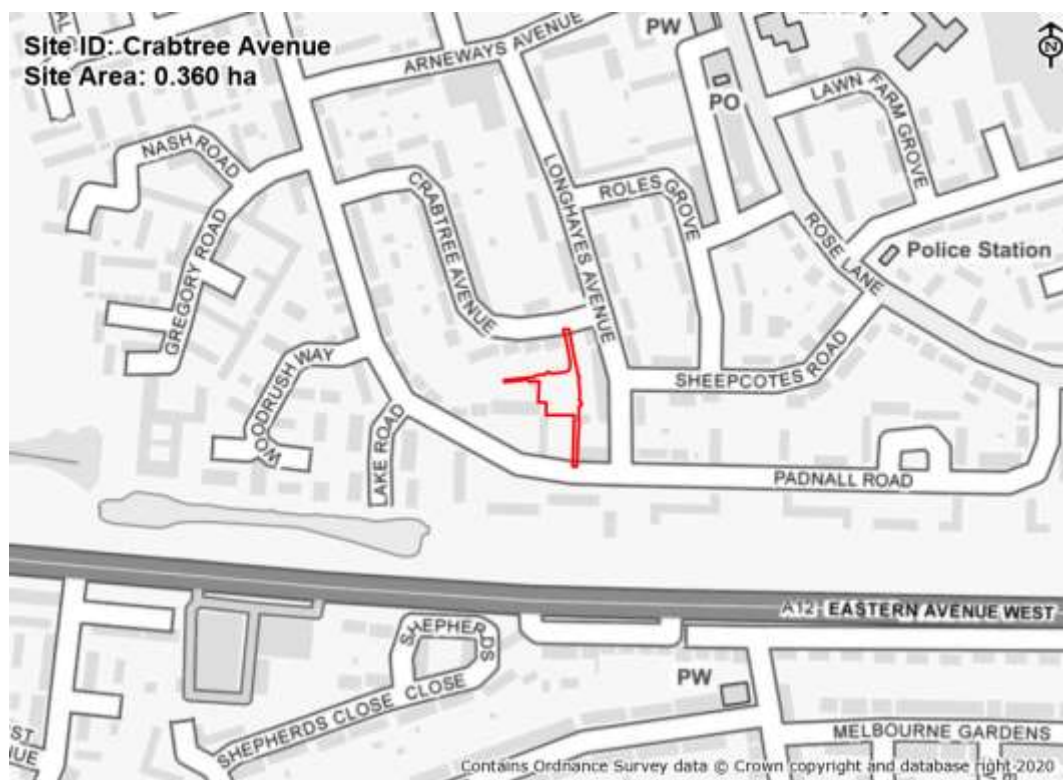
Opportunities: The site is located within an existing settlement with access to a wide range of services including a retail centre, schools, open space and leisure. The site is within close proximity to bus services with access to Romford and Barking. The site is also not within any significant environmental or planning constraints. The site is wholly owned by the Council.

Constraints: The site is within 400m of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The site is also within 400-800m of a BAP priority habitat. Due to the small size of the site it is unlikely that it would be able to hold the siting of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers along with space for utility blocks. There would be poor site access and would not have safe manoeuvring of vehicles within the site. The site is within close proximity to existing residential dwellings meaning that the site will be overlooked with limited privacy for any potential future residents.

Land Ownership: Land owned by London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Potential capacity: Up to 5 pitches

Conclusions: Although the site would benefit from the access to essential services and public transport access, due to the size and close proximity to existing residential dwellings it would be unsuitable for the siting of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and would not allow the safe movement of vehicles. Therefore, the site should not be allocated in the draft Local Plan.



Site Name: Roosevelt Way

Site and Surroundings: The site is located to the east of Roosevelt Way and south of Auriel Avenue. The site is surrounded by residential dwellings with open space and beam river running to the east. The site is 0.285 hectares and is currently vacant with a small number of garages. The site is accessed by a small lane running from Roosevelt Way.

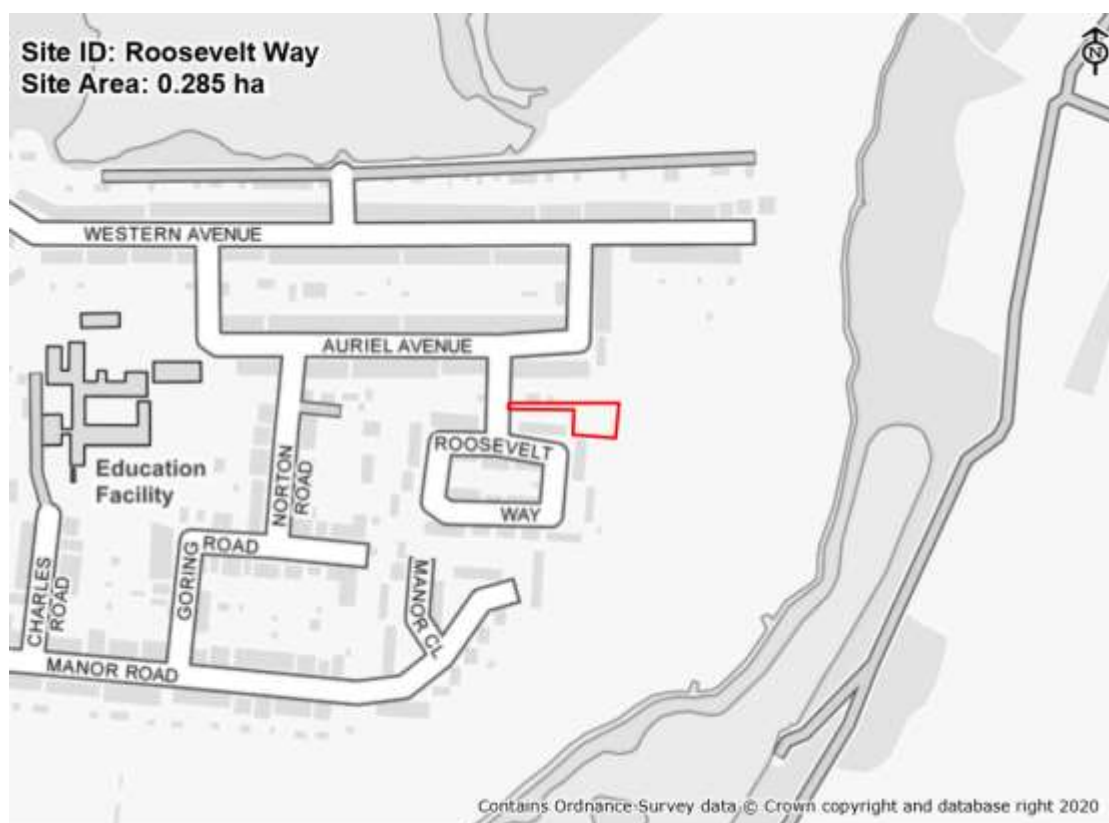
Opportunities: The site is within an existing residential neighbourhood and is well served by services including a retail centre and schools. The site has good access to public transport with Dagenham East station and bus routes nearby. The site has high environmental quality with nearby open space. The site is wholly owned by the Council.

Constraints: The site is located within the Green Belt. It is adjacent to a Local Nature Reserve. It is within 400m of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. It is within 400m of a BAP Priority Habitat. The site is very small and is unlikely to have capacity for pitches and the associated utilities. It is close to existing residential units which would impact on the privacy of future residents. The access is small and due to the limited space would not be possible to manoeuvre vehicles within and out of the site.

Land Ownership: Land owned by London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Potential capacity: Up to 5 pitches

Conclusions: The site would provide access to a wide range of essential services and public transport connections. However, due to the size of the site this would severely limit the capacity to provide pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and would not allow the safe movement of vehicles. It is also located near existing residential units which would impact on the privacy of the site. It would therefore not be a suitable site to be allocated within the draft Local Plan.



Site Name: Keir Hardie Way

Site and Surroundings: The site is located to the south of Keir Hardie Way and is surrounded by residential dwellings to the north, east and west. To the south is Rippleside Cemetery. The site is 0.367 hectares and is currently vacant with garages.

Opportunities: The site is within an existing residential area with good access to services such as a retail centre and a wide range of schools. The site has good access to public transport with bus stations and Upney station nearby. The site is located within an area with good environmental standards and there are no significant environmental or planning constraints. The site is wholly owned by the Council.

Constraints: The site is within 400m of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. It is within 800m of a BAP Priority Habitat. The site is surrounded by existing residential units although this is mitigated by surrounding rear gardens and there is scope for additional screening. The site is small although there is scope for considering the siting of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and vehicle movements through additional assessments.

Land Ownership: Land owned by London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Potential capacity: Up to 5 pitches.

Conclusion: The site would provide access to a wide range of essential services and public transport connections. The size of the site could also be suitable for pitches for Gypsies and Travellers with further assessment work by the Council. The site is owned by the Council which would improve the deliverability of the site. However, the site is surrounded by existing residential uses and is highly constrained with limited privacy and accessibility. The site should therefore not be included in the draft Local Plan.



Site Name: Eastbrookend Country Park

Site and Surroundings: The site is located within Eastbrookend Country Park to the south of The Chase. To the west of the site is the Eastbrookend Discovery Centre. North of the site are the White Hart Lakes. The site is surrounded by open space.

Opportunities: Although Eastbrookend Country Park does not have any services, further to the east of the site there are a number of services such as a retail centre, schools and employment opportunities. There is also a bus stop near to the site with access to Dagenham and Romford. It has access to a large open space within the Country Park with good environmental quality. There is already an existing Gypsy and Traveller site owned by the Council.

Constraints: The site is located within the Green Belt. It is situated within a Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. It is within 400m of a BAP Priority Habitat. Part of the site intersects with flood risk zone 2 or 3. The site will need to take into account the location of listed buildings at Bell House and Hooks Hall Farmhouse.

Ownership: Land is owned by London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Potential capacity: Up to 14 pitches. Land to the east of the existing traveller site could deliver a total of 10 pitches. If the Council utilised land inbetween the existing and proposed site, this could deliver a total of 14 pitches overall. Further exploratory work would be required to assess the potential of the site. The Council are seeking to bid for additional funding from the GLA.

Conclusions: The site would have access to a wide range of essential services such as a retail centre, schools, employment and access to public transport. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment identified families on the existing site requiring additional pitches, therefore expanding the site would ensure that the families are able to stay together. As the site is owned by the Council this would provide additional flexibility in the delivery of the site. However, there are a number of planning constraints that would need to be taken into account when considering how the site could be expanded, including the Green Belt.

Overall, it is considered that the site should be allocated in the draft Local Plan in order to ensure that any families already on the site can remain near family members should they need to expand to an additional site. It would also provide potential residents a wide range of essential services near to the site.



