

John Preston DOPaED



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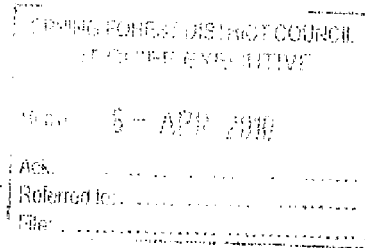
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Your Ref: LC/DC/SH



31 MAR 2010

Dear Diana

EPPING FOREST GYPSY AND TRAVELLER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

Thank you for your letter of 25 January to the Rt Hon John Healey MP, requesting a meeting to discuss Epping Forest's Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document. The letter provides a useful update on your progress in meeting the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community and the resource implications the plan has had on your authority.

I am pleased to see that the Council has made headway in approving permanent sites to meet the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community. This is positive but there remains a pressing and urgent need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches in your district.

I appreciate that the Direction has had consequences for the preparation of the Core Strategy. Whilst I am not prepared to withdraw or amend the Direction at the current time, it is worthwhile clarifying the Government's expectation of you as a local authority. First and foremost we want to see a responsible, proportionate approach being taken to plan-making. In practice this means dedicating more of your staff resource to the timely production of the Core Strategy whilst working with Gypsy and Traveller families and the wider community to enable the granting permanent permission for suitable Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Your evidence indicates that pitch provision since 2006 has been delivered via the granting of permanent planning permission to existing temporary, unauthorised or tolerated sites. Although this is not the preferred planned approach to delivering new sites, it is a pragmatic way forward for meeting immediate needs. I am given some comfort that 19 pitches have been granted permission since 2006 and understand that more permanent sites are in the pipeline.

I would be prepared to revisit the Direction once you have demonstrated that provision has been made to meet the immediate needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community in Epping Forest. This would mean meeting the East of England Plan requirement of at least 34 net additional permanent pitches by 2011.

In terms of longer term provision the most effective way in meeting the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community is for local authorities to take a proactive, planned approach to provision rather than rely on ad-hoc planning decisions. To meet accommodation needs beyond 2011 the Government expects a planned approach to be taken. This means allocating specific sites to meet identified need in a Site Allocations DPD.

I note that there have been discussions between your officers and officers from the Government Office. I am happy for this dialogue to continue and as such do not think it necessary for a meeting at the current time. I have asked my officials to keep me informed of your progress.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shahid', written in a cursive style.

SHAHID MALIK MP