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Dear resident

### **Consultation on proposed Gypsy and Traveller site in Church Grove, Ladywell**

On 5 October the Mayor of Lewisham, at a meeting of Mayor and Cabinet, agreed to consult on the former Watergate school site in Church Grove as the preferred location for a site for Gypsy and Traveller families.

Lewisham, like all local authorities, has a duty under the Housing Act 2004 to assess the need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation when it assesses the borough's housing requirements. This includes undertaking regular assessments of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and to develop strategies to meet those needs. Earlier this year, an independent needs assessment recommended the provision of between four and nine pitches (i.e. sufficient accommodation for between four and nine families) to meet the current need of the borough's Traveller population.

As the local planning authority, the Council has a responsibility to identify and address accommodation requirements for pitch provision in the borough. The Council is required to have identified a site that is suitable for this purpose by early 2012, in order that it can be included in its final draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document (a key Planning document).

Lewisham has had no Gypsy and Traveller site since 2009, when the Thurston Road site in Lewisham town centre was closed to make way for the Lewisham Gateway redevelopment scheme. The Council has undertaken two comprehensive site searches during the past five years, the first of which was to find a site to relocate the Travellers who were then living on the Thurston Road site. In June 2007, the Council selected the Church Grove site as its preferred site for this purpose. On 3 April 2008, planning permission was granted for five pitches on this site, but for various reasons (detailed later on within the Frequently Asked Questions) the plans were put on hold.

Normally planning permission is subject to a condition that it expires after three years unless the development to which it relates is begun during that period but, where any proceedings are begun to challenge the validity of a planning permission, this period is extended by one year. As judicial review proceedings were begun in relation to the planning permission for the Church Grove site, it is still capable of being implemented until 3 April 2012.

The most recent site search, undertaken earlier this year, resulted in a shortlist of seven sites which could meet the current need as identified in the independent needs assessment. From this shortlist of seven, Council officers recommended Church Grove as the preferred site (see the Frequently Asked Questions later on for more details on the other shortlisted sites and how Council officers came to recommend Church Grove as the preferred site).

**The Council would like to hear the views of residents and other interested parties on this proposal. In particular, we would like to know if there are any factors which you feel we may have overlooked in our consideration of the site which would make Church Grove unsuitable as a site for Gypsy and Traveller families, or if there are reasons why another site in the borough is in fact more suitable.**

There are several ways that you can find out more and have your say.

### **Drop-in sessions**

We have arranged drop-in sessions where Council officers will be present to take your questions and discuss any concerns. These will take place at St Mary's Centre on Ladywell Road on the following dates:

- Saturday 12 November 2011, 10am-12midday
- Friday 18 November 2011, 7pm-9pm
- Thursday 24 November 2011, 3pm-5pm
- Wednesday 30 November 2011, 3pm-5pm

### **Public meeting**

There will be a public meeting on Tuesday 6 December 2011, from 7.30pm-9pm, also at St Mary's Centre.

### **Online**

Go to [www.lewisham.gov.uk](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk) and search for 'Travellers' site', for a link to an online form.

### **Freepost**

Additionally you can write to us with your views (please include your name and address) using the Freepost address:

Freepost RSGJ-CYZS-JUYA  
Travellers' site consultation  
Communications  
London Borough of Lewisham  
Town Hall  
Catford  
London  
SE6 4RU.

Whichever method you choose, you have until midnight on Sunday 18 December to have your say.

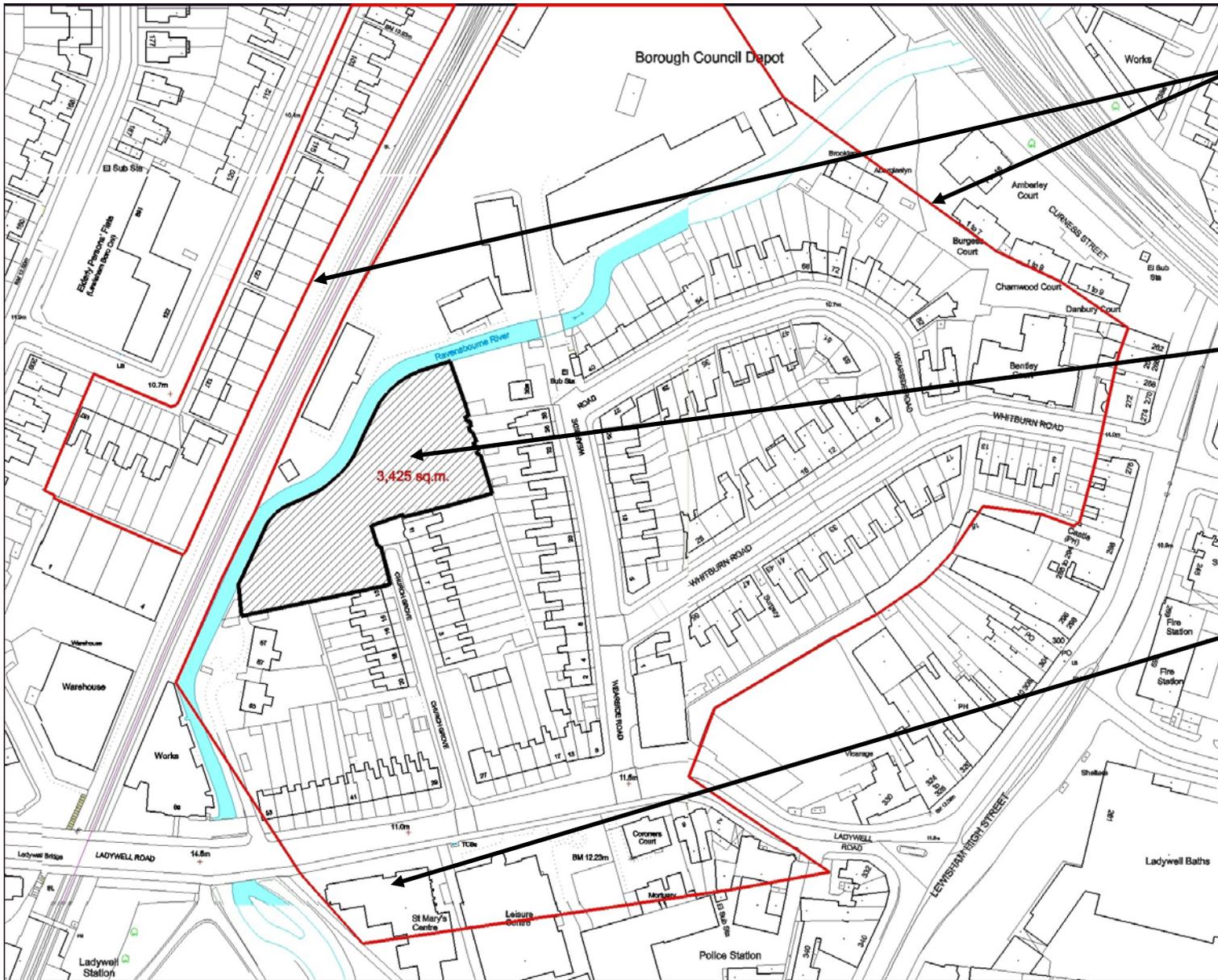
This letter has been door-dropped to those homes and businesses indicated on the following page, due to their close proximity to the Church Grove site. It is also being sent directly to local interest groups and Traveller groups. However, anyone with views on this proposal is able to participate in this consultation via any of the methods outlined above.

All views expressed during the consultation period will be summarised in a report which will be presented to Mayor and Cabinet in January 2012 or at a later date.

Yours sincerely

### **Steve Gough**

Director of Regeneration and Asset Management



These lines indicate the boundaries within which this letter has been hand-delivered to homes and businesses

The proposed site

St Mary's Centre, the venue for the drop-in sessions and public meeting

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is the Council consulting again on Church Grove's suitability as a Travellers' site? What has changed since 2007?**

The site search undertaken in 2007 was to assist the Council in its aim of providing new accommodation for the Traveller families being re-located from the Thurston Road site. Although planning permission was subsequently granted for five pitches on the site, construction never commenced as, towards the end of 2008, the Thurston Road Travellers asked the Council if it would consider terms for the surrender of their licences. Once agreement had been reached, the plans for the site were put on hold as the infrastructure was not yet in place to accommodate caravans or touring homes.

However, the Council still has a requirement to provide a site to meet the anticipated need for its Gypsy and Traveller population. An independent assessment undertaken in 2011 (available on the Council's website) recommended the provision of between four and nine pitches (i.e. sufficient accommodation for between four and nine families) and concluded that five pitches would give a suitable level of provision to meet the current need, subject to an ongoing review of future need. On this basis, a new site search was undertaken during 2011 which resulted in the Church Grove site being recommended as the preferred site to meet the current need. It is for this reason that the Council is again consulting.

### **Why is the Church Grove site the preferred site?**

Initially, Council officers compiled a long list of 41 potential sites across the borough. This was reduced to a shortlist of seven sites when the following objective criteria, which reflect the potential needs of Gypsy and Traveller sites, were applied:

- Suitability - within 800m of primary school, GP and food shop
- Planning constraints - site must not be on designated open space or nature reserve or employment land etc
- Availability - deliverable within a reasonable timescale (5 years)

The seven sites shortlisted using these criteria were:

- Laurence House Lorry Park, Canadian Avenue, SE6
- Church Grove (former Watergate School), Ladywell SE13
- Site of Former Greenvale School, Perry Rise, Forest Hill SE23
- Catford Dog Track and Adenmore Road Sites, Catford SE6
- Ladywell Leisure Centre Site, Lewisham SE13
- Giffin Street Site (rear of old Tidemill Primary School), Deptford SE8
- Deptford Green School (Upper School), Amersham Vale, Deptford SE8

Officers then scored each of these sites against the above criteria, with the addition of any known environmental concerns under the suitability criteria and a new criteria for alternative corporate use. It was this scoring that led to the Church Grove site being recommended as the preferred site. (All the scoring, and reasons for the scoring, are contained in the 'Travellers' Site – Needs Assessment & Site Selection' report which is available on the Council website, and will be available at the planned drop-in sessions and public meeting.)

**Does the Council currently have planning permission to build on the Church Grove site?**

Planning permission was granted to construct a Gypsy and Traveller site on Church Grove on 3 April 2008. Normally planning permission is subject to a condition that it expires after three years unless the development to which it relates is begun during that period and, at the time of the report to Mayor and Cabinet on 5 October 2011, the Council's understanding was that the planning permission for the Church Grove site had lapsed in April 2011.

However, it has subsequently been brought to the Council's attention that, where any proceedings are begun to challenge the validity of a planning permission, the three year period is extended by one year. As judicial review proceedings were begun in relation to the planning permission, it is therefore still capable of being implemented until 3 April 2012.

**Isn't the width of Church Grove insufficient to allow movement of caravans and emergency vehicles, especially when current problems with parking are taken into account?**

This was previously dealt with in the granting of planning permission. Church Grove is generally 4.6m wide with car parking only permitted along the eastern side of the road, leaving an effective useable carriageway width of 2.6m. Pupils at the former school, for instance, were transported by the Council's Passenger Services bus fleet which are 2.3m wide. The street is also serviced by the Council's refuse trucks, each of which is 2.5 metres wide.

Typically, touring caravans are 2.2m wide, while static ones are 3.6m wide. This would enable the touring caravans to use the street with limited clearance, but on the rare occasions when static ones are moved residents' bays would need to be suspended. This would be arranged with the prior consultation of residents. In reality this would occur very infrequently leading to limited inconvenience for residents.

The width is therefore considered adequate to enable the movement of caravans and emergency vehicles.

**If the site is on the flood plain of the River Ravensbourne, won't this have health and safety implications for the Travellers?**

This was previously dealt with in the granting of planning permission. There are measures that can be employed to help prevent flooding, such as raising levels throughout the site and creating a 'buffer' zone on the part of the site nearest to the river, and these were incorporated in the design which was granted planning permission.

**Isn't the site in a Conservation Area?**

The site is not in a Conservation Area, although it is adjacent to the St Mary's Conservation Area.

**How many pitches would the Council be seeking to create on the Church Grove site?**

The current planning permission includes five separate pitches. A pitch typically provides accommodation for one family unit, and usually includes a brick-built amenity building comprising a kitchen, living room and bathroom, plus space for a static caravan (containing bedrooms), a touring caravan and in some instances a car.

Each pitch is self-contained having its own address, boundary and postcode. Residents of permanent pitches on local authority gypsy and traveller sites occupy under licence agreements governed by the Mobile Homes Act 1983.

### **Who are Gypsies and Travellers?**

Gypsies are Romany ethnic groups whose ancestors migrated from India in the tenth century and then mixed with European and other groups. Irish Travellers are a nomadic group who have been part of Irish society for centuries, and have since migrated to the UK.

### **What rights do Gypsies and Travellers have?**

The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 placed a legal duty on public authorities to promote race equality and good race relations. Under the Race Relations Act, it was unlawful to discriminate against anyone on grounds of race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origin. Gypsies and Irish Travellers have been recognised by the courts to be two distinct ethnic groups, so had the full protection of the Race Relations Act. The public sector duties provided by the Race Relations Act, have been replaced by the new public sector Equality Duty which came into force pursuant to the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act will continue to provide protection against unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups.

### **How long have there been Gypsies and Travellers in Britain?**

It is believed that the Gypsies and Travellers of Britain have been here for at least 500 years, with the first recording dating all the way back to 1514.

### **What is Gypsy and Traveller culture?**

Just like any ethnic group in the UK, Gypsies and Travellers have their own customs and traditions which are fundamental to their everyday life, such as having their own languages.

### **Why do Gypsies and Travellers live in built up areas rather than the countryside?**

The Gypsies and Travellers who choose to reside in more urban areas do so for many of the reasons that most people do, to be closer to health care, schools, shops and work.

### **Would Travellers living on the Church Grove site be able to operate businesses from there?**

The site would be purely residential and no commercial activity would be allowed on the site.

### **Why do Travellers have a brick building and a caravan?**

The caravan/mobile home is only for sleeping. Travellers have traditionally lived in caravans for hundreds of years but when on a legal site with a licence the Council provides them with amenity blocks which provide each household with its own utilities. New amenity blocks are designed to a very high standard to ensure that they are energy efficient and meet modern building requirements.

**As questions are raised during the course of the consultation, the most frequently asked will be added to the Council's website.**

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REFER TO LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT'S INFORMATION FOR HARD & SOFT LANDSCAPE DETAIL  
 SITE CONTAINED BY RED LINE SURVEYED. SURROUNDING CONTEXT TAKEN FROM ORDINANCE SURVEY INFORMATION (NOT SURVEYED).

**PLANNING**

Revisions:

Rev	Date	Drawn	Chkd
1	30 NOV 2007		

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM  
 PLANNING SERVICE

DATE: 30 NOV 2007  
 REVISION: 1

CASE NO: .....  
 REC'D NO: .....

Revisions:

Rev	Date	Drawn	Chkd
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Date: Oct 2007	Client: London Borough of Lewisham
Drawn: PR	Project: Lewisham Travellers Relocation
Check: .....	Title: Site Layout
Scale: 1:200	Drawn: 06.081
	D50
	Revision: .....

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# Indicative View from Church Grove



Notes/revisions:

Rev	Date	Drwn	Chkd

Date: FEB 08	Client: London Borough of Lewisham	
Drawn: LB/DR	Project: Lewisham Travellers	
Check:	Title: Indicative Visualisation from Church Grove	
Scale: N/A @ A3	Dwgno: J06.081 / D58	Revision: