

Don't hold your breath

Planning Approval for Gypsy and Traveller sites in London year ended 31st March 2009

The recent Government publication of a new set of statistics on planning application for Gypsy and Traveller sites¹ reports that 3 applications in London were approved last year. This appears to be good news:

Major applications (10 or more pitches)
Kingston-upon-Thames
Southwark

Minor applications (less than 10 pitches)
Lewisham

But these permissions will lead to only 3 new pitches, (max):

Kingston-upon-Thames: (net gain = 3)

Application (ref 08/10201) approved for reconfiguration of the Swallow Park site with 3 extra pitches (from 15 to 18 pitches in total) and some refurbishment. This is coded as a major application because it affects a total of 18 pitches.

Southwark: (net gain = 0)

Application (ref 08/CO/0102) approved for refurbishment of Burnhill Close site, with no change in pitch numbers from 6. This is a miscoding – it should be a minor application.

Lewisham: (net gain = 0 or -4)

Application (refs DC/07/67610 & DC/07/67610A) approved for development of Church Grove site with 5 new pitches. But this scheme has now been put on ice pending *another* borough survey of suitable sites, the fourth² in recent years.

Indeed, since this development was designed as a necessary replacement for a site needed for regeneration³ whose last four pitches were being closed just as the approval was granted, it can be claimed that this permission was instrumental in a net loss of 4 pitches.

At this rate it will take at least 250 years to reach the London target.⁴

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¹ DCLG, 26th June 2009, Planning Statistical Release Table 8a www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/1265898.xls

² NLP, 29 Nov 2007, Planning Report. Para 2.10 http://acolnet.lewisham.gov.uk/ACOLLATEDOCS/32300_13.pdf

³ The GLA report (Oct 2007) on the regeneration states: “*alternative appropriate provision for the travellers is a prerequisite for redevelopment of the main Lewisham Gateway site..... Mechanisms to enable appropriate alternative provision are therefore in place.*”

⁴ GLA Draft Housing Strategy (May 2009) sets a London target of 768 new pitches by 2017