

**2 March 2018**

**Draft New London Plan**

**Policy H16 Gypsy and Traveller accommodation**

I am Marian Mahoney, I'm an Irish Traveller and live on the Old Willow Close site in Tower Hamlets. I've been an activist for Travellers' rights for 40 years. I have travelled all over England and London and together with my family we always fought to have facilities and official designation after the 1968 Caravan Sites Act was introduced. We finally settled in Bow and got the site recognised and designated by the council and have been there for 36 years.

Our site was threatened by the Crossrail redevelopment and we had to fight for 10 years to keep our site. There are 19 pitches on the site and 3 generations live here, but no new sites have been built in Tower Hamlets to house growing families and young people. The council knows how many kids there are on the site who need their own pitch, yet nothing has been done to meet this need.

We are hoping that the London Plan will ask every council to build at least 3-4 pitches every five years; we only need small sites, not big pieces of land. When other housing gets built they need to acknowledge Gypsies and Travellers who work and pay taxes in the area and treat them the same as everyone else, while recognising our ethnicity and way of life and the culturally suitable homes we need. There is money available for sites from the Mayor and shouldn't be so hard to build new sites if we were included with all the new housing that is getting built.

We have been discriminated and prejudiced for centuries. This affects our culture, education, families. Because there are not enough sites, we get pushed into housing, our families suffer from mental health, our old people are not being looked after because there is nowhere to live. We are Londoners and we want the same as everyone else. The Mayor and each borough should monitor that sites are getting delivered and that funding is being used. Under the previous Mayor money was sent back by councils because they said they can't find any land.

We see the evidence of land becoming available to build supermarkets and other things, yet there is never anything for Travellers. It is very cruel what's happening to us and it's time to stop this. We need a fair Mayor who can ensure there will be delivery.

I would like to attend the Examination in Public to contribute to the discussion on this policy.