

**POSITION STATEMENT ON DALE
FARM**

Wednesday 14 September 2011

The Commission recognises the complex nature of planning provision for Gypsy and Traveller sites and the challenges this presents for Local Authorities. Our evidence shows the fundamental importance of accommodation in tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers and the wider human rights and good relations implications for all our communities.

Basildon District Council has a dual responsibility to uphold planning laws but also to identify alternative culturally appropriate accommodation where the families facing eviction from Dale Farm can live legally. However, the root cause of this dispute is the national lack of authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites across the country. Neither the Gypsy and Traveller residents at Dale Farm nor the wider settled community will benefit from a costly and traumatic forced eviction.

In addition to pressing for a peaceful solution at Dale Farm, the Commission will continue its dialogue with central and local Governments to encourage them to demonstrate tangible progress in meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

The Commission welcomes the concluding observations of CERD published on 2 September 2011 and draws these to the attention of the Government's Ministerial Working Group on Gypsies and Travellers in addressing these concerns and meeting the shortfall in accommodation needs. Moreover, The Commission believes that the Government could still play a pivotal role in facilitating an amicable solution for the benefit of Traveller and settled communities alike, supporting Basildon Council and Essex Police, whilst deploying public resources more effectively.

Speaking on behalf of the EHRC, Commissioner Simon Wooley said: "Even at this very late hour there is still time to find a solution that avoids a messy eviction. There is an acknowledgement from those on Dale Farm that illegal residents should leave. The question remains, with so few suitable sites around the country, where do the evicted families go?"

Sadly, Dale Farm is a product of a national problem - the chronic under-provision of Traveller sites.

“We at the Commission would urge strong leadership from the leaders of Dale Farm, national government, and surrounding local authorities to find a solution that both upholds the law, whilst showing decency and humanity for all those involved. “