

Executive Summary for Merseyside and West Lancashire GTAA 2013

Introduction

In March 2013 arc⁴ was commissioned by Knowsley Council, Liverpool Council, Sefton Council, St Helens Council, West Lancashire Council and Wirral Council ('the Authorities') to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment to identify the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (referred to hereafter as "Travellers") from across the area. The overall objective of the research was to provide a robust evidence base to inform future reviews of Local Plans and housing strategies.

Methodology

In order to deliver the requirements of Government Guidance the methodology for this study has comprised:

- Desktop analysis of existing documents, data and pitch information;
- Interviews with Travellers;
- A Key stakeholder on-line questionnaire for professionals who have contact with and knowledge of local Traveller communities; and
- Discussions with community representatives and representative bodies including Irish Community Care Merseyside and the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain North West Section.

The current picture: population and pitch provision

According to the 2011 Census, a total of 465 residents in Merseyside and West Lancashire identified as having a White British Traveller ethnicity (Knowsley six, Liverpool 185, Sefton 120, St Helens 69, Wirral 77, West Lancashire eight). This may include residents living in bricks and mortar accommodation (in Wirral and Knowsley the absence of sites means that this figure does include households living in bricks and mortar).

As the number of pitches on existing sites is known, the main issue of uncertainty is the number of Travellers in bricks and mortar housing. Although the focus was to interview households living on sites, the fieldwork sought to identify and undertake interviews with Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation; 17 interviews were achieved with such households.

Overall, there are three Council owned sites in the study area (50 pitches) at Sherdley Road in St Helens (20 pitches), Tara Park in Liverpool (14 pitches) and Red Rose Park in Sefton (16 pitches). There are six private permanent authorised sites that are occupied (33 pitches); and six private unauthorised sites (12 pitches). This equates to 95 pitches across the study area.

In addition there are six authorised private pitches (transit and permanent) at Berrys Lane in St Helens and six authorised private pitches (permanent) at Hoghton Road in St. Helens. Both of these sites are not occupied but are family-owned and may

become occupied in the future. Finally there is a site at Sherdley Road Private Caravan Park in St Helens, next to the Council operated site. The private site has planning permission for permanent pitches and has been occupied in the past but is currently unoccupied. St Helens Council has been in contact with the owners regarding securing the use of the site for Traveller accommodation but it is earmarked for transit/permanent use. This takes the overall total of pitches to 107 excluding any potential pitches at Sherdley Road Private Caravan Park.

Table ES1 Summary of Traveller sites and pitches

Merseyside and West Lancashire	No. Sites	No. Pitches
Local Authority owned	3	50
Private authorised (occupied)	6	33
Private authorised (unoccupied)	3	12
Private unauthorised	6	12
TOTAL Authorised	12	95
TOTAL Unauthorised	6	12
GRAND TOTAL	18	107

In terms of Travelling Showpeople's yards, there is one yard in the study area at Burscough in West Lancashire. The yard has 10 plots permitted, with four of these being occupied permanently, and the other six only being occupied seasonally.

Household Survey Data: Key Information

The primary fieldwork for this study was managed by Home Space Sustainable Accommodation (HSSA) and undertaken by Traveller fieldworkers. A total of 111 interviews were secured, 38 with households living on a pitch/plot on a private authorised site, 43 with households living on a local authority site, 17 living in bricks and mortar accommodation, and 13 interviews were undertaken with households living on unauthorised developments. The survey work undertaken with the Travelling community looked at a range of issues that went beyond future accommodation requirements. The full report contains detailed survey results on the following issues:

- Ethnicity;
- Tenure;
- Facilities;
- Repairs and improvements;
- Space standards and overcrowding;
- Location and safety;
- Cost of accommodation and services;
- Planned moves and mobility; and
- Travelling practices and experience.

Stakeholder consultation

A total of 35 responses from a range of organisations were received to the online stakeholder survey. The majority of stakeholders felt that there was not an adequate understanding of the education, health, employment and support needs of Travellers across the study area with variations in provision evident across the study area.

The key issues arising were that:

- More could be done to monitor both the accommodation and support needs of Travellers;
- Better liaison and improved communication between Travellers and service providers is needed;
- More needs to be done by the Authorities to raise awareness of the accommodation and support needs of Travelling communities locally;
- Local Authorities could respond to 'complaints' about Travellers in an informative and factual way;
- Conditions on current Local Authority sites were felt to be generally good or improving;
- Conditions on the private sites varied in the study area;
- Irish Community Care Merseyside state that the preference amongst the majority of their service users is for a pitch on a Local Authority site;
- There was insufficient new provision of both permanent and transit pitches in the study area;
- Local opposition and a lack of funding are key barriers to the delivery of new provision, alongside land availability;
- More could be done to identify and bring forward new sites; and
- A sub-regional and regional approach to the issue should be promoted.

Future Pitch Requirements

The overarching purpose of this study has been to identify the accommodation requirements of Travellers across Merseyside and West Lancashire on the basis of 'need where need arises' as promoted by national guidance.

Short Term Pitch Requirements [next five years]

In line with the guidance, the assessment of current need takes account of existing supply and demand. This was informed by the survey work and information from the Local Authorities. In terms of supply, the assessment considers:

- Total supply of pitches on authorised sites;
- Turnover on existing authorised sites; and
- Vacant pitches on authorised sites.

In terms of need, the assessment considers:

- The number of existing households currently living on sites who are intending to move in the next five years, either between pitches on the same site, to a site elsewhere or to bricks and mortar accommodation;
- The number of existing households currently living in bricks and mortar accommodation who are intending to move onto a site within the study area or elsewhere within the next five years; and
- The number of emerging households (newly forming) in the next five years who are currently living on a pitch or in bricks and mortar and will need their own pitch on the same site, or need to move elsewhere in the study area, outside the study area or to bricks and mortar accommodation.

The assessment then reconciles total need and existing authorised supply by summarising:

- Total need for pitches; and
- Total supply of authorised pitches.

Longer term pitch requirements (six to 15 years)

The prediction of longer-term pitch requirements (six to 15 years) is challenging because the Traveller population requiring pitches within the study area is relatively small and any change in the number of unauthorised pitches cannot easily be forecast. Nevertheless, an indication of long term pitch requirement can be given based on anticipated household formation trends for the Traveller community obtained from the survey work.

Post 2027/28 Pitch Requirement (post 15 years)

For the period beyond 2027/28 it is considered difficult to rely on demographic information as it is not possible to use existing household information obtained from survey work to project accommodation need 15 years plus into the future. Longer term pitch requirements can be calculated using an annual 3% growth rate, in line with CLG guidance, on the total number of pitches for each Local Authority.

Summary of future requirements

Longer-term modelling of pitch need based on the demographic profile of households currently living in the study area indicates a total need for 39 additional pitches over the period 2013/14 to 2027/28 (15 years) and a further need for three pitches over the period 2028/29 to 2032/33 using a standard annual growth estimate of 3%.

Table ES2 Summary of future permanent pitch requirements 2013/14 to 2032/33

Longer-term projection model	Liverpool	Knowsley	Sefton	St.	West	Wirral	Merseyside
				Helens	Lancashire		and West Lancashire
2013/14 to 2017/18	0	0	4	6	14	6	30
2018/9 to 2022/23	-4	0	6	1	3	1	7
2023/24 to 2027/28	-4	0	4	-1	3	0	2
2028/29 to 2032/33	-3	0	1	2	2	1	3
Total need 2013/14 to 2032/33 (20 years)	-11	0	15	8	22	8	42

Transit Requirements

The two key elements used in determining a need for transit provision were unauthorised encampment data and information from Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officers (GTLOs).

Unauthorised encampment data for the two and a half year period [January 2011 to June 2013] was collated and analysed to give an indication as to the level of activity across the area – as unauthorised encampments are generally indicative of a lack of transit accommodation this is a useful starting point.

Discussions with GTLOs across the study area enabled further analysis of the unauthorised encampment data, and enabled anomalies, such as ‘one off’ large scale encampments to be excluded from the analysis where applicable. It also enabled identification of repeated incidences of unauthorised encampment activity by the same group of households. Refining the unauthorised encampment data in this way enabled us to determine the real extent of need based on past activity. The views of GTLOs as to the extent of provision required were then used to ratify these figures.

Note that by definition the transit pitches would only be used for some parts of the year and it is not assumed that the scale of transit need will change over the five years 2013/14 to 2017/18 or beyond. It is assumed that each transit pitch would accommodate one caravan. However, established practice within the Travelling community means that pitches could accommodate up to two vans if the pitch is being occupied by the same household or members of a family group.

For some Local Authorities it may be more appropriate to consider a form of authorised ‘stopover’ or negotiated stopping provision rather than a conventional formal transit site. Each Local Authority will have to determine through their Local Plans what would be the most appropriate type of site that will best meet the needs of Travellers passing through their area.

Overall, analysis of unauthorised encampment data and contextual information indicates that new transit provision is needed across Merseyside and West Lancashire. It is recommended that provision for 22 transit pitches be made across the study area as a whole.

Table ES3 Summary of transit pitch requirements 2013/14 to 2017/18

Authority	Five year pitch requirement (single van use)	Total maximum caravans that could be accommodated
Knowsley	3	6
Liverpool	4	8
Sefton	4	8
St Helens	3	6
West Lancashire	4	8
Wirral	4	8
Total	22	44

Travelling Showpeople Requirements

There is currently no provision for Travelling Showpeople within Merseyside and very limited provision within West Lancashire; provision in neighbouring local authority areas is overcrowded with no capacity to meet existing and future need. The primary fieldwork identified no need for new provision for Travelling Showpeople across the study area. However, evidence in respect of the site at Burscough has identified significant overcrowding and the need for provision of a new yard. It is therefore recommended that a new yard with at least one residential plot is delivered within West Lancashire over the next five years (2013/14 to 2017/18).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found that the key challenge facing the Authorities is meeting the identified accommodation requirements of Travellers in Merseyside and West Lancashire.

The research has evidenced:

- An overall five year requirement (2013/14 to 2017/18) of 30 permanent Traveller pitches and a further 17 pitches to 2027/28 (excluding the oversupply identified for Liverpool) or a further requirement for nine pitches if the oversupply identified in Liverpool is included;
- A minimum of one Travelling Showperson yard to be provided in West Lancashire in the first five years (2013/14 to 2017/18) with continued engagement with the Travelling Showpeople community to establish any further needs over the period 2018/19 to 2027/28; and
- A recommendation for 22 transit pitches for Travellers across the study area based on past trends of unauthorised encampment activity.

The Authorities, in partnership with Travelling communities, need to consider the options available to help meet identified need, including the expansion of existing sites, re-designation of unauthorised sites, use of Community Land Trusts and exceptions site policies.

It is also recommended that this evidence base be refreshed on a regular basis to ensure that the level of pitch and plot provision remains appropriate for the Traveller population across the study area.