

Accommodation for Gypsies & Travellers¹

1. The context for policies on Gypsies and Travellers is the key Government objective of providing decent homes for all. The Government's key policy objectives in relation to Gypsies and Travellers are to ensure that sufficient, suitable provision is made throughout the region to meet the needs of these groups through the inclusion of appropriate policies in Development Plan Documents. RSS should identify the number of pitches required for each Local Planning Authority and these pitch numbers should be translated into site specific allocations in DPDs.

2. The identification of sites at a local level should be carried out in line with the existing national and regional policies. Sites should be identified which support the development of inclusive communities and fit with principles of sustainable development. In order to facilitate such an approach, policies should not repeat existing regional and national guidance.

Interim Draft Policy L6 – Scale & Distribution of Gypsy & Travellers Pitch Provision

To contribute to housing provision in the North West as a whole, provision will be made for at least 1250 net additional residential pitches for Gypsies & Travellers over the period 2007 to 2016. In doing so Local Authorities should: ensure there is no net loss in existing levels of provision; and distinguish between permanent residential and transit pitches to deliver the distribution of pitches contained in Table 7.2.

Beyond 2016 provision will be made across the region for an annual 3% compound increase in the level of overall residential pitch provision, equivalent to at least 351 additional pitches between 2016 and 2021. Where Local Development Documents look beyond 2016 provision will be made for the same proportion of the regional requirement as in Table 7.2 for 2007-16. A coordinated review of sub regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) should be undertaken in 2013 to provide the evidence base for a subsequent review of this policy.

The provision of temporary accommodation in connection with festivals and other similar annual events is an important requirement, but should not be regarded as formal transit provision to meet the requirements identified in Table 7.2

Local Planning Authorities should take account of the specific needs of different groups of Gypsies & Travellers. In doing so, they should work with housing and other professionals, site managers, local Gypsy & Travellers and settled communities, to achieve levels of provision required by 2016, as soon as possible across a range of sites and tenures through:

- **the development management process, particularly when opportunities present themselves in respect of new major developments; and**

¹ For the purposes of this policy - Gypsies & Travellers means: persons of nomadic habit of life who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such.

- the identification of sufficient sites in Local Development Documents.
- Sites should be identified having regard to: Circular 01/2006; priorities in RDF1, RDF2 and RDF4; and the spatial principles in Policies DP1, DP2, DP4, DP5, DP7, EM5, L1 and L5.
- Local Development Documents should consider the need for rural exception sites and the alteration of Green Belt boundaries where necessary to make required levels of provision.
- The preparation of joint or co-ordinated Local Development Documents between two or more districts, to identify suitable locations for pitches is encouraged. Where joint or co-ordinated documents are produced provision can be redistributed across the areas concerned.

Table 7.2 - Scale & Distribution of Gypsy & Traveller Pitch Provision				
District	<i>Current Authorised Provision in 2007</i>	Minimum Additional Permanent Residential Pitches Required 2007- 2016	<i>Proposed Provision of Permanent Residential Pitches at 2016</i>	Minimum Additional Transit Residential Pitches Required 2007- 2016
<u>Cumbria Sub Regional Partnership</u>				
Eden	44	20	64	10
Carlisle	30	45	75	10
Allerdale	0	20	20	5
Copeland	0	0	0	5
Barrow in Furness	0	10	10	5
South Lakeland	0	10	10	5
<u>Cheshire Sub Regional Partnership</u>				
Cheshire East	95	80	175	10
Cheshire West & Chester	55	80	135	10
Halton	36	60	96	5
Warrington	22	35	57	5
St Helens	70	45	115	5
<u>Lancashire Sub Region Partnership</u>				
Blackburn with Darwen	48	60	108	5
Hyndburn	86	45	131	5
Burnley	0	20	20	5
Pendle	0	15	15	5
Blackpool	51	10	61	5

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District	<i>Current Authorised Provision in 2007</i>	Minimum Additional Permanent Residential Pitches Required 2007- 2016	<i>Proposed Provision of Permanent Residential Pitches at 2016</i>	Minimum Additional Transit Residential Pitches Required 2007- 2016
Fylde	0	10	10	5
Wyre	0	10	10	5
Lancaster	142	45	187	5
Chorley	0	10	10	5
Preston	12	45	57	5
South Ribble	0	10	10	5
Ribble Valley	0	10	10	5
Rossendale	0	10	10	5
West Lancashire	0	20	20	5
<u>Merseyside Sub Regional Partnership</u>				
Knowsley	0	10	10	5
Liverpool	14	25	39	5
Sefton	16	30	46	5
Wirral	0	10	10	5
<u>Greater Manchester Sub Regional Partnership</u>				
Bolton	26	60	86	10
Bury	17	60	77	10
Wigan	34	45	79	10
Salford	31	45	76	10
Manchester	16	60	76	15
Oldham	0	45	45	10
Rochdale	27	45	72	10
Tameside	0	30	30	10
Stockport	0	35	35	10
Trafford	83	25	108	10
NW Total	955	1250	2205	270

Supporting Text

3. There is an urgent need to address the shortage of accommodation suitable for Gypsies & Travellers. This shortage creates additional problems for the Gypsy & Traveller community in terms of access to health, education, employment and other opportunities. It can also create tensions over the use of pitches without planning permission. This is a national issue, and one that has been evident for some time in the North West. Recent legislation and guidance² from the government has indicated a commitment to taking steps to resolve some of the long standing accommodation issues for members of the Gypsy & Traveller communities. The overarching aim is to ensure that members of the Gypsy & Traveller communities have equal access to decent and appropriate accommodation options akin to each and every other member of society.

4. Interim Draft Policy L6 seeks to meet the pressing needs for additional provision of residential pitches for Gypsies & Travellers. Using the evidence from regional and sub regional Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's)³ the level of provision to be made reflects the needs of those currently resident in the North West on pitches / sites without planning permission, anticipated natural growth and net movements between pitches and other forms of accommodation. In addition an allowance has been made to address the issue raised by the Gypsy & Traveller community of "hidden" overcrowding on existing sites and concealed Gypsy & Traveller households who currently reside on other caravan sites and holiday parks, who for various cultural and management reasons remain undetected in GTAA's.

5. The current pattern of provision of accommodation for Gypsies & Travellers is concentrated in particular parts of the region⁴. In light of feedback from the Options Consultation stage, the distribution of additional pitches in Interim Draft Policy L6 seeks to broaden the choice available to the Gypsy & Traveller community by providing some pitches in areas where previously little provision has been made. It also seeks to assist the delivery of pitches by widening the geographic distribution to increase provision in areas beyond those where the highest level of need is currently evident. However, the distribution of additional pitches remains to a significant degree concentrated in parts of the region where Gypsies & Travellers currently reside.

² Housing Act 2004 and ODPM Circular 01/2006 "Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites".

³ "North West Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment" SHUSU, May 2007
"Cheshire Partnership Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment" SHUSU, May 2007
"Lancashire Sub-Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment" SHUSU, May 2007
"Merseyside Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment" SHUSU, February 2008
"Ribble Valley Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment" SHUSU, March 2008
"Cumbria Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment" SHUSU, May 2008
"Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Service Delivery Needs in Greater Manchester – 2007/8" arc⁴, 2008

⁴ Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs are identified in GTAA's on a 'need where it is seen to arise' basis. However, the results of these apportionments should not necessarily be assumed to imply that those needs should actually be met to the identified degree in these specific localities. This distribution reflects the current uneven distribution of pitch provision and the Gypsy and Traveller population across the region.

Because of the historical inequalities in pitch provision, Gypsies and Travellers have constrained choices as to where and how they would choose to live if they had real choice. Over time, this has inevitably meant that Gypsies and Travellers have generally moved to areas they see as offering the best life chances; for example, an authority which provides a site; an authority which is perceived as having more private authorised sites than others; or, an authority that is attractive in some other way (slower enforcement, transport links, friends and family resident, etc.). Therefore, there is a tendency, when the need for additional accommodation is assessed in GTAA's, for the needs assessment to further compound these inequalities in site provision. For example, authorities which already provide Gypsy and Traveller accommodation (publicly or privately) are assessed as having greater need for additional pitch provision than authorities with little or no pitch provision. This is compounded further the longer-term the assessment is made (i.e. to 2016).

6. Although nomadism and travelling is currently restricted to a certain extent, this remains an important feature of Gypsy & Traveller identity and way of life, even if only to visit fairs or visit family. Some Gypsies & Travellers are still highly mobile without a permanent base, and others travel for significant parts of the year from a winter base. More Gypsies & Travellers might travel if it were possible to find places to stop without the threat of constant eviction. Currently the worst living conditions are commonly experienced by Gypsies & Travellers living on unauthorised encampments, who do not have easy access to water or toilet facilities, as well as difficulties in accessing education and health services. National policy is clear that there should be provision in order for Gypsies & Travellers who chose to travel to do so without resorting to stopping illegally or inappropriately.

7. It is clear that travelling and resulting unauthorised encampments are complex phenomena. In order to assist Gypsies & Travellers in maintaining their cultural practices, the development of sites need to accommodate the diversity of travelling. It is important to note that the provision of an inappropriate form of transit accommodation may fail to reduce unauthorised encampment. It is therefore important that flexibility is built into the provision of feasible and appropriate options for transit accommodation by working across districts, with private landowners and key Gypsy & Traveller groups. There are two fundamental aspects here:

- Larger pitches on residential sites provide the potential to meet the needs of short-term visitors.
- Variety in transit provision is needed to cater for the variety of needs. This might include
 - ~ formal transit sites;
 - ~ less-equipped 'tolerated' stopping places used on a regular basis; or
 - ~ temporary sites with temporary facilities available during an event, family gathering or for part of the year.

8. The location and design of pitches is a matter for Local Planning Authorities to address by setting clear and appropriate policies in Local Development Documents. In doing so they should also take account of Circular 01/2006 - which provides Government policy with regard to the location of provision, and the further guidance on the site layout and design and management⁵. Policies should also recognise the diversity of Gypsy & Traveller Communities found in different parts of the region. Those involved in Gypsy & Traveller site design and management (both permanent residential and transit) should approach this in a creative and innovative manner. Preferences and aspirations of Gypsies & Travellers should be taken into consideration. Important things to consider include:

- Location to local services and transport networks ensuring schools, shops, health and other community facilities are within reasonable travelling distance, and can be reached by foot, cycle or public transport
- Ensuring the site is served (or can be served) by adequate electricity, water and sewerage connections
- Ensuring there would be no significant adverse effect on the amenity of nearby residents or operations of adjoining land uses

⁵ "Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites - Good Practice Guide", Department for Communities and Local Government, May 2008

- Ensuring the siting and landscaping ensure that any impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside is minimised including impacts on wildlife, biodiversity, nature conservation, and how the development can be assimilated into its surroundings
- Ensuring the development is not in an area at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplains
- That the provision of a settled base will reduce the need for long distance travelling
- Ensuring easy and safe access to the road network
- Need to avoid overcrowding and “doubling up” by ensuring adequate pitch size which allows for
 - ~ space for short term visitors
 - ~ facilities
 - ~ amenity blocks
 - ~ □□ mixture of accommodation (chalet, trailer etc.)
 - ~ utility of outside space (driveways, gardens etc.)
 - ~ Homes for life principles
 - ~ Health and safety
- Health and related support issues
- Tenure Mix
- Management

9. It is recognised that sites need to be situated in places which meet the current working patterns of Gypsies & Travellers and these may include countryside locations. However, issues of sustainability are important and decisions about the acceptability of particular sites need to take into account access to essential services and the impact on the settled community in the vicinity in order to promote coexistence between potential residents and the local community.

10. In line with Circular 01/2006, where Gypsies & Travellers want to run their business from the same site where their caravans are located, Local Planning Authorities should identify sites suitable for mixed residential and business uses with regard to the safety and amenity of occupants and their children, and neighbouring residents. If this is not possible, they should consider the scope for identifying separate sites for residential and for business purposes in close proximity to one another.

11. Where there is a demonstrated need identified in a needs assessment and a lack of affordable land to meet that Gypsy and Traveller need local planning authorities should include ‘rural exception sites policies’ allocated specifically to address that need in the same ways as rural exception sites for housing. Mixed uses should not be allocated on these sites.

12. New Gypsy & Traveller sites in the Green Belt are normally defined as inappropriate development as defined in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts. All other alternatives should be explored before Green Belt locations are considered. If there is an identified need for a Gypsy and Traveller site in an area and no suitable sites outside the Green Belt boundary exist, in exceptional circumstances, limited alterations or sites inset in the Green Belt could be considered. Such proposals should be brought forward through the plan making process and specifically allocated as a Gypsy and Traveller site only.

13. It is recognised that some Gypsies & Travellers may prefer to buy and manage their own sites, often living in relatively small family groups. Private sector provision of sites should be encouraged. There is, however, still a role for provision of public sites and sites directly managed by local authorities or registered social landlords to help meet the needs of those who cannot develop their own sites or prefer to rent, as well as transit sites and emergency stopping places⁶.

⁶ Circular 01/2006 states "The Government recognises that many Gypsies and Travellers wish to find and buy their own sites to develop and manage. However, there will remain a requirement for public site provision above the current levels. Such sites are needed for Gypsies and Travellers who are unable to buy and develop their own sites, or prefer to rent, and to provide transit sites and emergency stopping places where Gypsies and Travellers may legally stop in the course of travelling. "