

Accommodation for Travelling Showpeople¹

1. The context for policies on Travelling Showpeople is the key Government objective of providing decent homes for all. The Government's key policy objectives in relation to Travelling Showpeople is to ensure that sufficient, suitable provision is made throughout the region to meet the needs of the community 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 L7 – Scale & Distribution of Travelling Showpeople Plot Provision

To contribute to housing provision in the North West as a whole, provision will be made for at least 285 net additional plots for Travelling Showpeople over the period 2007 to 2016. In doing so Local Authorities should ensure there is no net loss in existing levels of provision and deliver the distribution of plots contained in Table 7.3.

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 124 additional plots 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 7.3 for 2007-16. A coordinated review of sub regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments should be undertaken by 2013 to provide the evidence base for a subsequent review of this policy.

The provision of temporary accommodation (including tolerated stopping places) in connection with festivals and other similar annual events is an important requirement, but should not be regarded as formal provision to meet the requirements identified in Table 7.3

Local Planning Authorities should take account of the specific needs of different groups of Travelling Showpeople. In doing so they should work with housing and other professionals, site managers, local Travelling Showpeople 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**
- the preparation of Local Development Documents.**

Sites should be identified having regard to: Circular 04/2007; priorities in RDF1, RDF2 and RDF4; and the spatial principles in Policies DP1, DP2, DP4, DP5, DP7, EM5, L1

¹ For the purposes of this policy "Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined in ODPM Circular 1/2006".

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 plots is encouraged. Where joint or co-ordinated documents are produced provision can be redistributed across the areas concerned.

Table 7.3 - Scale & Distribution of Travelling Showpeople Plot Provision			
District	<i>Current Authorised Provision in 2007</i>	Minimum Additional Plots Required 2007- 2016	<i>Proposed Provision of Plots at 2016</i>
<u>Cumbria Sub Regional Partnership</u>			
Eden	0	0	0
Carlisle	15	5	20
Allerdale	30	10	40
Copeland	0	0	0
Barrow in Furness	0	0	0
South Lakeland	5	5	10
<u>Cheshire Sub Regional Partnership</u>			
Cheshire East	6	10	16
Cheshire West & Chester	13	10	23
Halton	0	0	0
Warrington	3	10	13
St Helens	0	5	5
<u>Lancashire Sub Region Partnership</u>			
Blackburn with Darwen	0	5	5
Hyndburn	54	0	54
Burnley	0	0	0
Pendle	0	0	0
Blackpool	0	10	10
Fylde	2	10	12
Wyre	0	10	10
Lancaster	0	5	5

Table 7.3 - Scale & Distribution of Travelling Showpeople Plot Provision			
District	<i>Current Authorised Provision in 2007</i>	Minimum Additional Plots Required 2007- 2016	<i>Proposed Provision of Plots at 2016</i>
Chorley	0	10	10
Preston	0	10	10
South Ribble	0	10	10
Ribble Valley	0	0	0
Rossendale	0	0	0
West Lancashire	8	5	13
<u>Merseyside Sub Regional Partnership</u>			
Knowsley	0	0	0
Liverpool	0	0	0
Sefton	0	5	5
Wirral	0	5	5
<u>Greater Manchester Sub Regional Partnership</u>			
Bolton	88	40	128
Bury	20	10	30
Wigan	36	25	61
Salford	99	25	124
Manchester	75	25	100
Oldham	0	0	0
Rochdale	0	0	0
Tameside	38	20	58
Stockport	0	0	0
Trafford	0	0	0
NW Total	492	285	777

Supporting Text

3. In Circular 04/2007² the Government recognises that Travelling Showpeople are often self-employed business people who travel the country (often with their families), holding fairs. Many have done so for generations. Although their work is of a mobile nature, Travelling Showpeople nevertheless require secure, permanent bases for the storage of their equipment and more particularly for residential purposes. Such bases are most occupied during the winter, when many Travelling Showpeople will return there with their caravans, vehicles and fairground equipment. For this reason, these sites traditionally have been referred to as “Yards” (or “winter quarters”), with individual pitches generally referred to by Travelling Showpeople as “Plots”. A site with a number of plots on it is often referred to as a “Yard”. However, increasingly Travelling Showpeople’s quarters are occupied by some members of the family permanently. Older family members may stay on site for most of the year and there are plainly advantages in children living there all year to benefit from uninterrupted education.

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

5. Interim Draft Policy L7 seeks to meet the pressing needs for additional provision of plots for Travelling Showpeople. Using the evidence from regional and sub regional Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA’s)³ and surveys of Travelling Showpeople⁴, the level of provision to be made reflects the needs of those currently resident in the North West and anticipated natural growth.

6. The current pattern of provision of accommodation for Travelling Showpeople is concentrated in particular parts of the region⁵. In light of feedback from the Options

² CLG Circular 04/2007 “Planning for Travelling Showpeople”

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 The Accommodation Situation of Showmen in the Northwest” The Showmen’s Guild, Lancashire Section, June 2007 and “The North West’s Travelling Showpeople’s Current Base Location, Preferred Base Locations and Operating Patterns” 4NW, 2008 – produced with assistance from The Showmen’s Guild, Lancashire Section.

⁵ Travelling Showpeople 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 plot provision and the Travelling Showpeople population across the region.

Because of the historical inequalities in plot provision, Travelling Showpeople 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 Travelling Showpeople 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, areas which already provide Travelling Showpeople accommodation are

Consultation stage, the distribution of additional plots in Interim Draft Policy L7 seeks to broaden the choice available to the Travelling Showpeople community by providing plots in areas where Travelling Showpeople currently work and would like to live, yet previously little provision has been made. It also seeks to assist the delivery of plots 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 plots remains to a significant degree concentrated in parts of the region where Travelling Showpeople currently reside.

7. From our consultation with members of the Showmen's Guild, it would appear that a significant number of households work in the various sub-regions (particularly parts of Cheshire and Lancashire) but currently live in other sub-regions in the North West (particularly Greater Manchester – many of whose sites (yards) suffer from overcrowding problems) due to a lack of appropriate accommodation options in other areas. In addition there is a strong desire for some households to live in and around the areas which offer them the greatest opportunities to work. During the working season (mainly from March through to November), Travelling Showpeople will stay on legal fairground sites when working, but require secure places to stay whilst travelling with large fairground equipment for up to three or four days between one fair's end and the next fair's start date. In response to this an informal network of temporary accommodation (including tolerated stopping places) has developed with some landowners in parts of the region. The only other option is the expense of having to return to the Travelling Showpeople's own permanent base that may be many miles away. The logistics related to travelling long distances to and from permanent bases every few days and the cost and inconvenience in terms of sustainability, time, money, stress, fuel and pollution make a short stay near the next fairground location much more attractive to Travelling Showpeople.

8. The nature of Travelling Showpeople's sites is unusual in planning terms. The sites (yards) often combine residential, storage and maintenance uses. Typically a site (yard) comprises areas set aside for the Travelling Showpeople's accommodation and areas where vehicles and fairground equipment can be stored, repaired and occasionally tested. The area of land set aside for accommodation by one family unit and the area of land set aside for the storage and maintenance of their equipment would collectively form a plot. This means that the sites (yards) do not fit easily into existing land-use planning categories. The requirement for sites to be suitable both for accommodation and business uses is very important to the Travelling Showpeople's way of life as they find the principle of site-splitting unacceptable⁶.

9. The location and design of plots / yards 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 04/2007 - which provides Government policy with regard to the location of provision, and the guidance the Showman's Guild have produced on the design of sites.⁷ Policies should also recognise the diversity of Travelling Showpeople Communities found in different parts of the region. Those

assessed as having greater need for additional plot provision than areas with little or no plot provision. This is compounded further the longer-term the assessment is made (i.e. to 2016).

⁶ CLG Circular 04/2007 "Planning for Travelling Showpeople"

⁷ "Travelling Showpeople's Sites - A Planning Focus Model Standard Package" Showman's Guild of Great Britain, September 2007

involved in Travelling Showpeople site design and management should approach this in a creative and innovative manner. Preferences and aspirations of Travelling Showpeople 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
- 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 for large vehicles and equipment to the road network
- Need to avoid overcrowding and “doubling up” by ensuring adequate plot / yard size which allows for
 - ~ Adequate space to allow residential, storage and maintenance uses
 - ~ 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

10. It is recognised that sites (yards) need to be situated in places which meet the current working patterns of Travelling Showpeople 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. Where there is a demonstrated need identified in a needs assessment and a lack of affordable land to meet that Travelling Showpeople 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.

11. New Travelling Showpeople 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 Travelling Showpeople 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 Travelling Showpeople site only.

12. It is recognised that many Travelling Showpeople would prefer to buy and manage their own sites, often living in relatively small family groups. Private sector provision of sites should be encouraged. However there may also be a role for provision of public sector owned sites and /or 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.