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North and North East Lincolnshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment

Executive Summary

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The Study

1. Recent legislation and guidance from the government has indicated a commitment to taking steps to resolve some of the long-standing accommodation issues for members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. This legislation has an overarching aim of ensuring that members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities have equal access to decent and appropriate accommodation options akin to each and every other member of society. As a result, a number of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) are now being undertaken across the UK, as local authorities respond to these new obligations and requirements.
2. This research was commissioned by North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire District Council in August 2007. The study was led by a team of researchers from the Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford with support from researchers at the Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University. The study was greatly aided by research support and expertise from members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. The study was managed by a Steering Group composed of officers representing the commissioning authorities. This report also builds on a previous exploratory study commissioned by the two local authorities in 2005.¹
3. The assessment was undertaken by conducting:
 - A review of available literature, data and secondary sources;
 - A detailed questionnaire completed by housing and planning officers;
 - Consultations with key stakeholders; and
 - A total of 57 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers from a range of tenures and community groups.

Background

4. Following the Housing Act 2004, local authorities have been preparing to develop and implement strategies to respond to the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities living in their areas as part of their wider housing strategies and the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS). Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) are designed to provide the evidence needed to inform these strategies. However, as well as presenting evidence and information on

¹ Powell, R. and Reeve, K. (2006) Gypsies and Travellers in North and North East Lincolnshire: Accommodation Situations, Needs and Preferences. CRESR: Sheffield Hallam University.

accommodation needs at an immediate local level, the evidence collected and analysis produced have a wider regional role. The assessment of accommodation need and pitch requirements are also to be fed into the Regional Planning Body (RPB), in this case the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly (YHRA), for inclusion into the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS then specifies pitch numbers required (but not their location) for each local planning authority (LPA) in light of the GTAA's conducted and a strategic view of need, supply and demand across the region is taken. The local planning authority's Development Planning Document (DPD) then identifies specific sites to match pitch numbers from the RSS.

Main Findings

Local Gypsies and Travellers and accommodation provision

5. There is no one source of information about the size of the Gypsy and Traveller population in the Study Area. Our best estimate is that there are at least 250 local Gypsies and Travellers.
6. There are currently **no socially rented sites** in the Study Area. A socially rented site used to be provided within Scunthorpe however this was closed due to significant levels of vandalism to the site.
7. There are **4 authorised private sites** in the Study Area, together providing an estimated 57 pitches; 37 of these are residential, 20 are for transit purposes. The provision of authorised pitches is mainly within North Lincolnshire with a single 10 pitch site located within North East Lincolnshire. All respondents on private sites reported access to WC, postal service, rubbish collection, a water supply and an electric supply. Respondents on private sites had, on average, 1.5 caravans per household with the vast majority commenting that this gave them enough space. Respondents on private sites were, generally speaking, satisfied with their accommodation, neighbours, location and management of the site. Broadly speaking, there appeared to be good relations between members of the Gypsy and Traveller community and non-Gypsies/Travellers who resided locally.
8. At the time of the fieldwork there was also a private site in a neighbouring authority (West Lindsey) which was subject to temporary permission, although this was quashed in early 2008. The residents of this site are all believed to be former residents of North Lincolnshire.
9. There are **no unauthorised developments** (land owned by Gypsies and Travellers but developed without planning permission) within the Study Area. There was an unauthorised development situated in a neighbouring authority (West Lindsey) of which most/all residents are believed to be former residents of North Lincolnshire. Although the site did not fall within the administration of the commissioning authorities a

number of site residents were invited to take part in the assessment in order to establish their accommodation needs and aspirations. All but one of these residents wanted to remain on the site, the remaining household specified 'Brigg' as their idea area for accommodation. In general terms, it is believed that 'all' residents are attached to 'Brigg' rather than a specific authority.

10. There are **4 Travelling Showpeople Yards** all located within North Lincolnshire. One yard is socially rented the remaining yards are private and owner-occupied. Interviews took place on the socially rented site. It was clear from the responses of residents that more engagement from the local authority was required on the yard. The need for additional accommodation for Travelling Showpeople was at quite a low level.

Unauthorised encampments

11. The Caravan Count in January 2007 recorded 8 caravans on unauthorised encampments (on land not owned by Gypsies and Travellers). Records kept by the local authorities show that the Study Area experienced around 38 encampments over the previous full calendar year (2006), which was seen by the local authorities as a similar level for previous years. The average encampment size was just over 4 caravans. Most encampments stayed for a relatively short period of time; however, the average length of stay was 26 days (although this is skewed by several long lasting encampments). Most of the encampments occurred in North Lincolnshire.
12. A total of 6 interviews were carried out with people on unauthorised encampments. The average number of caravans owned by households on unauthorised encampments was 1.7, with around 2.5 people living in each caravan. Most households felt that they had enough living space for their needs although for some, both overcrowding and affordability provided a major barrier to achieving more space.
13. Access to facilities was largely restricted for households on unauthorised encampments with just one respondent able to access showers, waste disposal and electricity. No respondent had access to water and WC facilities
14. Just one respondent reported having a base elsewhere – this was described as a local authority site in the London area.

Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar housing

15. Both authorities make specific reference to Gypsies and Travellers in their local authority housing strategies. Only North Lincolnshire references Gypsies and Travellers in their homelessness strategy. Neither authority has a BME housing strategy. Neither authority was able to quantify the number of Gypsies and Travellers in social or private bricks and mortar housing. Based on the experiences of the fieldwork team for this assessment, it is suggested that there are at least 20 Gypsy and Traveller households in bricks and mortar housing across the two authorities; however, it is acknowledged that this is probably a significant underestimate.
16. A total of 15 households living in bricks and mortar housing across the Study Area were interviewed. Just over half of Gypsies and Travellers were owner-occupiers of their property, just over a fifth were social housing tenants, and a fifth were private tenants. Nearly two thirds of households still retained a trailer. The vast majority of respondents viewed their property very positively. Most respondents had lived in their accommodation for a number of years – nearly half for 3 years and over, and nearly half for between 1 and 3 years. No one was planning to leave the house in the near future. Over half of households thought they would remain in the house indefinitely. The remainder did not know.
17. In general, family reasons, a lack of sites and being born in housing were all given as major reasons why respondents had lived in a house at some point.
18. Nearly a quarter of all respondents had lived in a house at some point in the past. Most of those who had left housing did not like the experience. Respondents tended to cite marriage, cultural reasons or family reasons as reasons for leaving bricks and mortar housing.

Characteristics of local Gypsies and Travellers

19. The survey of Gypsies and Travellers identified some of the important characteristics of the local population.

Household size is significantly larger than in the settled/non-Traveller population at 3.7 persons across the whole sample.

A significant minority of the sample (13%) were households over 60 years of age.

Young families are the predominant household type in the Study Area as a whole. However, there are small but significant number of older families across the Study Area.

The vast majority of Gypsies and Travellers in trailers and in housing can be seen to belong, in some way, to the Study Area.

The majority of respondents (9 in 10) felt they were 'local' to the area they were residing in. 'Family connections' was the main reason given when respondents were asked why they were living where they were.

The local population includes a range of Gypsy/Traveller groups but is largely dominated by the Romany Gypsy community (8 in every 10). This is followed by Travelling Showpeople (9%); Irish Travellers (4%); Welsh Gypsies/Travellers (2%); and, small numbers of other groups of Travellers.

A significant number of households reported that their children do not regularly attend school or receive home education. Children on unauthorised sites had the poorest attendance levels.

The Gypsy and Traveller population was largely sedentary. However, around half of settled or authorised households still travelled seasonally – with some travelling more often than this. Feeling settled and having children were the main reasons cited for not travelling.

Of those households who still travelled, around a quarter of respondents tended to engage in quite diverse travelling. This included to destinations such as Appleby Horse Fair, Cambridgeshire, Stow, and areas along the route of the A1.

Self-employment was a major source of income for respondents with the type of work people engaged in including gardening/tree work, painting and decorating, building work, and uPVC and guttering.

Gypsies and Travellers and housing-related support

20. North Lincolnshire reported a new service providing support for various BME groups, although it is not clear if this is being received by Gypsies and Travellers in the area. North East Lincolnshire reported no such service.
21. The kind of housing-related services Gypsies and Travellers expressed an interest in receiving assistance with included: accessing health care; filling in forms; accessing legal services; support on planning; accessing training; claiming benefits; and, finding accommodation.
22. Just over a quarter of respondents felt that they had experienced some form of harassment or discrimination as a result of being a Gypsy or Traveller.

Accommodation preferences and aspirations

23. All households were asked whether there was anyone living with them who were likely to want their own accommodation over the next 5 years. Overall, 6 households reported that there was, which equated to 6 individuals who will require their own accommodation by 2012.
24. There was support for the creation of additional long-stay residential sites within the Study Area, with a quarter of respondents interested in moving to a new residential site/pitch – this included households who were currently accommodated on sites within the Study Area. Respondents voiced a preference for sites to be provided within the Brigg area and, to a lesser extent, the Grimsby area.
25. Nearly a fifth of respondents wanted to see the development of more transit/short-stay sites in the Study Area. Interest in such sites was shown from households from all accommodation types. According to the views of Gypsies and Travellers, transit provision should be provided in the form of ‘designated stopping areas’ or as transit pitches on residential private sites. There was no ‘agreed’ common duration which people anticipating using the provision for although a large number of people suggested between 4 and 8 weeks.
26. Respondents were asked to comment on a range of differing accommodation types in order to ascertain their preferences. The clear preference was for a small private site which they/their family owned. Living in a local authority or RSL house was the least favoured option.

Accommodation need and supply

27. Nationally, there are no signs that the growth in the Gypsy and Traveller population will slow significantly. The supply of additional authorised accommodation has slowed since 1994, but the size of the population of Gypsies and Travellers does not appear to have been affected to a great extent. Instead, the way in which Gypsies and Travellers live has changed, with increases in unauthorised accommodation, innovative house dwelling arrangements (living in trailers in the grounds of houses), overcrowding on sites and overcrowding within accommodation units (trailers, houses, chalets, etc.). In order to respond effectively and appropriately to the lack of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers, the regional planning body (Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly) has the role of ensuring that all local authorities contribute to resolving the current shortage of authorised site accommodation in a strategic manner, which helps redress current imbalances in the pattern of provision, and enhances the sustainability of the Gypsy and Traveller site network.

28. The 'models' for assessing the numerical requirement for additional residential pitches have developed significantly over the past few years. The calculation used here is an adaptation of the example provided by the CLG.² The calculation for years 1–5 (2007–2012) takes account of need arising from the following indicators: expiry of temporary planning permissions; household growth; need from unauthorised developments; movement between sites and housing; need from closing sites; and, need from households on unauthorised encampments. On the supply side, the calculation takes account of: pitch vacancies on socially rented sites; unused pitches; and, known/planned developments of sites/pitches. These calculations are estimates based on information drawn from: local authority information; knowledge of key stakeholders; survey findings; and, assumptions based on the professional experience of the study team.
29. Additional requirements beyond 2012 are based on estimated household growth. This follows commonly accepted assumptions as to the growth of the population.³
30. Transit requirements (2007–2012) are calculated by the average number of households on unauthorised encampments seeking a transit/short-stay pitch in the area; an allowance for vacancies is included in order to manage their operation effectively. No further transit provision is estimated to be required beyond 2012 on the assumption that the level of travelling will not increase in the foreseeable future and other surrounding local authorities will also have developed appropriate transit options.
31. Requirements for the additional residential provision for Travelling Showpeople are estimated on the basis of survey findings together with local authority information and information provided by the Showmen's Guild.
32. 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. So while choices for the non-Travelling community are generally much wider, as there is social housing available in every authority in the country, there are no local authority sites in 138 of the 353 local authorities in England, and only in 71 authorities is there more than one site. Some authorities have no authorised private sites. 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

² CLG (2007) *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments – Guidance*. London: HMSO.

³ Household growth rates of 2% and 3% a year were suggested as appropriate in Pat Niner (2003) *Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England*, London: ODPM. A 3% growth rate was also used in the recent report from Communities and Local Government (2007) *Preparing Regional Spatial Strategy reviews on Gypsies and Travellers by regional planning bodies*, London: HMSO.

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, 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).

33. As requested in the research brief, Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs have been identified at a sub-regional and a local level. This has been done on a **'need where it is seen to arise'** basis. However, the results of this apportionment should not necessarily be assumed to imply that those needs should be actually met in that specific locality. This distribution reflects the current uneven distribution of pitch provision and the Gypsy and Traveller population across the Study Area. Decisions about where need should be met should be strategic, taken in partnership with local authorities, the County Councils and the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly – involving consultation with Gypsies and Travellers and other interested parties, which will take into account wider social and economic planning considerations such as equity, choice and sustainability.

34. Table i below presents the 'needs where they arise' requirements.

Table i: Accommodation need arising from existing district level Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople populations

	Study Area Total	North Lincolnshire	North East Lincolnshire
Current authorised residential provision ⁴ (pitches/plot)	54	44	10
Additional residential need 2007–2012 (pitches/plots)	46	36	10
Additional residential need 2012–2016 (pitches/plots)	13	10	3
Additional suggested transit need 2007–2016 (pitches)	10	10	
Estimated total additional residential pitch/plot need 2007–2016	59	46	13

Note: For pragmatic reasons these figures have been rounded up to the nearest whole pitch

⁴ These are approximations of the provision (public and private) based on information obtained from the authorities during the course of the assessment. This includes Travelling Showpeople sites.

Recommendations

35. The overarching recommendation resulting from this assessment is that the authorities across the Study Area engage proactively to meet the accommodation needs that have been identified as a result of this assessment and that a strategic joined-up approach is taken. More specifically a total of 34 recommendations have been made for the Partner Authorities – all of which can be found in the main report. These recommendations include the need:

- to establish an internal working group within each authority to better co-ordinate the response and approach on Gypsy and Traveller issues.
- for a co-ordination group on Gypsy and Traveller issues comprised of local authorities and partners to be established to assist the authorities in developing a meaningful and co-ordinated approach to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and related issues.
- to ensure that all relevant policies are sensitive to the different cultural and support needs of Gypsies and Travellers.
- to ensure that the level of accommodation provision across the authorities (but also linked with neighbouring authorities) remain under constant monitoring/review.
- to engage in efforts to raise cultural awareness issues and dispel some of the persistent myths around Gypsies and Travellers.