Following the reorganisation of the government in May 2002, the responsibilities of the former Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) in this area were transferred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

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- Alan Hedges carried out the interviews with Gypsies and other Travellers and provided valuable analysis of this material.

- Martin Gladwin and his colleagues from FPDSavills undertook and analysed the physical survey of Gypsy/Traveller sites.

- Representatives of various bodies concerned with Gypsy/Traveller matters agreed to be interviewed and provided much relevant material.

- Local authority officers patiently responded to the questionnaires, and together with elected members and others participated in the case studies.

- Last, but by no means least, Gypsies and other Travellers agreed to take part in group discussions and provided valuable information and opinions.

My thanks to everyone who participated – and my apologies if I have not drawn all the right conclusions from the wealth of material provided.
VERBATIM QUOTATIONS

Verbatim quotations from interviews with Gypsies and other Travellers appear at various points throughout this report.

They are identified by a particular form of presentation:

Verbatim quotations from interviews with Gypsies and other Travellers

I: "Question or comment by the interviewer."
F: "Comment by female participant; given an arbitrary number within a particular interview session"
M: "Comment by male participant as above" (type of respondent/type of site)

The respondent types identified are:

Gypsy: English, Welsh or Scottish Gypsy
Irish: Irish Traveller
New: New (Age) Traveller

The types of sites identified are:

LA: Local authority residential Gypsy/Traveller site
Private: Commercial residential Gypsy/Traveller site owned and managed by a non-local authority body
Transit: Transit site (local authority)
Owner occ: Site owned by the Gypsy/Traveller family living on it
Housed: In permanent housing
Camped: On roadside or other unauthorised encampment
The following abbreviations, words and phrases are used in this report and may need some explanation.

**Amenity block**: Building housing one or more amenity units or sheds on a Gypsy/Traveller site.

**Amenity unit**: On most residential Gypsy/Traveller sites basic plumbing amenities (bath/shower, WC and sink) are provided at the rate of one per pitch in small permanent buildings. Some amenity units also include a day room. Amenity units may be grouped into amenity blocks. Amenity units are commonly referred to by Gypsy/Traveller residents as sheds.

**Bricks-and-mortar**: Term commonly used in the report to refer to permanent, mainstream housing.

**Caravans**: Mobile living vehicles used by Gypsies and other Travellers. Also referred to as trailers.

**CSA**: Caravan Sites Act 1968

**CSCDA**: Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960

**Day room**: Some amenity units have a larger area where residents can eat or relax; this is normally referred to as a day room.

**ECHR**: European Convention on Human Rights

**English Gypsy**: Member of one of the main groups of Gypsy/Travellers in England. Romany Gypsies trace their ethnic origin back to migrations, probably from India, taking place at intervals since before 1500. Gypsies were recognised as an ethnic group in 1989.

**Gorgio**: Term sometimes used by English Gypsies to refer to members of the settled community (also Gaujo).

**Group housing**: A small scheme of permanent houses or bungalows specially designed to meet the needs of Gypsy/Travellers. Group housing was developed in the Republic of Ireland and has been introduced on a pilot basis in Northern Ireland.

**GSRG**: Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant – see below

**Gypsies and other Travellers**: Term used in this report to include all ethnic Gypsies and Irish Travellers, plus other Travellers who adopt a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle.

**Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant**: a challenge fund available between 2001/2 and 2003/4 providing financial help to improve and refurbish local authority Gypsy sites. In its third year the scheme has been extended to cover development costs of transit sites and stopping places.

**HRA**: Human Rights Act 1998
Irish Traveller: Member of one of the main Gypsy/Traveller groups in England. Irish Travellers have a distinct indigenous origin in Ireland and were recognised as an ethnic group in England in 2000.

LGPLA: Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980

Mobile home: Legally a ‘caravan’, but not usually capable of being moved by towing.

New Traveller: Term used here to refer to members of the settled community who have adopted a nomadic lifestyle. New Travellers are sometimes also referred to as New Age Traveller.

Pitch: Area of land on a Gypsy/Traveller site rented under licence to a single resident. Often referred to by Gypsy/Traveller residents as a plot.

Plot: See pitch above.

Residential site: A Gypsy site intended for long-term or permanent occupation by residents. No maximum length of stay is set.

Shed: Term commonly used by Gypsy/Traveller residents for an amenity unit housing bath/shower, WC, sink and food preparation area.

Site: An area of land laid out and used for Gypsy/Traveller caravans. An authorised site will have planning permission (and a site licence if privately owned) for use as a Gypsy caravan site. An unauthorised site lacks planning permission.

Stopping place: An area of land identified for use by Gypsy/Travellers in transit; less formal than a transit site.

Trailer: Term used for mobile living vehicles used by Gypsies and other Travellers. Also referred to a caravans.

Transit site: A Gypsy site intended for short-term use by Gypsy/Travellers in transit. The site is normally permanent, while its residents are temporary and a maximum period of stay is usually imposed.

Unauthorised encampment: An area where Gypsy/Travellers reside in vehicles or tents without permission. Unauthorised encampments can occur in a wide variety of locations.
There are around 320 caravan sites in England owned by local authorities. Specifically designed for Gypsies and other Travellers, they constitute a specialist form of accommodation provision, and make a significant contribution towards meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and other Travellers.

Between April 2001 and September 2002, the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham carried out a programme of research on the extent and quality of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in England on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

This research collected a large amount of information about Gypsy/Traveller sites, how they are managed and about future needs. Much of this information is new. The findings have already been published in summary form (Niner 2002), and are reported in full here. This executive summary briefly states the main conclusions of the research to be read in conjunction with chapter summaries.

• There is no clear, widely understood national policy towards accommodation for Gypsies and other Travellers in England; there is a general feeling that such a policy is needed involving local authorities and others but with a strong lead from central government.

• There are around 320 local authority sites providing about 5,000 pitches. It is important that the existing network is retained, and currently closed sites brought back into use. Expenditure in excess of £16.78 million is needed over the next five years to bring site to standard, and at similar or higher levels thereafter. Spending at this level cannot be met from site income.

• We estimate that between 1,000 and 2,000 additional residential pitches will be needed over the next five years. Between 2,000 and 2,500 additional pitches on transit sites or stopping places will also be needed to accommodate nomadism. The latter need to form a national network. There is little agreement about the feasibility and viability of transit sites. They are likely to be costly both to build and manage.

• There are obvious barriers to site provision, especially through resistance from the settled community. Many believe that a statutory duty and central subsidy are needed to ‘encourage’ local authorities to make provision. Treating site provision in the same way as housing for planning purposes could help.

• Site management is more intensive than is usual for social housing management and requires higher staff/resident ratios. It should be ‘firm but fair’. There are areas where greater formality might be introduced, including performance monitoring.

• The anomaly in the treatment of sites for housing benefit purposes according to site owner status should be removed as quickly as possible.
CHAPTER 1

Background

There are currently just over 300 caravan sites in England owned by local authorities, specifically designed for and occupied by Gypsies and other Travellers. They constitute a specialist form of accommodation provision developed since 1960, and make a significant contribution towards meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and other Travellers.

Between April 2001 and July 2002, the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham carried out a programme of research on the extent and quality of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in England on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (formerly Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions). This report of the findings presents information – as up-to-date and as comprehensive as possible – on the characteristics of sites and how they are managed. It also looks at the need for further provision and explores various accommodation options for Gypsies and other Travellers.

This chapter describes the objectives of the research programme and the methods used. It then sets the scene by briefly describing some of the most relevant characteristics of Gypsies and other Travellers and sketching in the policy context.

The Research

Objectives

The research reported here was designed to inform the development of government policy by strengthening the evidence base and providing up-to-date and statistically reliable information on the size and condition of the current local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites network and the need for new site provision.

A number of research questions were posed in the original research specification. These can be summarised:

a) The size of the local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites network, past changes and predicted trends.

b) Demand and need for sites and other housing provision for Gypsy/Travellers and how those needs and demands can best be met.

c) Obstacles to new site provision and ways of overcoming them.
d) The standard and type of provision of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites and improvements needed.

e) Site management, resident involvement and improvements needed.

f) Economics of site provision and the desirability/feasibility of a more business-like approach.

g) Government guidance on site conditions and management and the need to update it.

h) Ensuring the social, economic and physical sustainability of new provision.

i) The role of private site provision in meeting needs of Gypsy/Travellers.

The main focus of the research is on English local authority Gypsy/Traveller site provision, with an exploration of authorised privately-owned sites in so far as this informs estimates of need for new provision and ways in which Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs might be met. The research brief also asked for an assessment of other approaches to accommodation provision for Gypsy/Travellers in western Europe, with special reference to 'group housing' as developed in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Research Methods

The complexity and scope of the research objectives demanded a variety of methods in order to collect the required information. The main elements are:

Initial Scoping Work
Scoping work was planned to increase familiarity with the research requirements and to explore issues from a variety of stakeholder perspectives. It contributed to the development of other survey instruments. A literature review was carried out; most material scanned is cited under References at the end of this report. Scottish reports on site management and Traveller opinions proved particularly useful in developing the research design (Douglas 1997; Lomax et al 2000). In addition, a series of eleven semi-structured interviews was carried out with key players representing site owners (local authority, registered social landlord and private individual) and organisations representing Gypsies and other Travellers or with a particular interest in Gypsy/Traveller matters (ACERT; the Gypsy Council; Friends, Families and Travellers; London Gypsy and Traveller Unit; and the Traveller Law Research Unit).

Postal Survey to Local Authorities
Much of the information about the type, number and management of sites was collected through a postal questionnaire survey to local authorities. In addition to providing comprehensive and consistent background information about local authority policies and practice on the provision of Gypsy/Traveller sites and answering some of the research questions directly, the results of the postal survey also helped in selecting sites for detailed survey and to act as case studies.

The questionnaire was sent to 385 English local authorities (both county and district councils) in late August 2001. Following postal and telephone/e-mail reminders, a total of 194 responses were received in time for analysis in early December 2001. While the overall response rate was
only 50%, an excellent response by county councils (82%) and a 60%+ response rates from metropolitan districts and unitary authorities meant that the majority of the country was covered geographically, although London was significantly under-represented in the response. The majority of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites were covered by the response (257 of the 328 sites included in the January 2001 DTLR Gypsy Sites Count, representing 79%).

Physical Survey
The aim was to survey a sample of 100 local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in order to assess their nature, quality, condition and repair needs. Six sites were surveyed to pilot the survey instrument. For the main-stage survey a total sample of 124 sites (94 main sample and 30 reserves) was selected using stratification to represent regional spread and type and size of site. Transit and mixed sites (a small minority) were over-sampled to increase their share in the final sample. Site owning local authorities were written to about the survey and asked to provide contact information to facilitate surveyors in locating and visiting sites.

The survey was carried out by FPDSavills, by the section specialising in planned maintenance and stock condition surveys, between 15 April and 19 July 2002. In total, including pilot sites, 107 sites were surveyed.

The survey schedule (see Appendix 2) was divided into sections: environment, site, pitch, amenity buildings and other site buildings. This was used along with a schedule of rates to collect condition and cost information, and to collect attribute data which provides a description of various aspects of sites, including quality/appearance and adequacy of provision. The survey data was input to a Microsoft Access database which was used to produce tables of required maintenance/improvement costs over a thirty year period. Attribute data was also provided to CURS who carried out further analyses using SPSS.

Site Management Survey
A further postal questionnaire was sent to the owner of each of the sites sampled for the physical survey seeking more detailed information on site management, occupancy and finances. Seven questionnaires were completed at pilot stage and have been included in the analysis. A further 121 questionnaires were sent out at the end of February 2002 for all sites on the main and reserve sample lists for the physical survey. Following postal and telephone/e-mail reminders, a total of 97 returned questionnaires were analysed in mid-June 2002. Some of these were incomplete, but have been included in the analysis for the questions answered. The overall response rate was 76%.

Case Studies
Ten case studies were carried out during the spring of 2002. The case studies were site-specific, with site-specific policy and practice being set within the wider context of all relevant local authority policies and approaches. Case studies involved the collection of documentary material and semi-structured interviews with a range of local authority personnel concerned with site provision and management, and in related fields of land use planning, housing and Traveller education. An elected member was interviewed in most case studies. The case studies were:
• A large mainly residential site managed directly by a metropolitan borough council in the north of England. ***

• A residential site located in a rural area, owned by a county council and managed by a Gypsy organisation in the north of England. ***

• A residential site owned and managed by a unitary authority in the West Midlands.

• A residential site on the outskirts of a small town in the Eastern region, owned by a county council and managed by a district council.

• A residential site owned and managed by a county council in the Eastern region.

• A residential site in a rural location owned and managed by a unitary authority in the South West. ***

• A residential site in a rural location owned by a county council and managed by a commercial company in the South East.

• A residential site owned and managed by a unitary authority in the South East. ***

• A transit site owned and managed by a unitary authority in the South East. ***

• A residential site owned and managed by a London Borough. ***

*** indicates case studies which involved interviews with Gypsies and other Travellers.

In six of the case studies, Gypsies and other Travellers resident in a range of accommodation types took part in discussions with a qualitative researcher, Alan Hedges, in spring 2002. Participants are referred to as ‘residents’ in this report. In all, 85 people were involved in 28 separate sessions. The range of accommodation covered is shown in Table 1.1.

These residents included 62 women and 23 men. In terms of ethnic origin the divisions were: English, Welsh or Scottish Gypsies (mainly English) 49; Irish Travellers 24; and New Travellers 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of accommodation</th>
<th>People interviewed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority residential site</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority transit site</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately owned commercial site*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied private site</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unauthorised encampment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent house/flat</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These sites had originally been built by a local authority, but are now owned and managed by a registered social landlord.
Resident discussions were intended to give an impression and ‘flavour’ of Gypsy/Traveller views, especially focusing on experience of travelling; views on sites ownership, design, facilities and management; perceptions of accommodation options available to Gypsies and other Travellers and preferences. The discussions also threw up issues around wider service provision, discrimination and social exclusion. The sessions were generally successful and provide a valuable resident perspective to complement what is otherwise a very ‘provider-oriented’ piece of research. Appendix 1 contains further description of the qualitative methodology and raises some of the issues – anticipated and realised – involved in carrying out qualitative research with Gypsies and other Travellers.

Other Elements
There were two further elements in the overall research:

- A desk-based study of group housing and other accommodation options from Ireland, France and, to a much lesser extent, other Western European countries. This study concentrated on readily available material, drawing heavily on internet sources.

- A workshop was held at the University of Birmingham on 9 April 2002. There were 19 participants (15 invited local authority officers and four from DTLR). The main subjects discussed were: assessing need/demand for accommodation for Gypsies and other Travellers; the need for and feasibility of transit sites; obstacles to site provision and how they might be overcome; and how to ensure sustainability of provision.

This report brings together material from all these sources.

Outline of the Report
The remainder of this Chapter describes some of the most relevant characteristics of Gypsies and other Travellers, and outline the policy context. Chapter 2 looks at local authorities and how they deal with Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues in general, including reference to managing unauthorised camping. It draws on the postal questionnaire survey of all local authorities and the case studies and assesses to what extent there is a corporate approach to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters.

Chapter 3 focuses on the network of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites. Drawing mainly on the physical site survey and to a lesser extent on the local authority questionnaire survey and case studies, it notes the extent of the network and recent and planned changes to it. It describes Gypsy/Traveller sites in terms of their size, construction, amenities and environment as well as their physical condition and quality. The cost of bringing sites up to standard and maintaining standards is estimated. Comments on site design and quality from Gypsies and other Travellers interviewed in the case studies are reported.

Chapter 4 looks at how local authorities organise for site management, including issues around contracting management out to other bodies. Chapter 5 explores site management policies, procedures and performance; it also describes site occupancy and resident characteristics. Chapter 6 looks at site finances. All these chapters draw on the postal and management surveys, case studies and discussions with Gypsies and other Travellers.

Chapter 7 explores the need – present and future – for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation. It discusses how need can be assessed and applies one model. Material from Gypsy and other
Traveller interviews on perceived accommodation options, preferences and aspiration is presented.

Previous studies have identified a number of obstacles to site provision. Chapter 8 looks again at obstacles and suggestions on how they might be overcome made by research participants. Chapter 9 develops this and other themes from earlier chapters into a set of conclusions and recommendations.

Gypsies and Other Travellers

Gypsies and other Travellers make up a small proportion of the British population with distinctive cultures, characteristics and accommodation needs. There is a significant literature on Gypsy/Traveller issues which makes clear just how complex those issues are and how potentially dangerous attempts at summary and simplification can be. Nevertheless, it is important here to attempt to describe briefly some characteristics of Gypsy and other Traveller groups as a context to the account of central and local government policies which follows. This is a selective account, focusing on factors particularly important to the provision and management of accommodation.

Some Definitions and Terminology

There is a legal definition1 of a ‘Gypsy’: ‘persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin’, excluding members of an organised group of travelling showmen or person engaged in travelling circuses travelling together as such. This was clarified in the case of *R v South Hams ex parte Gibbs* as ‘persons who wander or travel for the purpose of making or seeking their livelihood (not persons who move from place to place without any connection between their movements and their means of livelihood)’. Thus the legal definition is explicitly concerned with habitual lifestyle rather than ethnicity. It raises questions such as the length of time or number of generations required to establish a ‘nomadic habit of life’ by people taking to travelling and, conversely, the period of ‘settlement’ which would break a ‘nomadic habit of life’. Both have been considered in court cases where someone is seeking to prove their ‘Gypsy’ status (see Kenrick 1999).

Concentrating on lifestyle and nomadism leads to a possible distinction between ‘born’ Gypsies or Travellers and members of the settled community who have adopted a travelling lifestyle from choice, who might be termed ‘elective Travellers’. So-called New (Age) Travellers fall into this category. New Travellers are extremely varied and are on the road for a wide variety of economic, environmental, social and personal reasons (see for example Martin 1998; Davis et al 1994; Webster & Millar 2001; Earle et al 1994; and Davis 1997). It is likely that small numbers of the settled community have adopted a nomadic lifestyle throughout history, and that New Travellers represent the current manifestation of a long-term historical trend. Some New Travellers may settle into houses, others may continue to travel and transmit a travelling lifestyle to their children.

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Alongside the legal definition, there is an ethnic definition of a Gypsy or Traveller. Ethnic Gypsies are first recorded in Britain around the year 1500. It is widely believed that they crossed from continental Europe as part of a major migration west and north from India in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Subsequent migrations reached Britain in the late nineteenth century (families from Romania and other countries of eastern Europe), in the late 1950s (refugees from Hungary) and more recently as Roma refugees and asylum seekers from eastern Europe and the Balkans (Liégeois 1994: 25). Over the years, Gypsies have inter-married with local populations to the extent that some writers consider self-ascription (and acceptance by others in the group) as significant as claims to ‘racial purity’ in defining ‘ethnic Gypsies’ (Okely 1983). Okely is particularly critical of the quest to identify the ‘true Gypsy’ in an ethnic sense. In England now ethnic Gypsies include English Romany Gypsies and members of the Welsh Kale and Scottish Traveller groups. Romany Gypsies were accepted as an ethnic group for race relations legislation in 1989.

It is accepted that Irish Travellers have a distinct indigenous origin. Irish Travellers travelled to England in the nineteenth century (around the potato famine) and in greater numbers from 1960 onwards. Irish Travellers were accepted as an ethnic group for British race relations legislation in August 2000.

Okely (1983: 27) identifies some common aspects which emerge from many studies of Gypsies and Travellers on several continents:

- Gypsies and Travellers invariably differentiate themselves from the settled community, who are often referred to by English Gypsies as ‘Gorgios’.

- Many are found to have beliefs about pollution which express and strengthen this separation. Sometimes these beliefs can lead to hygiene practices which differ from those adopted by the settled community.

- There is usually an ideology and practice of self-employment and occupational flexibility. While there are examples of Gypsies and other Travellers in waged employment, the emphasis on self-employment still seems to be strong in England. Traditional occupations have included agricultural work, horse dealing, scrap dealing and hawking. As opportunities and economic circumstances change, so do Gypsy/Traveller occupations. Current occupations include tarmac and other building work, tree and garden work, furniture and carpet dealing, scrap dealing (despite falling prices), and seasonal agricultural work (despite shrinking opportunities and competition from other sources of labour).

- Many groups exploit geographical mobility. This, of course, links with the legal definition of ‘Gypsies’ outlined above though Okely notes that not all Gypsy and Traveller groups could be labelled nomads and some are predominantly settled in fixed accommodation. This mixture of nomadism and ‘settlement’ was apparent in the current research.

- All groups have had to survive hostility and periods of persecution from the dominant society. In Britain, being a Gypsy at times led to execution, imprisonment or transportation. While such overt persecution obviously no longer exists in Britain, many writers are still deeply concerned at everyday discrimination against Gypsies and other Travellers, and Hawes and Perez could subtitle their 1995 book _The Gypsy and the State ‘the Ethnic Cleansing of British Society’. The history of persecution and discrimination has led to a number of coping strategies being adopted by Gypsies and other Travellers, and has certainly contributed to lack of trust between communities.
Gypsies and Travellers have also been objects of fantasy and romance (often contradictory, for example the romance of life in horse-drawn caravans versus the one-time belief that Gypsies would steal babies or put a curse on members of the settled community). There is still considerable ignorance on the part of the settled community about Gypsies and other Travellers, who they are and how they live. One response to lack of knowledge is resort to stereotypes, and a failure to identify the individual from the supposed behaviour of the group as a whole. One of the frequently recurring comments made by Gypsies and other Travellers – as will be seen – is that they feel they are ‘all tarred with the same brush’ and constantly blamed for bad behaviour by any members of the wider group.

One other characteristic commonly remarked on amongst Gypsies and other Travellers in Britain is a social structure based on the extended family, but with little apparent structured organisation at a higher level. There is a tendency on the part of those within the Gypsy and other Traveller community to distinguish and identify with ‘real’ Gypsies (or Travellers) in a way which is confusing to the outsider. Thus, for example, there are several ‘representative’ Gypsy/Traveller bodies, but none which appears to ‘represent’ all Gypsies and other Travellers (see also Turner 2000); many site managers in the research spoke of problems in not having representative bodies to consult, and lack of interest in forming residents’ associations on sites. To the outsider at least, Gypsy/Traveller society appears factional rather than cohesive – perhaps not surprising in the light of the variety of origins, families and personalities to be found in a relatively small population.

All the above characteristics of Gypsy/Traveller communities were apparent in our research discussions with Gypsies and other Travellers. A further feature which emerged was the place of children in Gypsy/Traveller culture. Children are very important, and are often seen as vulnerable and therefore to be kept within view of adults for protection. Usually children are kept on a tighter rein than is usual in the settled community, and are expected to obey quickly. Children are usually well behaved, but can be very problematic where they get out of hand.
Some aspects of Gypsy/Traveller life illustrated

F: “We’re not classed as the same as a house-dweller – definite on that”
F: “No – and it’s not fair on us, cos we’re all the same” (Gypsy LA)
M: “I just live from day to day. If I wanna do anything, if it’s possible I’ll do it – and if I don’t wanna do it, I won’t do it. I just sort my problems out as they come along. I might have a different attitude than other people, or a different way of looking at life, but I just take it as it comes, good or bad – ‘cos there’s nothing I can do about it till it comes. And I haven’t got nothing planned like.” (Gypsy camped)
F: “They’ve got to have teaching now, my love, the young ‘uns have – not like we, when we was kids, travelling, we never had – we used to have someone to teach us now and again – for them what could read, and half on us can’t read nor write, and it makes it awkward for us” (Gypsy LA)
F: “And when you was a Gypsy child you didn’t used to fit in at schools – you still don’t now”
F: “They call you names”
F: “I know they’re racist with blacks, but Gypsies they get called ‘dirty Gypsies’, ‘gyppie heads’ – and they get called all names, the kids do at school, still now” (Gypsy housed)
M: “There’s lots of ways the travelling people can turn their fingers to. I mean they’re not idle people, they will do work. They can turn to gardening work, they can turn to scrap work, they turn to selling things. They don’t want to be like this” (Gypsy LA)
F: “If one Traveller does something everyone is getting blamed for it”
I: “And are there Travellers who do cause trouble that give you a bad name?”
F: “Yeah there is”
F: “All Travellers gets the one painted brush” (Irish LA)
M: “Where have you picked up a paper and seen we’ve raped one of our own kids? It’s your people that’s doing it, not my people – settled people. You rape your own kids, you abandon your kids, we don’t. Therefore why should we be discriminated and you’re not? Every morning you pick up a paper and you see some man has raped a kid, he’s kidnapped a baby, he’s killed it – but where have you picked up a paper and seen that a Traveller has done that?” (Irish housed)
M: “Nine out of ten travelling men would not push a pram, nine out of ten would not link their wives or hold her hand going walking, nine out of ten won’t do that. Now don’t ask the reason why, I don’t know the reasons why, it’s been handed down” (Irish housed)
F: “We keep a lot to ourselves, and it’s a family thing – we don’t go to the police with things like that, if we’ve got a problem we sort it out between our own selves. It’s not the right way to do things – we’ve never been brought up to run to the police and tell ‘em” (Gypsy housed)
M: “There’s been a lot of trouble recently, like in pub fights – but we don’t interfere with the public, we interfere with ourselves, Traveller on to Traveller or Gypsy on to Gypsy” (Irish housed)

This brief discussion of definitions of Gypsies and other Travellers should highlight a number of points:
There are no simple definitions. Definitions can only really be related to a particular purpose.

Over time, definitions can change. This temporal fluidity means, for example, that ethnic Gypsies could lose Gypsy status if solely related to a nomadic lifestyle, while non-ethnic New Travellers can gain it. Through inter-marriage even the ethnic boundaries can shift over time.

There is the potential at least for great complexity within the Gypsy/Traveller population (however defined) in England. For example, at the simplest a distinction can be drawn between English Gypsies, Irish Travellers and New Travellers. However, different families within each group may also differ in lifestyle, behaviour and aspirations – as may individuals within those families.

For the purposes of this research an inclusive definition of Gypsies and other Travellers is adopted which accepts an ethnic core of Gypsies and other Travellers (some of whom will be ‘settled’), and adds members of the settled community who have adopted a travelling lifestyle. This is not intended as a political statement, but as a pragmatic recognition that nomadism or semi-nomadism presents certain common accommodation issues regardless of who is adopting that pattern of life. The specific question of the legal definition of ‘Gypsies’ is returned to in the final chapter of the report. It should be noted that this research does not deal specifically with recent Roma refugees and asylum seekers, although these may represent the largest ‘Gypsy’ grouping in some cities at present (personal communication from Traveller education worker, Manchester). This is because the issues surrounding recently arrived Roma appear distinct and very different from those facing the more tradition Gypsy/Traveller populations in England. Indeed, it is interesting that recent Roma arrivals were very rarely mentioned in interviews with local authority personnel or other stakeholders, and never by Gypsy/Travellers in resident discussions.

Terminology can be contentious. The work with Gypsies and other Travellers carried out as part of this research found that all identified with the term ‘Traveller’ and would use it to describe themselves despite realising that it may be a stigmatised word in the eyes of the settled community. Some participants described themselves as ‘Gypsies’ with pride. Others felt the term more stigmatised than ‘Traveller’. Irish Travellers never spoke of themselves as Gypsies and were never referred to in that way by others. ‘Traveller’ or ‘Irish Traveller’ was their preferred title. New Traveller participants seemed to have no clear idea of how they should be referred to and were not generally very ‘label-conscious’. Throughout this report we use ‘Gypsy and other Traveller’ as a general term to include people falling within the pragmatic definition given above (Gypsy/Traveller when used adjectivally). Sub-groupings are referred to where necessary as ‘English (or Welsh) Gypsies’; ‘Irish (or Scottish) Travellers’ and ‘New Travellers’. We hope that this usage is acceptable and causes no offence.

Numbers and Demography

The total Gypsy/Traveller population in England is unknown. Estimates range between 90,000 and 120,000 for the United Kingdom (Liégeois 1994: 34), presumably on some ethnic basis. The majority will be in England. There are uncertainties partly because of different possible definitions, but mainly because of an almost total lack of information about the numbers of Gypsies and other Travellers (who consider themselves such) who live in houses or flats – estimated to be at least 50% (Cambridgeshire Travellers Review, undated). Some see the failure
of the 2001 Census to have a specific Gypsy/Traveller ethnic category as a major lost opportunity, although others question how accurate self-ascription would be in identifying a group who may have some interest in remaining anonymous because of stigmatisation and discrimination.

Local authorities in England provide a count of Gypsy caravans in January and June each year to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)\(^2\). The January 2002 count was 13,612 caravans. Applying an assumed 3 person per caravan multiplier would give a population of about 41,000. Again applying an assumed multiplier and doubling this to allow for Gypsies and other Travellers in housing, gives a total population of around 82,000 for England. This figure can only be very approximate – caravan counts are known to be inconsistent and probably under-enumerate Gypsy caravans; some authorities probably do not include New Travellers while others do (see Green 1991).

When caravan counts were first introduced in January 1979, the total was 8,358. Applying the same multipliers gives an estimated total population of around 50,100\(^3\), suggesting a 64% increase over the 23 year period.

Comments made during the scoping stage of this research drew attention to other demographic characteristics, with accommodation and other service provision implications:

- Gypsies and other Travellers marry at a relatively young age. If for some reason support is not available from the extended family group, young families can be particularly vulnerable. This can happen where young couples/families are accommodated in housing away from their wider families.

- Numbers of children in families are above the norm in the settled population, especially amongst Irish Travellers. This has obvious implications for health and education services. It suggests that need for further accommodation through population growth is and will be significant (see also the crude estimates of past population growth).

- Gypsies and other Travellers suffer poorer health and lower life expectancy than is the norm in the settled community. One of the triggers for settling in housing is old age and ill health.

- Some respondents are unhappy about categorising and labelling Gypsy/Traveller groups (English Gypsy, Irish Traveller etc), arguing that this can encourage facile and misleading stereotyping, is undesirable on equal opportunity grounds and can encourage prejudice about particular groups. However, it seems important to recognise that sub-groups do exist with significant differences as well as similarities between them. Gypsies and other Travellers often make these distinctions themselves (as noted above). These differences – where they are real – can have implications for accommodation provision and management.

Table 1.2 shows the regional distribution of total Gypsy caravans enumerated at the January 2002 count. The table also shows the regional distribution of the total English population.

\(^2\) Counts are published on the ODPM website at http://www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/information/index14.htm\#stats

\(^3\) Applying the same multipliers is purely arbitrary. It might be thought that family size per caravan would have decreased over the period while the number in housing may have increased.
As can be seen, the three regions comprising the north of England house almost three in ten of the total English population but only a fifth of Gypsy caravans. There are proportionately significantly more Gypsy caravans in the Eastern region and slightly more in East Midlands, South West and South East regions. Greater London has proportionately many fewer Gypsy caravans than might be expected from population share (it is probable that higher proportions of Gypsies and other Travellers live in houses or flats rather than caravans in London than elsewhere).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Gypsy caravans</th>
<th>Population of England 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humber</td>
<td>1,241</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>1,485</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>1,427</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>3,108</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>1,562</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>2,478</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater London</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DTLR Count of Gypsy Caravans 16 January 2002; 1999 mid-year estimates

Travelling

Travelling is part of the cultural heritage of traditional Gypsies and Travellers. Some of the attractions of travelling described by participants in our research are relevant here. The main appeal of travelling is to do with varying mixtures of the following factors:

- ** Tradition and culture:** born Travellers travel partly because this is an inherited way of life from traditions and culture which revolve around travelling. They often say ‘it’s in the blood’, have a visible urge to travel, and get restless if kept in one place. Travelling has been the normal thing to do unless there are powerful reasons for not doing so.

- ** Feeling free:** the words ‘free’ and ‘freedom’ were often used when talking about the travelling life; people said that they did not want to feel ‘tied down’.

- ** Keeping options open:** an aspect of freedom is the ability to stay flexible and choose what to do next – there is no need to plan ahead, Travellers can take advantage of opportunities as they arise, and can avoid problems by moving on.

- ** Avoiding feeling enclosed or ‘shut-in’:** the travelling life seems very open, with frequent references to open air and open space. Travelling also brings close contact with rural areas and green countryside.

- ** Variety:** the travelling life offers a great deal of variety, for example ‘pulling on somewhere fresh’ can be a delight; if the view palls Travellers can move on to find another one; and there are continual meetings (and perhaps travelling) with new people.
- Social life: travelling involves a tightly-knit social life. There is often a close bond with travelling companions, with a sense of community identity and mutual self-help which is stronger than is now felt in many house-dwelling communities. While on the road, there is some choice of travelling companions whereas on a residential site or in housing someone else decides who the neighbours will be.

Much the same factors seem to apply, with different emphases and manifestations, to New Travellers. Most basically, it seems that travelling is ‘a state of mind’ quite as much as an actual way of life, which must be taken into account in any discussion of accommodation options for Gypsies and other Travellers.

### The Appeal of Travelling

I: “What’s the appeal of travelling?”
F: “It’s the way you’re brought up with, it’s in your blood and you just like to keep travelling”
F: “You don’t like to be settled down like for too long, you like to go out and go to different places, don’t you?”
F: “Go to different towns and meet different people, you get the urge. When you see the sunshine, you’ve got to go – all Travellers is like that, when they see the sunshine they just wants to go anywhere, they don’t care where it is, Travellers don’t know where they’re going to be tomorrow, they could be anywhere” (Irish LA)
F: “Well, you’re free, my love”
M: “And you’re not tied, guv, you’re not tied”
F: “And different air, you’re free like a bird – when we’re on these places (sites) we’re just like wild birds in a cage” (Gypsy LA)
F: “I’ll tell you what, when we lived along the roads – ”
F: “We were all happier”
F: “Much happier and better off than we are today anyway - because we was free. We was free”
I: “You don’t feel free here?”
F: “No, we don’t feel free now”
F: “Prisoner of war camps” (Gypsy LA)
F: “The main reason people live this way is because you have a social life, you have other people. If I had to live in a house in an estate I’d have nothing in common with the people” (New transit)

As has already been noted, not all born Gypsies and other Travellers actually travel (meaning moving from one place to another while living in trailers (caravans) or other wheeled vehicles). There are variations in frequency and distance of travel.
Contrasting travelling patterns

I: “Do you travel off the site here now at all?”
M: “No”
M: “Not – very rarely, no” (Gypsy LA)
M: “We were travelling. We could travel around at that time. The old law stopped us. The
government stopped us doing it”
I: “So you don’t travel at all now?”
M: “Not at all now”
I: “Not even in the summer?”
M: “No. Well they go away couple of weeks’ holiday. That’s about it. No travelling”
I: “Not on the road!”
M: “No. Very seldom. We’re stuck in the Gorgio’s ways now” (Gypsy LA)
M: “Travel all over”
M: “All over – Scotland, England and Wales”
I: “Yeah, you still do that?”
M: “Still do”
I: “So in six months time you might be the other end of the country!”
M: “You could see me in the last part of Scotland, you could see me in Germany. We do go to
Germany – we go to Germany once, two times a year, it’s a lovely country, lovely country –
we do tarmacking in Germany. Nice to get a break for a while” (Irish camped)

In terms of frequency of travelling a number of categories can be identified:

- **Full-time Travellers** who travel more-or-less all the time, and all the year round.

- **Seasonal Travellers** who travel all or most of the summer (from a few weeks to several
  months) and stay put in the winter, having some kind of base on a site or in a permanent
dwelling.

- **Holiday Travellers** who are basically settled on sites or in houses, but travel for a few weeks
  in the summer, living during that period in some kind of trailer or caravan.

- **Special occasion Travellers** who are basically settled but travel for family or other occasions,
  for example weddings, funerals and fairs.

- **Settled Travellers** who live on residential sites or in houses/flats, and travel little if at all.

It is probable that full-time and longer seasonal travelling will have an economic basis and will
be geared to employment patterns and opportunities. The ideal length of stay in any one
location may be geared to the duration of the event (for holiday or special occasion Travellers)
or exhausting employment opportunities (for example, meeting the market for temporary
agricultural, tarmacking or garden work in an area). The actual length of stay may also be a
function of local eviction policies towards those on unauthorised encampments.

Distance travelled in regular travelling patterns also varies:
• Long distance Travellers may regularly travel between several English regions, and may visit Ireland or even travel to destinations in continental Europe.

• Regional Travellers may regularly travel within a single region, or over relatively short distances between two or more regions.

• Local Travellers may travel regularly but over short distances, perhaps around a single town or city.

There are no estimates of the relative size of these various travelling categories. There are, however, some indications of trends and tendencies. There is an indication that fewer Gypsies and other Travellers now travel full-time, with a concomitant growth in the other categories nearer to being ‘settled’. Our own research with Gypsies and other Travellers suggest that this is due to a complex combination of factors including increased difficulties around finding places to stop, being more hassled and more rapidly moved on when they do, a greater sense of insecurity on the road, growing recognition of the importance of schooling for children and realisation that this is harder while travelling, and desire for a generally easier and more comfortable lifestyle with more straightforward access to water, electricity, central heating, health and other services than is normally possible while following a travelling life.

However, it would be unwise to assume that any trend towards greater ‘settlement’ is universal, or unidirectional. Individuals can pass from one pattern of travelling to another in line with family cycle, health and personal circumstances. Children of ‘settled’ born Gypsy/Travellers may take to the road again. Many housed Gypsy/Travellers (where there is no easy alternative open to them) aspire to live in a trailer and to travel. Movement into and out or houses, or between houses is common.
Increasing problems in travelling

F: “These days you can’t travel no more on the road, it’s impossible, cos if you’re at the side of the road you get cars pull up, throwed at”
F: “Verbal abuse as well – stones be throwed at you”
F: “Well, you could be smashed up aside the road, and be beat up for no reason at all – and you don’t know who’s doing it”
M: “Cos you’re a Gypsy”
F: “So it’s not safe”
I: “So you wouldn’t feel safe travelling around anyway, even if you could find places?”
F: “No – no, not with the kids”
F: “Unless there was a big crowd”
F: “You can’t let a kid go out and have a game, if you had a child outside playing you’d be frightened of ‘em – kidnapped and that” (Gypsy LA)
F: “The only place we can get water for drinking is from a garage”
M: “And 9 garages out of 10 won’t let you have it”
F: “We’ve had them actually take the taps off from the wall or turn the water off or tell you to get out. So you can drive around for 2 hours sometimes trying to get a can of water. They’re all the hate bits”
M: “Even the toilets, even the toilets innit, in the garage”
F: “Oh yes, if they see you coming to the toilet what they do is they put a barrier across it and say it’s out of order”
M: “I mean in (this town) there’s God knows how many garages, but there’s only two we can get water from”
F: “That’s the hate bits because you’re degraded, you’re made to feel so tiny, you’re not supposed to exist. And they say to you, ‘Oh you don’t pay no rates, you don’t pay no taxes, you live for nothing!’” (Gypsy camped)

And the decision to ‘settle’

I: “What made you decide you were going to come and settle then?”
M: “We had no choice, nowhere else to go, travelling life come to an end”
F: “We were just getting moved on all the time”
F: “They wouldn’t let us stay”
M: “Chuckings us off all the time”
F: “And as time’s gone on, the worser it’s got”
F: “We had to – that was the law, that we had to settle down” (Gypsy LA)
F: “Although I was reared to it, since I’ve been on the caravan site it has ruined me, it has spoilt me really – more comfort, and I long to come back here when I go away for a while – I get fed up. This is home.” (Gypsy LA)
M: “I said to meself one day, I says, I’ve had enough of travelling because of all the aggravation” (New housed)
I: “What made you decide to stop and not travel anymore?”
F: “It’s the children’s education, wasn’t it – the schooling and that, cos when you’re travelling around you’re always hassled with education and that – it’s just kids’ education, get them a bit of education, the girls into a bit of work, if they want to get a job or whatever” (Irish LA)
Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation

As already noted, some Gypsies and other Travellers live in permanent dwellings. Although this has been the case for many years, very little is known about Gypsies and other Travellers in housing, especially in the private sector. London is an exception with several studies dealing with housed Travellers, for example (Emmerson & Bodie 2000/1; Southwark Housing 2000). Common issues for Gypsies and other Travellers in social housing appear to include discrimination and racism, support and housing management. Levels of deprivation and stress among housed Travellers are reported to be extremely high. As noted above, there are no figures for the number of Gypsy/Travellers in housing.

At the other extreme, some Gypsies and other Travellers engaged in full-time travelling lack any form of authorised accommodation, living in trailers (caravans) on unauthorised encampments on a variety of sites including the roadside, public open space, fields and woodlands, industrial estates, car parks and playing fields. Gypsies and other Travellers on unauthorised sites experience great uncertainty as to permitted length of stay, and can be subject to rapid eviction for trespass. In addition, Gypsies and other Travellers experience a lack of basic taken-for-granted services and facilities which is unique in England today. Unauthorised encampments almost always lack mains water supply and sewage disposal, and mains electricity. Discussions with Gypsies and other Travellers on unauthorised sites suggest that, for them, the difficulties and uncertainties around finding a place to stop are much more serious than lack of services – which have never been easily available while travelling.

The January 2002 Gypsy caravan count enumerated 2,774 caravans on unauthorised sites – a figure which probably excludes some New Travellers not counted by local authorities as ‘Gypsies’. Numbers of caravans on unauthorised sites have fallen from a peak in January 1992 (4,324), but have proved obstinate since the late 1990s. July counts are consistently some 400-500 higher than in January presumably because of the incidence of seasonal travel by Gypsies and other Travellers enumerated on authorised sites in winter, or missing from the counts altogether because they have a winter base in a house or in Ireland.

‘Gypsy sites’ – with which this research is primarily concerned – are caravan sites provided explicitly for Gypsies and other Travellers (a few Gypsy/Travellers may live on mobile home sites without any special designation). It is sometimes argued that ‘sites’ are a construct of the settled community through planning and caravan sites legislation, which has been ‘foisted’ on the Gypsy/Traveller community in an attempt to enable continuing caravan-dwelling and mobility while conforming to settled community ideas of land ownership and authorised land use. Briefly, on local authority sites and some private ones the norm is for Gypsy/Traveller families to live in owner-occupied trailers (caravans) or mobile homes on plots rented under licence from the site provider. Very few publicly provided sites cater for transit needs, and most are designed for residential use with hardstanding, water, electricity and standard amenities provided on an individual family basis. Privately owned sites are briefly discussed in Chapter 2, while Chapters 3 to 6 look in some detail at local authority sites. Here, as context, it is appropriate to look at numbers.

The January 2002 Gypsy caravan count identified 6,178 caravans on authorised council sites, and 4,660 on authorised private sites. Both figures represent a big increase over 1979 when counts began (2,988 caravans on public sites and 1,194 on private sites) and 1990 (5,199 and 2,435 respectively). However, since 2000 the number of Gypsy caravans enumerated in January

\[\text{An unknown number will be on ‘tolerated’ sites where the local authority is not likely to take eviction action in the near future. In addition, some will be living on their own land, but without benefit of planning permission.}\]
on local authority sites has declined slightly and the rate of increase of private sites has slowed (see Table 1.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of site</th>
<th>Percentage rate of increase in the period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>+17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>+27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All authorised sites</td>
<td>+20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DTLR Count of Gypsy Caravans on 16 January 2002, and Hawes and Perez 1996, Table 2a, page 44

These numbers and trends set the context for the research findings presented below.

### The Policy Context

The policy context of Gypsy site provision and management and wider Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues is broad. It is also important to have a historical perspective since local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites are the product of past rather than current legislation and funding regimes. While detailed aspects of the legal framework, for example on security of tenure and plot licences, are described in the substantive chapters of this report, it is useful here to sketch in the bones of the policy framework and its development. This is organised under headings which highlight the breadth of scope relevant: legislation and guidance which relates to sites; and legislation and guidance on dealing with unauthorised camping by Gypsies and other Travellers; land use planning; and other areas. Finally previous government research on Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues is noted.

### Legislation and Guidance: Related to Gypsy Sites

The starting point in modern legislation related to Gypsy sites was not specific to Gypsy sites. The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 aimed to regularise static caravan sites within the land use planning system and to raise standards for caravan dwellers. The 1960 Act required that land used as a caravan site have both planning permission for that use and a caravan site licence with conditions determining basic standards of amenity, spacing and safety (caravan sites provided by a local authority were exempted from the requirement for a site licence, but expected to attain similar basic standards). ‘The effect of the controls, although not specifically directed against them, was that in large numbers of cases Gypsies were unable to find legitimate homes for themselves and their families’ (Gordon 1985:150).

Section 24 of the 1960 Act empowered local authorities to provide caravan sites, both for holiday/temporary and residential purposes. They might manage the sites or lease them to
others. Section 24(4) stated that services and facilities provided under the section may be made available to those who do not normally reside in the area as well as those who do, thus allowing provision for nomadic caravan dwellers including Gypsies. Section 24 introduced a power, but no duty to provide sites.

A national census of Gypsies and other Travellers in 1965 showed some 3,400 families in caravans and tents (Adams 1967), which – although heavily criticised as an under-enumeration – was higher than anticipated. Few local authorities had exercised their powers to provide Gypsy caravan sites and most families enumerated were on unauthorised camps.

Part II of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, which came into force on 1 April 1970, imposed a duty on county councils and London Borough to provide adequate accommodation for Gypsies residing in or resorting to their area by exercising their powers under s24 of the 1960 Act. County councils were to determine what sites were to be provided and to acquire the necessary land. District councils were to exercise all other necessary powers to establish sites. District councils were to manage the sites, with the county council responsible for any financial deficit having set the charges. London Boroughs and county boroughs were only required to provide for 15 caravans to fulfil their duty. No time limit was set to fulfil the duty and initially no specific financial assistance was given although 100% exchequer subsidy was available for site provision following the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 (LGPLA 1980).

The Minister (later Secretary of State) could, at any time, give directions to a local authority requiring it to provide additional sites for a specified number of caravans. Directions were used very rarely.

The Minister could also ‘designate’ a county or London Borough (also an individual district or group of districts after the LGPLA 1980) under three circumstances:

- When adequate site provision for Gypsies residing in or resorting to the area had been made.
- When it was not necessary or expedient to make adequate provision.
- When it was not necessary or expedient to make any provision.

Designation brought enhanced powers to tackle unauthorised camping by making it a criminal offence to park a caravan with the purpose of residing in it other than on an authorised site, and seems to have been intended as an incentive to site provision especially before exchequer subsidy was available. Just 38% of English local authorities achieved designation while the legislation was in place. Designation was heavily criticised as creating ‘no-go’ areas for Gypsies and for criminalising one minority group since the enhanced trespass powers applied only to Gypsies.

Site provision under the 1968 Act was initially slow, with greater momentum building after exchequer subsidy became available. The great majority of sites provided were designed for residential rather than transit use. There were a number of reviews of progress (see below) and amendments to details and guidance over the years. For many observers the effectiveness of the legislation was limited both by the nature of the legislation itself and a failure of implementation (see for example Hawes & Perez 1996).

Part II of the 1968 Act was repealed by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 – thus
removing the duty to provide sites (but not the enabling power to do so), direction, designation and exchequer subsidy. The 1994 Act also introduced enhanced powers for local authorities and the police to tackle unauthorised camping by Gypsies and other Travellers.

The rationale for removing the duty, as set out in the Consultation Paper of August 1992 (DoE 1992), is somewhat paradoxical. The Paper argued that ‘the problem has grown faster than its remedy’ (DoE 1992: para 8) since the number of Gypsy caravans counted had risen from 3,400 in 1965 to nearly 13,500 in January 1992. A key sentence reads ‘But site provision is not keeping pace with the growth in the number of caravans, and the Government considers there is no reason why this need should automatically be met by public provision, nor any reason why gypsies – once settled – should remain on public sites indefinitely’ (para 9). The consultation paper referred to changing economic circumstances and ‘less need [for travellers] to move from place to place . . . So, while some traveller families retain a yearning to travel the open road, many have settled on permanent sites and a few have moved into permanent housing’ (para 11). Drawing attention to the emergence of groups who do not wish to move to sites that are provided (including New Age Travellers and highly mobile Travellers working laying tarmacadam) the Paper concluded that ‘The Government considers that for the 1990s a fresh policy is needed which recognises the considerably greater number of travellers and the lessons which have been learned over the last 25 years’ (para 12).

DoE Circular 18/94 made clear that the Secretaries of State ‘consider it important that authorities should maintain their existing gypsy caravan sites, or should make suitable arrangements for their maintenance by leasing them to other persons who are willing and able to maintain them’ (DoE 1994: para 21). The circular also said that local authorities should continue to consider whether it is appropriate to provide further permanent caravan sites for Gypsies in their areas (para 22). Circular 18/94 drew attention to the fact that the repeal of parts of the 1968 Act means that county councils become responsible for managing Gypsy sites built by them, although they might arrange for district councils to continue management.

In July 2000, the Housing Minister announced, in advance of the next spending review, a challenge fund of £17 million over the three years from 2001/2 to help local authorities to improve and refurbish a limited number of Gypsy sites. The objective of the Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant (GSRG) scheme is to fund projects that will:

- Significantly extend the useful life of existing sites;
- Bring unused or under-used sites back into full use; and/or
- Improve the quality of life for the residents by modernising or improving sub-standard facilities and/or providing new facilities.

GSRG was launched as part of ‘the Government’s policy to discourage unauthorised camping and all the problems associated with it’ (DETR 2000).

In July 2002, ODPM and the Home Office jointly announced the intention to introduce enhanced police powers to deal with unauthorised camping. These enhanced powers will only be available in areas where the local authority has made provision for sites and stopping places. The third round of GSRG was widened to include bids for developing transit sites and stopping places, and bidding guidance set out some of ODPM’s requirements for such provision. This is a pilot scheme and two transit sites were approved for GSRG in March 2003. Also in March 2003, a further two rounds of GSRG were announced, providing a total of £16 million over 2004/5 and 2005/6.
The only government guidance available on Gypsy site design and management is now old. A site design guide was issued in 1979 in hand-written format (DoE 1979), and site management guidance in 1982 (DoE 1982). Model standards relating to residential and holiday caravan sites through the site licensing system are not applicable to Gypsy/Traveller sites. There is no formal statement of expected minimum standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites.

Legislation and Guidance: Dealing with Unauthorised Camping

As noted above, the policy framework for site provision has developed alongside the framework for dealing with unauthorised camping on other land. Enhanced powers to deal with trespass and unauthorised camping were an essential part of the site provision strategy under the 1968 Act through ‘designation’. Getting enhanced powers to move Gypsies on might be seen as the reward for making adequate site provision. As noted, these particular measures were repealed by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Local authorities, as landowners, have civil powers to recover land from trespassers, including unauthorised campers. This now normally requires a hearing in the County Court. The 1994 Act gave local authorities in England and Wales powers to make directions to leave land being used by itinerant groups (s77). It is an offence to fail to comply with such a direction. If the direction to leave is not complied with, the local authority can apply to a magistrates’ court for an order requiring the removal of vehicles and any occupants from the land (s78). The 1994 Act (s61) also gave the police powers to direct trespassers to leave land provided that certain conditions are met. Civil rights workers and Gypsy/Traveller bodies argued that these powers were draconian and effectively criminalised unauthorised camping with disproportionate effect for a particular minority group. These effects were seen as particularly serious given the shortage of authorised sites.

DoE Circular 18/94 (DoE 1994a) offered guidance to local authorities on the use of their new powers. Amongst other things this Circular reiterated previous advice that authorities should adopt tolerant eviction policies in respect of Gypsies, drew attention to obligations an authority might have under other legislation (concerning children, homelessness and education responsibilities), and advised that authorities should liaise with other relevant authorities and service providers. Case law (starting with the judgement of Sedley J in R v Wealden District Council ex parte Wales) has developed and clarified the courts’ expectations of the welfare enquiries and decision-making processes local authorities (and others) should adopt in making evictions under 1994 Act and other powers.

In October 1998 DETR and the Home Office issued joint good practice guidance to local authorities and the police on managing unauthorised camping (DETR 1998). This stressed the importance of local authorities taking a strategic approach to managing unauthorised camping within which the needs of Gypsies and other Travellers for sites, accommodation and other services could be considered. It discussed decision making on unauthorised encampments, ‘toleration’ of encampments, and good practice for effective action once a decision has been taken to evict. The need for joint working between local authorities, police and other bodies, and the need to involve other stakeholders including Gypsies and other Travellers and members of the settled community are recurring themes of the guidance.

In July 2000, amendments to Circular 18/94 and to Chapter 5 of the Good Practice Guide were
issued. The amendments dealt with advice about ‘toleration’ of encampments and drew a clearer distinction between unauthorised camping where there are no problems and no criminal offence, and where there is anti-social or criminal behaviour. The revised guidance stressed that there will always be circumstances where an unauthorised encampment cannot be allowed to remain and prompt action will be required.

Dealing with unauthorised camping by Gypsies and other Travellers is currently quite high on the policy agenda, fuelled particularly by complaints about the disruption and nuisance caused to the settled community and businesses by troublesome encampments. Noise; aggressive, criminal and anti-social behaviour; rubbish and fly-tipping; and damage to land and buildings are common sources of complaint, although it is also true that many complaints stem from the mere presence of unauthorised campers regardless of their behaviour. There is a widespread dissatisfaction with the powers available to deal with unauthorised camping – largely because anti-trespass powers described above allow campers to be moved on but offer no ‘solution’ to the ‘problem’.

As noted above, enhanced police powers will be made available in future. At the time of writing, details are not available.

Legislation and Guidance: Land Use Planning

All Gypsy sites, including those provided by local authorities, must have planning permission. Getting planning permission has been identified as one of the major obstacles to further site provision. Gypsies and other Travellers seeking to provide sites for themselves frequently find themselves falling foul of the planning system when they buy land and move on without permission and are faced with enforcement action.

DoE Circular 1/94 set out the current planning policy context for Gypsy site provision. It was intended to reflect the Government’s shift in policy towards self-provision of sites by Gypsies and other Travellers, ensuring that ‘the planning system recognises the need for accommodation consistent with gypsies’ nomadic lifestyle’ (DoE 1994a: para 1). Circular 1/94 drew attention to local planning authorities' continuing requirement to indicate in development plans the regard they have had to meeting Gypsies' accommodation need. It noted that local and unitary development plans should, wherever possible, identify locations suitable for Gypsy sites, and where this is not possible, should set out clear, realistic criteria for suitable site locations. It drew attention to a number of factors that local authorities should take into account when formulating Gypsy site policies:

- Evaluation of former provision under the Caravan Site Act 1968.
- Consultation with Gypsies, representative bodies and support groups.
- Identification of existing site permissions and possible Gypsy site locations, including an evaluation of different kinds of sites needed.
- Quantitative assessment of the amount of accommodation required through maintenance of records and information bases.
• Consistency with other policies covering countryside, agricultural areas, semi-rural settlements, etc. The Circular withdrew previous guidance indicating that it might be necessary to accept the establishment of Gypsy sites in protected areas including Green Belts.

Circular 1/94 suggested that local authorities offer advice and practical help to Gypsies wishing to acquire their own land for development.

Studies have repeatedly shown that, despite this guidance, Gypsies continue to have great difficulty in gaining planning permission for sites, and where they do so, this is often through the appeal system (for example, FFT 1998, Williams 1999). Further circular letters were sent to local planning authorities in May 1998 and November 1999 reminding them of their responsibilities in the light of evidence of continuing problems facing Gypsies seeking planning permission for sites.

While Circular 1/94 and government policy generally encourages local authorities to consider need for Gypsy sites in local planning policies, a fundamental issue, apparent from appeal inquiry reports, judicial reviews and high profile cases before the European Court of Human Rights (for example Buckley and Chapman), is the balance to be struck between the accommodation needs of Gypsy families on the one hand, and on the other hand the need to maintain Green Belt and other countryside constraint polices for the good of the community as a whole. The planning context seeks to treat Gypsy site applications fairly and on the same footing as other applications, but this proves difficult simply because Gypsy site applications are essentially unique. Case studies in this research suggest that local authorities seeking to develop Gypsy/Traveller sites experience problems getting planning permission in much the same way as individual Gypsy families.

Legislation and Guidance: Other

There are three other policy strands which are particularly relevant to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters. These are housing and homelessness; human rights and equal opportunities; and social exclusion.

Housing

Local authorities are under a general duty under the Housing Act 1985 s8 to consider the accommodation needs of people within their area, including those of Gypsies and other Travellers. Gypsies and other Travellers are, however, only identified as a distinct group with distinct needs in terms of their nomadic lifestyle, apparently equated with the need for caravan site provision (see above). There is no housing policy specific to 'settled' Gypsies or other Travellers. The recent DTLR (Housing Directorate) Action Plan for addressing the housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic people (DTLR 2001) refers explicitly to Gypsies and Travellers but refers only to the GSRG scheme (see above), the current research and a revision of the DTLR/Home Office guidance on unauthorised camping. The remainder of the action plan, dealing with mainstream housing appears much more closely geared to the needs of other BME groups.

The definition of homelessness explicitly includes reference to people with accommodation available in a 'moveable structure', including a caravan, with nowhere they can legally place and live in it. Simply on this definition, it would be possible to regard all unauthorised campers
without a legal base as homeless, although in practice it seems that homelessness duties are rarely invoked (Niner et al 1998: 44). A particular issue turns on what form of accommodation would be considered suitable in discharging a homelessness duty to a Gypsy/Traveller family. Despite the explicit reference to caravans in defining homelessness, there is little further guidance to local authorities in this area – for example one paragraph in the draft homelessness code of guidance (DETR 1999: para 15.61) and no mention at all in the recently published good practice guidance on preparation of homelessness strategies which are now required under the Homelessness Act 2002 (DTLR 2002).

The Supporting People programme will profoundly affect the way in which housing and support are paid for. It is about helping vulnerable people live independent lives in the community. The new funding and policy framework places on local authorities the responsibility for planning housing support services for vulnerable groups. The new framework should ensure that needs are assessed in a more comprehensive and consistent manner, and that service provision is better matched to need. It is not yet clear how support services provided for Gypsies and other Travellers might fit into this framework. It seems probable, certainly from the case studies carried out as part of this research, that many authorities will, initially at least, concentrate on more obvious vulnerable groups.

**Human Rights and Equal Opportunities**

The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) incorporates into UK law the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Public authorities – including local authorities – must act in a way that is compatible with the ECHR. There have been a number of cases brought under the HRA concerning Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues including unauthorised camping, security of tenure and planning enforcement action. The ECHR Articles of particular relevance are:

- **Article 8:** the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence. Article 8.2 qualifies this right ‘there shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.’ Case law has established that both eviction action against trespassers and planning enforcement potentially breach Article 8 rights. Such actions are clearly ‘in accordance with the law’ and the issue to be determined is whether the interference with Gypsy/Traveller family life and home is justified in the interests outlined in Article 8.2 – in other words whether the action is ‘proportionate’. This balance has now to be struck in all decisions by public authorities which would lead to Gypsy/Travellers being moved on and losing their ‘home’.

- **Article 14:** the enjoyment of Convention rights to be secured without discrimination on any ground including race, language, nation or social origin, association with a national minority etc. Most Gypsy/Traveller cases considering alleged breach of Article 8 have also included consideration of Article 14. It is relevant because Gypsy/Traveller cultural requirements may affect the interpretation of what actions may be considered to be an unjustified interference with private and family life and the home.

While the implications of the HRA are widely recognised as relevant for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters, those of race equality legislation seem less likely to be so recognised. Both Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are now recognised as ethnic minorities against whom discrimination is unlawful. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 now
strengthens the 1976 Race Relations Act. Public authorities – including local authorities and the police – are under a positive duty to ensure non-discrimination on racial grounds and to promote good race relations. Local authorities are required to develop and implement Race Equality Schemes. As with homelessness, much of the guidance issued by the Commission for Racial Equality and others regarding these duties appears to ignore Gypsies and Travellers, and certainly does not pick up on issues particularly relevant to these groups such as, for example, disentangling issues of ethnicity, nomadism and action taken against unauthorised campers. Despite the apparent framework of protection, Gypsies and other Travellers clearly feel themselves to be subject to discrimination and racial abuse, as witnessed by the various comments made by both Gypsy/Travellers and others in the course of this research.

Social Exclusion
As with other matters discussed in this section, the relevance of the current social exclusion agenda to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation is indirect rather than direct. Despite being recognised as one of the most socially excluded groups in Britain in terms of health, housing, benefit dependency and discrimination, Gypsies and other Travellers have not been identified explicitly by the Social Exclusion Unit (see also Morris 2000). However, the general emphasis on social inclusion and community cohesion, and the funds available within this general area, have enabled some local authorities and other bodies to introduce projects which have benefited Gypsies and other Travellers. Some examples are quoted later in this report.

Previous Government Research and Other Reports
There has been a series of research projects funded or directly undertaken by government on Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues.

The 1965 Gypsy census and associated research (Adams 1967) laid the foundation for this series. Its findings contributed directly to the Caravan Sites Act 1968. The early effects of the Act were charted through a major piece of research which included ethnographic work with Gypsies in several parts of England (Adams et al 1975).

In 1976 Sir John Cripps was commissioned to carry out a study of the effectiveness of the arrangements to secure Gypsy site provision and his report was published in 1977 (Cripps 1977). Not all his recommendations were implemented, but one consequence was the availability of exchequer subsidy for site provision.

The early 1980s saw a number of reports. George and Sharon Gmelch were commissioned to study problems associated with long distance and regional Travellers. The research provided a very useful description of the characteristics and economy of these groups, and recommended the establishment of a network of transit sites related to the motorway system (Smith et al 1982). These recommendations were not adopted. Ian McGill carried out research on the management of local authority Gypsy sites (McGill undated), and more generally a DoE report sought to clarify the existing definition of a ‘Gypsy’ concluding that the existing legislative definition was adequate (DoE 1984).
In 1985 Gerald Wibberley was commissioned to bring together and report on a consultation on the operation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 (Wibberley 1986). This is a wide ranging report which covers many issues around site provision and management. It dealt particularly with obstacles to speedy development of local authority and private sites, identifying local hostility and objections as prime stumbling blocks.

In 1987 the findings of a small study of the movement of Gypsies into local authority housing were published (Davies, 1987). The study identified both pull and push factors encouraging the movement of Gypsies into housing and concluded that local authorities need to approach the matter with sensitivity and care so that the move has the maximum chance of success.

Gypsy site provision and management were considered again in 1991 (Todd & Clark 1991). The research was based on a literature review and case studies involving 25 local authorities and Gypsy organisations. The research report was issued alongside good practice guidelines developed from the findings (Todd & Clark 1991a). This report covers much the same ground as is covered in the current research and report.

Since the mid 1990s government research in the area has focused on managing unauthorised camping (Niner et al 1998; Cowan et al 2001). While referring to wider Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters in general and site provision in particular, these studies were primarily concerned with local authority and police approaches to dealing with unauthorised encampments.

Perhaps the most striking impression from this spectrum of research and reports from almost forty years is the similarity of the issues and concerns being discussed, and the resistance of the problems being identified to ‘solution’. There are passages from the report on the 1965 census (Adams 1967), from the Cripps (1977) or Wibberley (1986) reports which apply equally well today. There are particular continuities in terms of basic demographic factors, poor health, prejudice and discrimination on the part of the settled community and very poor living conditions (as perceived by settled observers and policy makers at least) experienced by Gypsies and other Travellers not living on authorised sites. Resistance to site provision and objections from the settled community to proposals for development are recurring themes. One particular motif seen again and again is reference to the need to cater for nomadism through the provision of transit or transient sites or emergency stopping places.

**Summary**

The research was designed to inform the development of government policy by strengthening the evidence base and providing up-to-date and statistically reliable information on the size and condition of the local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites network and the need for new site provision. It also looked at how sites are managed. Research methods included postal surveys of local authorities; physical survey of 107 sites; ten case studies; group discussions with Gypsies and other Travellers in a variety of forms of accommodation; and a research workshop for invited site providers.

The research adopted a definition of Gypsies and other Travellers which combines ethnic and
lifestyle dimensions by including all ethnic Gypsies and Travellers plus members of the settled community who have adopted a travelling lifestyle.

Estimates for the Gypsy/Traveller population in the United Kingdom range between 90,000 and 120,000; the majority are in England. While there are no formal estimates, the rate of growth of the Gypsy/Traveller population seems to have been rapid since 1979. Gypsies and other Travellers suffer poorer health and lower life expectancy than is the norm in the settled community.

Gypsies and Travellers often differentiate themselves from the settled community. Many have beliefs about pollution and hygiene which express and strengthen this separation. The extended family is very important in the social structure. Gypsies and other Travellers have traditionally been very flexible in occupation, with a heavy emphasis on self-employment. A history of persecution and discrimination has led to a number of coping strategies being adopted by Gypsies and other Travellers, and has contributed to lack of trust between them and the settled community. There is still considerable ignorance on the part of the settled community about Gypsies and other Travellers, and resort to stereotypes.

Not all ethnic Gypsies and other Travellers travel regularly and a range of travelling patterns exist. Travelling is part of the cultural heritage of traditional Gypsies and Travellers, and is still culturally important even for those who no longer actively travel. There are some indications that fewer Gypsy/Travellers now travel full-time, and some have 'settled' for a combination of reasons.

An unknown number of Gypsies and other Travellers – perhaps around half – live in houses. At the other end of the scale, some live in caravans and travel all year round with no settled base, moving between unauthorised encampments. In January 2002, there were 13,612 Gypsy caravans, of which 6,178 (45%) were on authorised council sites, and 4,660 (34%) were on authorised private sites. The remaining 2,774 caravans (20%) were on unauthorised sites.

‘Gypsy sites’ are caravan sites provided explicitly for Gypsies and other Travellers. On local authority sites and some private ones the norm is for Gypsy/Traveller families to live in owner-occupied trailers (caravans) or mobile homes on plots rented under licence from the site provider. Very few publicly provided sites cater for transit needs, and most are designed for residential use with hardstanding, water, electricity and standard amenities provided on an individual family basis.

The relevant policy context for Gypsy site provision and management includes legislation and guidance which is specific to site provision; unauthorised camping; land use planning; housing; human rights and equal opportunities; and social exclusion.

Local authorities have been empowered to develop caravan sites, including Gypsy sites, since 1960. Between 1970 and 1994 they were under a duty to provide adequate accommodation for Gypsies residing in or resorting to their area. Exchequer subsidy for site provision was available after 1979. The existing network of Gypsy/Traveller sites was largely developed under this legislation. The duty was removed in 1994, but circular guidance makes clear that local authorities are expected to retain and maintain existing sites. The Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant challenge fund has provided £17 million over the three years from 2001/2 to help local authorities to improve and refurbish a limited number of Gypsy sites. The third year of the scheme has been extended to cover development of transit sites and stopping places on a pilot basis.
There has been a series of research projects funded or directly undertaken by government on Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues, starting with a Gypsy census in 1965. The most striking impression from the spectrum of research and reports from almost forty years is the similarity of the issues and concerns being discussed, and the resistance of the 'problems' being identified to 'solution'.
CHAPTER 2
Local authorities and gypsy/traveller accommodation issues

This chapter examines how local authorities handle Gypsy and Traveller accommodation matters other than local authority site provision and management which are covered in later chapters. It starts with overall policy and corporate organisation, then looks at specific policy areas: land use planning; private site provision; social housing; managing unauthorised camping; and equalities and human rights.

Overall Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Policies

Within housing and in local government more generally there has been a trend towards the development and publication of policy statements, service standards and performance indicators. Under Best Value, all services should be reviewed over a five year cycle applying the ‘4Cs’ of challenge, consultation, comparison and competition. It is apparent that, in many local authorities, Gypsy/Traveller accommodation policies have not been subject to this sort of development and scrutiny.

The postal survey found that a minority of local authorities have a written Gypsy/Traveller accommodation policy and that fewer than four authorities in ten have conducted or programmed a Best Value review of Gypsy/Traveller services (Box 2.1). It is worth considering briefly why so few authorities have codified policy in this area before examining the policies which do exist.

Box 2.1: Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Policies

- A minority of LAs (30%) have a written policy on Gypsy/Traveller accommodation provision:
  - the proportion is higher among county councils (50%) than other types of LA.
- Only 8% of LAs have conducted a Best Value review of Gypsy/Traveller services, a further 29% have one programmed:
  - county councils are much more likely than other types of LAs to have already undertaken a BV review or have one programmed (60%)
  - even among LAs which own and/or manage a site, BV reviews are far from universal (58% undertaken or programmed), although this proportion is much higher than among non-site owning/managing LAs (17%)

Source: Postal survey
Why so Few Policies?

There is, of course, no requirement that local authorities have a policy – written or unwritten – for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters. Since 1994 there has been no specific duty to provide accommodation for Gypsies. Other impressions emerged from the case studies and comments on the postal survey:

- There is a distinct tendency to equate ‘Gypsy/Traveller accommodation’ with ‘Gypsy sites’. In this, local authorities are mirroring national policy, and especially the effect of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. As a direct consequence, a local authority with no site seems to see Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues as irrelevant and not something they need be concerned with. In such cases it is not clear how any need for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation might be picked up.

- In two-tier local government areas, there is a tendency for some district councils to see Gypsy/Traveller accommodation policies as county council business. This was apparent from the way that some district councils failed to complete the postal survey arguing that their county council was completing it on their behalf – even though significant portions of the questionnaire dealt with district rather than county functions such as land use planning and social rented housing. Interestingly some districts commented along the lines: we have no policy now that the county council manage the site in our area.

- Some authorities raised a rather different argument, saying that it was not their policy to have accommodation policies aimed at specific population groups so it would be out of step to consider Gypsies and other Travellers in this way.

- Some authorities appear not to have developed policies because Gypsies and other Travellers are just not perceived as ‘an issue’ because they are rarely seen. The Gypsy Counts show that there are around 50 local authorities recording zero, one or two caravans over the past five reporting dates.

Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Policies

Where policies exist, they are not always comprehensive and integrated. Some authorities sent copies of their written policies with the returned postal survey as requested. These fell into four broad categories:

- Some are extracts from the Local Plan dealing with Gypsy/Traveller sites. These often refer to maintaining current provision (public and private) and set out the criteria against which further applications for site development will be assessed (see below).

- Some are statements of policy and/or procedures for dealing with unauthorised camping, which might strictly be seen as dealing with ‘accommodation’ only in so far as they encourage ‘toleration’ of unproblematic encampments.

- Some are statements incorporating reference to local site provision and management as well as policies on unauthorised camping.

- Others are comprehensive, integrated statements of policies and procedures towards Gypsy and Traveller services as a whole. Some statements of this kind have been developed.
jointly by county and district councils and local police forces and have been encouraged by the DETR/Home Office guidance on managing unauthorised camping (DETR 1998).

We are unable to quantify the different categories because not all authorities submitted their policy statements.

The case studies reveal a range of experience, from a county council with no overall written policy and little evidence of any consistent pro-active policy on the ground, through a unitary authority with no written policy but which is active day-to-day on Gypsy/Traveller matters, to a county council with a written policy agreed with the district councils. Another county council has extensive written policies on most issues relating to Gypsy/Traveller welfare, site provision and management, and enforcement. These are summarised in a short Guide to Policy on Gypsies and Travellers. We are aware of other, non-case study authorities which have developed policies drawing on research and widespread consultation, sometimes in the form of a Best Value review (for example Dorset County Council).

Other points about overall policies from the case studies and elsewhere are:

- History obviously has an impact. As noted above, the equation of ‘accommodation’ with ‘sites’ colours perceptions of what a policy should include, and the 1968 Act duty on county councils has coloured perceptions of whose business it is. History can have an impact at local level too. For example, policy in one case study unitary authority was developed very consciously in reaction to the defects of the approach under the former authorities.

- Individual officers can play an important part, and can be instrumental in raising Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues up the local policy agenda, and influencing the scope and direction of policy.

- Most policies seem to be developed without the involvement of Gypsies and other Travellers, either as individuals or through representative bodies or support groups. Only about a fifth of local authority participate in working groups or other forums involving Gypsies and other Travellers (Box 2.2).

**Corporate Organisation**

Box 2.2 shows the main postal survey findings about corporate organisation for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters. It also shows the extent to which local authorities convene or take part in working groups or other forums in which Gypsies and other Travellers are represented.

Perhaps not surprising in the light of the weak and fragmented policy in some areas, a tenth of local authorities (mostly district councils) are unable to identify any section or department with overall responsibility for Gypsy/Travellers accommodation matters.

It is clear that there is no single or dominant pattern of responsibility. One of the most interesting features is the relative unimportance of sections/departments concerned with housing management. Gypsy/Traveller accommodation appears not to be seen as an aspect of
housing, but as something other. Some of the other patterns of corporate responsibility illustrate how it is seen:

- The common pattern of placing prime responsibility in environmental health services seems to reflect the association of Gypsy/Traveller accommodation with dealing with unauthorised encampments on the one hand and with site provision on the other. Caravan site licensing responsibilities are commonly located in environmental health departments (Niner 2000), hence a link to Gypsy sites.

- Another sort of link with site provision is shown where responsibility is located in property services, planning or estates departments/sections. In two of the case study county councils for example, responsibility for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters has remained with the section (and the personnel) involved in the site finding and development process under the 1968 Act. In one instance, respondents commented that the location of Gypsy services in estates is an anomaly, and the council is currently reviewing structures and policies generally.

A minority of authorities (14% overall, but 39% of county councils) locate responsibility in a specialist Gypsy or Traveller Unit. A specialist unit implies a significant workload and several staff, and is associated with management of several Gypsy/Traveller sites and/or extensive unauthorised camping. Again, there is no consensus on where, in terms of departments or directorates, a specialist Unit is located.

Box 2.2 shows that a number of other departments/sections besides that with primary responsibility are involved in Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters. While not explored in detail, it is our impression that links vary widely in frequency and formality. Some are probably

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2.2: Corporate Organisation for Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Matters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Very generally, there is a fairly even split between LAs locating overall responsibility for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters in broadly ‘property’ related sections/departments and in ‘socially’ related sections/departments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- environmental health sections most frequently have overall responsibility (41%), normally a section concerned with private sector housing. This is particularly common in district councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- overall, responsibility is over three times more likely to lie with an environmental health section than with a housing management section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- only 14% of LAs locate overall responsibility with a specialist Gypsy/Traveller unit or section; the proportion is higher amongst county councils (39%) and LAs owning and/or managing a site (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- one LA in ten said that no Section or Department has overall responsibility for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specialist Gypsy/Traveller units or sections are located in a wide variety of Departments: of the 27 specialist units, 10 are in environmental services; 5 in social services; 4 in housing; 2 in chief executives; 1 each in housing and environment, community services, development/planning and estates; and 2 in other departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Almost three-quarters of LAs identified one or more other section/department regularly involved in Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters in addition to that with overall responsibility:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the overall average number of other sections/departments is 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the average is highest amongst county councils (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the sections/departments most commonly also involved are housing; environmental services; legal; planning/development; estates/valuers; and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gypsy/Travellers are directly represented on a working group or forum in only 22% of LAs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the proportion is highest among county councils (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- it is strongly related to site ownership status with 53% of site owning/managing LAs having such a group, compared with only 9% of non-site owning/managing LAs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Postal survey
to do with enforcement activities against unauthorised camping, others to do with more positive service provision.

Working groups or other forums involving Gypsies and other Travellers are a feature in a minority of local authorities only, although present in just over half of site-owning/managing authorities. These appear to be more often geared towards site management issues than wider policy formulation.

The Case Studies

The case studies are broadly evenly split between specialist and non-specialist approaches. The patterns seem to reflect history, personalities and philosophy of approach in addition to workload and objective assessment of the best organisational structures. Each is essentially unique. Three contrasting examples are presented in Box 2.3.

We have insufficient material to say whether location of responsibility for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters within a particular section/department affects the nature of the service provided.

One case study respondent noted that specialist Traveller units often 'take on the nomadic culture of the client group' moving from department to department. This perhaps reflects the point that their responsibilities, while related to several local authority functions, are uniquely focused, and that their day-to-day business is often politically contentious dealing with a generally unpopular and little-understood client group. Feelings of isolation within their local authority sometimes came through case study interviews with officers in the case studies.

Box 2.3: Examples of Corporate Organisation for Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Matters

| Example 1 | This county council has developed eight Gypsy/Traveller sites and currently experiences low levels of unauthorised camping. Gypsy/Traveller issues are politically low key and essentially non-problematic. The council has adopted a general enabling approach to service provision and has contracted out many of its services. Site management is contracted out, as is the general overseeing of those contracts; this latter contract includes some responsibilities for dealing with unauthorised camping. In so far as any officer has overall responsibility for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation it is the officer in the property department with client duties towards these contracts. There is no formal agreement between the county and district councils, or between the county and other bodies on Gypsy/Traveller matters. |
| Example 2 | This unitary council has two local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites and has in recent years experienced high levels of unauthorised camping, leading to many complaints. Gypsy/Traveller issues are high profile. The council has undertaken extensive consultation with all stakeholders including Travellers and the settled community. The specialist Traveller Management Unit involves police and council personnel working side by side and is a partnership between the council and police plus the local Parks Trust and English Partnerships. The Unit is responsible for site management and dealing with unauthorised camping and acts as a one-stop shop on all Traveller issues. It is currently located in the housing department although this location may be reviewed as the council is seeking to form an arms length management organisation (ALMO) for housing. |
| Example 3 | This unitary authority is developing a holistic approach to Gypsy/Traveller matters including site provision and management, unauthorised camping and wider service provision. The specialist Traveller Unit, which includes a Traveller, is located in the Chief Executive’s Office – a conscious decision to raise the profile of the service and to signal its importance. This Unit sees raising awareness and increasing understanding of Gypsy/Traveller issues among other local authority departments as one of its important functions, and Unit personnel will offer support and advice where appropriate. Site management is being transferred to this specialist unit from housing to further the holistic approach. |

Source: Case studies
Land Use Planning

The postal survey did not deal with land use planning issues, and the following section draws mainly on the case studies and scoping interviews.

ACERT research (Wilson, 1998) found that, as at December 1996, almost a third of local authorities had no policy at all on Gypsy site provision in their development plans (as recommended by Circular 1/94). Over three-quarters of the policies included were criteria-based, that is listing a series of criteria to be met when considering an application for a Gypsy site. Only two local authorities had identified locations for Gypsy sites despite this being the preferred form of policy recommended in Circular 1/94.

All but one of the case study authorities providing information had adopted a criteria-based approach although this was sometimes still only at draft stage in amended development plans. Criteria mentioned include proven need for accommodation, physical access, access to services and facilities, neighbourhood and visual impact, and maintaining the character and appearance of the area. Proposals for Gypsy site development are normally to be consonant with other policies regarding development in rural areas, Green Belts and other forms of landscape designation. We did not seek to analyse how easy or difficult it would be in practice to meet the set criteria in order to gain permission.

In response to high levels of unauthorised camping, one unitary authority is committed to finding four additional sites. The council accepted this in principle and the Planning Department assessed 30 possible sites against a number of criteria including access to facilities, visibility and landscape impact, road connections, size of plot and conservation considerations. Rather than running the risk of sites being rejected for failing to meet all the criteria if considered singly, sites were considered together on their relative merits. Members were presented with a shortlist of eight sites from which they chose four. The authority then chose to put these sites into the Local Planning process rather than await/encourage applications. The latter approach would have been relatively quick, but would have faced the difficulties of assessing each application on its own merits in the light of objections. The Local Plan process takes longer administratively because of the need to consult and take objections, but gives a clear decision at the end of the process. There were 5,300 objections to the Local Plan, about 700 concerned with sites. There were 2,000 signatures on petitions opposing the sites and two particularly strong objections from a village near two of the proposed sites. A Public Enquiry has been time-tabled for spring 2003, and may last a year with a further year before it reports.

A planner interviewed in another case study thought that his authority should consider replacing their criteria-based approach with one of identifying sites appropriate for owner-occupied provision. This authority has been involved in a high profile, expensive planning case (see below). ‘Travellers are not going to go away’.

Half the case study authorities had received no application for a private site over the past five or so years. At the other end of the scale, a district authority dealt with three or four applications a year. There was a mix of experience of applications being refused, approved and approved on appeal. One authority had been involved in an enforcement case which reached the House of Lords. A particular feature of the London case study was occasional applications from housed Travellers to put a caravan for further living quarters on their own garden. In practice these have been rejected on density and privacy grounds.
A number of issues arose in the course of case study interviews about the operation of the planning system and Gypsy site provision:

- Some issues relate to the planning system itself. One elected member spoke about an application for a Gypsy site in her ward which was generally acceptable despite being on Green Belt land; permission was refused because of the fear of setting a precedent for other applications. A planning officer in another authority commented on the conflict in practice between the current emphasis in planning on sustainable development and thus the desire to locate Gypsy sites near to roads, schools, shops and other services on the one hand, and the likelihood of applications proving acceptable to existing settled communities if so close to services and existing settlements on the other hand. A number of Catch 22 situations can arise where, for example, site proposals are judged too close to existing settlements or too distant from services, or in an area with no previous Gypsy/Traveller settlement and therefore too much of a departure from the local character or in an area of current settlement where a further approval is argued to run the risk of creating too great a local concentration.

- Gypsy/Traveller applications rarely ‘follow the rules’. The ‘usual’ pattern appears to be for Gypsy/Traveller families to buy land, often in a Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or other rural/landscape area where constraints on development mean that land prices are relatively low, and to settle on that land in advance of a planning application. This may be because of ignorance of the planning requirements, or a realisation that permission is unlikely to be forthcoming if applied for in advance, or simply the need to live somewhere if the alternative is the roadside. The system then catches up with enforcement action and applications for retrospective permission. Particular features of Gypsy/Traveller life can make applications even more problematic, for example combining residence and work on a site, or keeping horses or other animals. While some case study authorities are active in assisting Gypsy/Travellers to negotiate the planning system or in ‘educating’ planners to understand the lifestyle requirements, most appear to offer no advice or support beyond that generally available.
Some Gypsy/Travellers’ experience and perceptions of planning

M: “Me and my cousin have got a piece of ground over at ————. We’ve been trying for the last ten year to get that passed, and there’s no way they’ll pass it, no way”

M: “I mean they own that theirself. It’s only a little patch like”

I: “If you could develop that that’s what you’d like?”

M: “Yeah”

M: “That’s what they should do, they should give us chance to allow us to develop our own – I mean it’s going to save the government a lot of money in future” (Gypsy LA)

F: “With Travellers, if we put planning permission on a place (ie apply for planning permission) – it don’t matter if it’s building land or where it is, if we put planning permission for a place, it won’t get through, it’ll get refused because we’re not on there. That’s the way things are for Travellers. That’s why Travellers take it in their own hands and move on there, and then they go through all the paperwork and stuff. So that’s the only way we’ve got a chance, ‘cos people tried it without going on there – and there’s still a man trying now and he can’t get it passed – and he’s not even on there”

I: “So do you think they should make it easier to get permission?”

F: “They should do, ‘cos they’ll find the roads cleaner, they wouldn’t get the Travellers pulling on the sides of the roads, and having to leave the rubbish ‘cos they can’t put the rubbish anywhere” (Gypsy owner occ)

All respondents made the point that applications for Gypsy sites are almost always highly contentious and will generate objections from the local settled community (see the example above of objections to Local Plan site policies). This is a classic situation for NIMBY sentiment and also for NOTEs (not over there either). In such circumstances, decision-making can be fraught; one authority responded by making all decisions on Gypsy sites member decisions rather than following normal officer delegation rules. Differences of opinion and perception can arise between officers (who would like to encourage site development) and elected members (who may see voting for a site as local political suicide). One ‘resolution’ is the apparently not uncommon practice of refusing planning permission, then being able to ‘blame’ someone else when the decision is reversed at appeal. Such practices do little to encourage Gypsies and other Travellers to follow ‘proper’ procedures when seeking planning permission. As a local authority officer put it: ‘They know we are going to say “no”, so why should they bother? They also know that, legally, once they own the site it takes a long time to get them off.’

Some permissions for private sites are granted on a temporary basis or with conditions linking use to the applicant’s or his/her family’s lifetime. Some argue that this introduces uncertainty into the process and acts as a disincentive to investment in the site. A Gypsy interviewed at the scoping stage supported personal permissions on the grounds that otherwise land with planning permission became a very valuable asset to be traded, regardless of the need which had led to the initial permission being granted. Where permission is granted subject to other conditions to do with number of caravans and so on, one local authority respondent noted how active the settled community can become in policing the condition – notifying the authority and pressing for enforcement action as
soon as one caravan too many pulls on or someone stays longer than permitted on a transit site.

- Two of the case study sites were developed sufficiently recently for respondents to have been involved in the planning and development process. It is apparent that getting planning permission for a local authority site is scarcely easier than for a private site. One was developed before 1994 while the duty to provide was still in place, one was developed since then. In the latter case the local authority made a major effort to consult and involve both members of the settled community and Travellers in the design and development process leading to submission of a planning application. There were still objections, but the local authority stood firm and granted permission. Interestingly, the process followed in both cases had similar features. In both cases, officers drew up a schedule of possible site locations most of which seem to have been inappropriate or unacceptable. This process seems to have had the effect of making the site ultimately chosen stand out as the best available, or the least unacceptable. In both cases the site ultimately chosen was admitted to be physically or environmentally problematic (in one instance because of proximity to a motorway and major roads and site drainage problems, in the other because of severe drainage problems which now restrict freedom of use of the site). Both, however, share the advantage of being physically separate from, yet fairly close to, an existing settlement. One authority interviewee spoke of the personal dilemma in deciding whether or not to support a site known to be less than perfect when the alternative would certainly be no site at all. In such circumstances those opposed to a site in principle can argue that they are opposing the site to protect the Gypsy/Traveller residents from its inadequacies. Unless general attitudes to site provision change, this dilemma is likely to remain all too common.

Private Site Provision

Private site provision in the case study authorities varies widely – from zero to accommodation for over 100 families. Most of the sites involved are owned by the occupying family, although there are examples of commercially developed private sites. Two sites in one case study county comprise a number of individually owned pitches. A Gypsy/Traveller interviewee at the scoping stage commented that such sites (located elsewhere) could prove problematic as pitches are bought and sold making it hard for a local authority to enforce site licence conditions because ownership is unclear.

Generally, private sites in the case study areas are seen as unproblematic. Some specifically commented that sites which had raised objections at the proposal stage had caused no difficulties in operation (see also Duncan 1996 for similar experience with Traveller sites in Scotland).

Most information on private site provision comes from the postal survey. Questions were asked separately about owner-occupied (sites used exclusively by the site owner and members of his/her family) and commercial private authorised sites (with pitches available for Gypsy/Travellers other than the site owner and immediate family). Unfortunately the results do not provide a fully reliable estimate of the total number of private sites and pitches for two reasons:

- Not all local authorities replied, and where information was provided it was sometimes
incomplete or an estimate. It is not altogether clear that all local authorities ‘know’ how many private sites (especially owner-occupied ones) there are in their area although that information may be potentially available in planning or site licensing records.

- Because the survey was sent to all local authorities, there is potential for double counting where both a county and district council returned information about the same site. Unfortunately there is no way of checking or removing double counting since we did not ask for site names.

Local authorities returned information on around 650 owner-occupied sites with around 1,800 pitches (average 2.76 pitches) and 90 commercial sites with around 1,750 pitches (average 19.4 pitches). It is immediately apparent that commercial sites are considerably larger on average than owner-occupied sites – the total number of pitches is broadly similar in the two categories, while the number of sites is very different. The great majority of commercial sites (and by definition all owner-occupied sites) are owned and/or managed by Gypsy/Travellers.

Most local authorities with private sites said that some or all of them are used as a permanent base for Gypsies and other Travellers (100% for owner-occupied sites and 84% for commercial sites). Both types of site are also used for transit purposes but to a much lesser extent – 16% of authorities said local owner-occupied sites are used in this way and 47% said local commercial sites are used in this way. Unfortunately the survey did not ask about the number of pitches involved in the different usages, but the findings do suggest that Gypsy/Travellers make a contribution to meeting transit as well as residential needs for their own community through the private sector.

Table 2.1 gives an indication of how the number of private sites has changed since 1994, and how local authorities expect it to change over the next five years. Many more local authorities have experienced an increase in the number of both owner-occupied and commercial sites than have experienced a decrease. The same is true for expectations of change over the next five years. Estimates of growth in pitches (rather than sites) are generally higher in all cases, suggesting past experience and future expectations of increasing site size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Since 1994</th>
<th>Expected over next 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Owner-occ'd</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of LAs</td>
<td>% of LAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Static</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Postal survey

Respondents in the postal survey were asked to identify positive and negative features of owner-occupied and commercial private sites from a list of twelve factors. Table 2.2 shows the results.

The table suggests that local authority personnel perceive a wide range of factors as both positive and negative features of private Gypsy/Traveller sites. Only one factor (standard of
management on commercial sites) was identified as a feature (positive) by more than half of respondents. Other points from the table include:

- On average, higher proportions of respondents identify positive points than identify negative features about both types of private site. This must be seen as a positive for private provision.

- On most individual factors, higher proportions of respondents think it a positive than a negative feature. The exceptions for owner-occupied sites are site design, availability and affordability for residents; for commercial sites they are size of site, site design and size of pitches. It is not surprising that affordability is mentioned in this context, given that owner-occupiers have to buy land, develop and maintain their sites, negotiate the planning system and so on. Availability is to be expected as well given affordability issues and planning constraints. The references to size of both site and pitches for commercial sites suggest that some at least are perceived as cramped. This could be seen as a response to trying to provide as much accommodation as possible where it is hard to get permission for new sites as well as owners seeking to maximise income from their land.

- While some factors are seen as overwhelmingly positive in that mentions as positives far outnumber mentions as negatives (for example freedom of residents to come and go and popularity with residents), others are much more evenly balanced between positive and negative assessments. For example, behaviour of residents, location and general environment are identified by relatively high proportions as both positive and negative factors. This suggests that sites actually vary widely on these factors.

- Commercial sites seem to score well relative to owner-occupied sites, although this may be partly because different considerations come into play – for example, standard of management is a much more important factor on a large commercial site than on a small owner-occupied site. Commercial sites score relatively well on affordability for residents.

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1 We were aware that Rent Officer assessments of rents eligible for housing benefit were affecting some private commercial sites. Unfortunately local authority respondents were unable to comment on this so the extent of the issue is unknown.
Owner-occupied sites score relatively well on general environment and size of site (presumably small number of pitches).

The high positive score for perceptions of private site management is particularly interesting in a context where some local authorities may be looking to contract out site management (see Chapter 4). It is also important to note, however, that a quarter of respondents also identified management as a negative feature of commercial sites. Management standards undoubtedly vary and, as will be seen, so do perceptions of what actually constitutes good Gypsy/Traveller site management.

Local authority respondents’ assessment of private commercial sites was further checked by a question asking them to assess sites on a five point scale from very good to very poor on seven characteristics (Table 2.3). The same characteristics were used elsewhere in the postal survey seeking assessments of the quality of local authority sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.3: Site Quality Assessments for Commercial Private Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a distinct tendency for respondents to rate commercial private sites as fairly good or neither good nor poor on all characteristics. There are very few very poor ratings. Commercial sites are rated particularly highly on standard of management and resident satisfaction; they are rated relatively poorly on physical condition and amenities.

Broadly comparable average scores for local authority sites are shown in Table 3.8. Private commercial sites score better (a lower average) on all aspects. The differences are greatest for resident satisfaction, general appearance of the site and physical condition and maintenance of the site. Even bearing in mind that these comparisons are based on very different numbers and (perhaps) different levels of familiarity, the findings are interesting and could be seen to support the development of further commercial private sites. Opinions on private sites expressed by Gypsies and other Travellers in the case study interviews are reported in Chapter 7.

**Social Housing**

We wanted to identify the extent to which social rented housing contributes to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation options. This section looks first at information collected in the postal survey,
then at more qualitative material from the case studies. Gypsy and other Traveller comments about housing generally are in Chapter 7.

The Postal Survey

A section of the postal survey questionnaire to local authorities was devoted to Gypsy/Travellers and social rented housing. In general this was not answered well, even by local authorities which are also housing authorities. The reasons for reduced response are themselves interesting:

- The questionnaire tended to be completed by someone in the section/department with prime responsibility for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters. As noted above, this was rarely the housing department. Some respondents seem to have left the section blank rather than seeking answers from colleagues in another department.

- It is apparent that many local authorities keep no records of Gypsies and other Travellers in rented housing, even where they maintain ethnic records (see below), and are generally blind to this aspect of ethnic minority housing. Many authorities were unable to provide accurate information and unable or unwilling to guess.

- Some respondents noted on their questionnaires that rehousing of Gypsies and other Travellers is so rare that they simply had no experience to draw upon.

Overall, these suggest that social rented housing is not seen as a very relevant element in the corporate approach to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters in some authorities. It is impossible to say whether this wholly reflects their perceptions of Gypsy/Traveller demand and aspirations, or whether organisational structures also have an effect.

Box 2.4 summarises some of the main findings from those local housing authorities which did reply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2.4: Gypsy/Travellers and Social Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Most responding LHAs (59%) estimate that fewer than 10 Gypsy/Traveller families are in social rented housing in their area, and a further 36% estimate that there are between 10 and 100 families:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– 6 of the 7 LHAs with more than 100 families are in urban/conurban areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Gypsy/Traveller families are concentrated into one or two areas in 16% of LHAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– again this is an urban phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Small numbers of Gypsy/Traveller families are waiting for social rented housing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– 44% said there were none, and a further 29% said between 1 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– only 2% of LHAs able to give the information had over 20 Gypsy/Traveller families waiting for social rented housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– most LHAs with higher numbers waiting are in the East and West Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Estimates for numbers of Gypsy/Travellers housed in a year are also very low overall:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– 38% of LHAs able to give an estimate said that no Gypsy/Traveller had been housed and a further 22% estimated that, on average, no more than one is housed each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– 27% estimated rehousing at between one and five a year, 8% between six and ten, and 6% over ten (highest 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– LHAs housing higher numbers (10 or more a year) are spread geographically, but are mostly urban areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Postal survey
The postal survey explored local authority respondents’ perceptions of why Gypsies and other Travellers move into housing. Seven alternatives were offered and respondents were asked to tick the three or four most important. The two most commonly identified reasons are a desire to ‘settle’ (53%) and health reasons (51%). All the other reasons included were ticked by between 33% and 38% of respondents (schooling, inability to find stopping places while travelling, desire for a permanent house or flat, inability to find a place on a site and harassment or other problems on a site). A smaller number mentioned other reasons unprompted, particularly domestic violence. Thus important reasons for settling are linked to personal and family circumstances. The following box, which includes quotes from the resident discussions, illustrates some reasons quoted by Gypsies and other Travellers for moving into housing.

### Some reasons for moving to a house or flat

**I:** “You want to move into a house, what makes you feel you want to leave this site now?”

**F:** “Well I’ve got a husband and he’s had a heart attack, and he needs peace and quiet now”  
(Gypsy LA)

**I:** “And now you’re living in houses, how did you come to make the change?”

**F:** “Well I got sick of being moved about. That’s all we ever got, moved about all the time. And the kids weren’t properly at school – you was there a few weeks then you had to be moved off. And I’d had enough”  
(Gypsy housed)

**F:** “You get better satisfaction in houses – although I wouldn’t like it. I think it would be lonely, ‘cos you can close your door and do your own thing in your own house, whereas you can’t on the plots because you’re listening to everybody else. It’s more quiet and private in a house, innit? But it’s more lonely”  
(Irish LA)

**F:** “These little sheds, she goes out and has a bath, then she’s got to run from that bath when it’s cold up into her caravan. She’s had pneumonia twice hasn’t she? Well you can dress in there, but you’ve still got to run from there up out in the cold up to these caravans”  
(Gypsy private)

**I:** “And what made you want to move into a flat at this stage?”

**M:** “It was getting too cold – for the winter, it was getting too cold in winter”

**I:** “So you were noticing the cold more than you used to?”

**M:** “Yeah, yeah”  
(New housed)

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Gypsies and other Travellers sometimes find the transition to living in a house difficult, and that many tenancies ‘fail’ quite quickly with tenants moving back to a site or onto the road again. Only slightly more than half of postal survey respondents were able to estimate what proportion of Gypsy/Traveller tenancies end within a year. Of those who made an estimate, 60% think it is a minority, 16% about half and 24% the majority. Just over half (53%) think that the proportion is higher than for all tenancies (31% about average and 16% lower than average).

The top five reasons why tenancies end, selected from a given list by a quarter of respondents or more are: inability to settle in a house (79%); problems with neighbours (54%); isolation from families and friends (37%); desire to move to a caravan site (33%); and budgeting problems and arrears (28%). Harassment was selected by 18% of respondents. More mainstream reasons for ending tenancies, for example moving to a different/better area or changing family needs, were seen as much less significant than the reasons listed above.
Perhaps not surprisingly, postal survey respondents thought that Gypsy/Travellers commonly experience problems while living in houses. Sixty percent of respondents thought such problems are commonly greater than those faced by other tenants (34% the same and 6% less). Table 2.4 shows the problems identified (from a given list), ordered according to the frequency of mention. Inability to settle and problems with neighbours again are the most significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>% of LAs identifying problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unable to settle in a house</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with neighbours</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation from family and friends</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting problems and arrears</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Postal survey

Inability to settle in a house can be seen as a cultural matter which policy and support might help but not solve. Problems with neighbours and harassment, which may stem from a combination of prejudice and lifestyle differences, must make the process of settling more difficult. Some Gypsy/Travellers themselves perceive similar problems in settling into houses.

Some problems experienced in settling into housing

M: “We did live in a house for a year and they used to go in the backyard crying. When we first moved in they’d sit in the backyard crying, try and light a fire in the corner, try and light a fire outside, put a pan on it and that. They didn’t like it” (New camped)

F: “I would like to go back (to a site), cos I do miss it – in the summer night I like to sit out in our garden, and like when you’re on a site, the kids are in bed, and you come out with a cup of coffee, and your plots are all open and you can talk to each other, and it’s just like bonding in – so they’d say they’re like communities, all mixing in together” (Gypsy housed)

When asked what services are available to help Gypsies and other Travellers living in permanent housing, by far the commonest answer was ‘none’ or ‘the same as for any tenant’. A minority of authorities pointed to support being available from a specialist Gypsy or Traveller service (24 LAs), the Traveller Education Service (23 LAs) and/or a Traveller health service (12 LAs). Others referred to tenancy support services available to all tenants which Travellers could tap into or social services support similarly available to all tenants or residents. This suggests that services specifically designed to help Gypsy/Travellers settle in permanent housing are rare despite their potential problems being widely recognised.
The Case Studies

Material from the case studies tends to amplify and flesh out some of the findings from the postal survey. The case studies vary widely in the extent to which Gypsies and other Travellers seek housing, and thus the extent to which respondents were able to draw on first-hand experience. They also vary widely in terms of pressure in the local housing market and thus the ease with which anyone, whether a Gypsy/Traveller or not, can access social rented housing. In all instances, social rented housing is seen as one option for Gypsies and other Travellers which should be available when it is wanted by individual families.

One county council has an explicit policy to ‘assist those Gypsies . . . who wish to make applications to their District/Borough Councils . . . It will also guarantee to support those people who have been housed by District/Borough Councils or Housing Associations for a period of 6 months’. This degree of formality is unusual in the context of the case studies.

Except where access is difficult for everyone because of excess demand for social housing, respondents identified no real problems facing Gypsies and other Travellers in gaining entry. Examples were quoted of access through homelessness channels (because of domestic violence or unauthorised camping) and normal register channels. Indeed one respondent commented that the speed with which Gypsy/Travellers are sometimes housed is a cause of resentment amongst other applicants. Rehousing is so quick because of the seriousness of housing need in terms of overcrowding, poor conditions and ill health. However, local authority respondents also commented on the need for sensitivity in making lettings to Gypsies and other Travellers, and sometimes deplored the lack of sensitivity exhibited by their housing colleagues. Examples of insensitive lettings include vulnerable families being housed in isolation in the middle of a large estate and then suffering harassment; and lettings staff assuming that Gypsy/Travellers want to be housed together but ignoring ethnic or family differences. In two authorities in particular, Traveller unit staff liaise closely with housing staff over lettings.

Respondents noted problems around settling into a house and a tenancy, especially for the first time, although they also commented that rehousing is entirely successful for some families. Families rehoused from sites can experience much less support from neighbours than they are used to. Moving into a house brings all sorts of new requirements for payments never made before, especially on the road where there is no rent, council tax or electricity to pay for. Unfamiliarity with bureaucracy in general and form filling in particular can lead to arrears because of a failure to apply for housing benefit. Again Traveller unit staff try to ease the transition, but are not adequately resourced to do so on any scale; in one area a member of staff did this sort of work in her own time. More general cultural matters can also mean settling down is difficult. One local authority respondent noted that most Gypsy/Travellers come to housing because they feel that houses ‘look nicer’, are larger and better for children. The idea of settled housing is particularly attractive during winter; some housed Travellers become noticeable ‘more restless’ when summer comes. Gypsy/Traveller housing histories quite often include a period of living in a house, suggesting that the transition is often not a once-and-for-all process.

Many local authority respondents noted that housed Gypsies and other Travellers often suffer from problems with neighbours and outright harassment in the worst instances. This may be attributable to racism on the part of other house-dwellers. It may also be due to real or feared differences in lifestyle. A few Gypsy/Travellers may use the house as an amenity unit and eat and sleep in their caravans in the garden. Some will simply sleep in the house and spend their days with family and friends on a site. Neighbours can be especially worried when extended
family members visit, and live in their caravan in the garden or near to the house. Generally Gypsy/Traveller approaches to life – dogs, noise, fires, outside living – may be unfamiliar and perceived as culturally inappropriate by neighbours: ‘They are trying to follow the Traveller lifestyle in their own backyard – it leads to real problems’ (Traveller education officer interviewee). Once again this argues for sensitive lettings to minimise lifestyle conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gypsy/Traveller perceptions of problems in housing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M: ‘We was in a house for 10 year, and I’ll be honest with you, it didn’t work out. A council house. Well we had people calling us dirty Gypsy bastards, being abusive to me kids. We never stopped fighting – we got in a lot of trouble up there didn’t we?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: ‘Yeah, like trying to stick up for yourselves’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: ‘Sticking up for yourself, ‘cos of discrimination. And I lost me little baby and then when we lost the little girl, that pushed me to the edge, we didn’t want to stay there no more’’ (Gypsy owner occ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managing Unauthorised Camping

This research did not explore approaches to managing unauthorised camping in any detail. The topic was not included on the postal survey, and was not discussed in depth in the case studies. However, the case studies did throw up some points which illustrate aspects of the relationships between managing unauthorised camping and site provision and management.

All the case study areas experience unauthorised camping to some extent at some time. The first and most obvious point to make is that, even in areas where unauthorised camping is regular and extensive there are very rarely plans for further site provision. The unitary authority described above with a commitment to find four sites stands out in marked contrast to the norm. A case study county council is considering provision of a transit site, but in an apparently very low key way. None of the other case study authorities are contemplating further site provision2. There appear to be a number of different reasons, including:

- **No need**: For example, in one northern case study there is felt to simply be no need for further site provision. Indeed Gypsy count figures show that unauthorised camping there is sporadic and involves few caravans. Other case study respondents commented that few, if any, of the Travellers who camp in their areas actually want places on sites.

- **Politically not acceptable**: For example, a Unitary case study which has recently provided a site is unwilling to consider further provision until neighbouring authorities ‘have done their bit’. Another Unitary authority case study has, in the fairly recent past, been through a site finding exercise which generated enormous political and public reaction and complaints. Not seeking further sites, while adopting a tolerant policy towards

2 The case studies were carried out before the July 2002 announcement of changed policy towards unauthorised camping and site provision, and the extension of Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant to cover transit site and stopping place provision.
unproblematic encampments, is part of their current consciously lower key approach to Gypsy/Traveller issues. In some cases, officers clearly want to further site provision but could not take things forward because of lack of political support. In other cases, officers seemed to share politicians’ views.

- **Desire not to attract more Gypsy/Travellers:** For example, a county council with a relatively large population of Gypsies and other Travellers in a variety of accommodation is reluctant to provide more sites which might have a further ‘honey pot’ effect. Some councillors are reported to want to reduce the number of sites to reduce Gypsy/Traveller numbers. More generally, the desire not to attract further Gypsy/Travellers by providing sites in isolation led a number of respondents to argue the need for a regional or sub-regional approach especially to transit site provision.

- **Transit sites seen as unmanageable:** Respondents in a number of areas acknowledge that unauthorised camping will continue until further authorised provision is made. However, many officers are extremely reluctant to get involved in transit site provision and management because of perceived problems and costs. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 7.

The case studies showed some of the ways in which existing local authority sites can – and cannot – assist in managing unauthorised camping:

- Most of the case study sites are fully occupied and have a waiting list (see Chapter 5). This means that they cannot be used to accommodate unauthorised campers on a chance basis. One authority provides an exception: three pitches are kept vacant on a site and can be used as part of any legal case against unauthorised camping elsewhere in the district.

- All but one of the case study sites are residential sites. As will be seen, one of the main criteria for letting pitches is finding newcomers compatible with existing residents. Housing unauthorised campers may well not satisfy this criterion, especially where current residents are English Gypsies and most unauthorised campers are Irish Travellers.

- Where encampments are troublesome and lead to complaints because of the behaviour of the campers (noise, fly tipping, anti-social behaviour), site managers are particularly unlikely to be happy to accommodate them. Previous behaviour is another important criterion for selection in residential pitch allocation. One case study county council quoted an example where the TLO had negotiated access to a site for a family which had been causing problems for some time on roadside camps. The site manager (management is contracted out) was unwilling to take the family, but agreed when the county council offered to pay for any damage caused. The family failed to change their behaviour and was evicted after two years and is now back on the roadside.

- In contrast to these rather negative findings, the case study authority which has provided a transit site feels that the site has really helped them to tackle unauthorised camping. Numbers of encampments have gone down; people have been successfully housed onto the site; the authority has been able to withstand court challenges to eviction because of the existence of the site; and there is a general feeling that the site has saved money. However, this site caters only for one Traveller group and encampments by other ethnic groupings continue, often on high profile sites.

Finally, unauthorised camping can colour the views of the settled community and local
politicians towards Gypsy/Traveller issues as a whole. Unauthorised encampment is the most visible form of Gypsy/Traveller 'accommodation'. This is where perceptions are often formed. In this respect, what happens in connection with unauthorised camping can indirectly affect all Gypsies and other Travellers locally through the formation of stereotypes. While there is no hard evidence, several local authority respondents commented that stereotypes formed from problematic unauthorised campers make it harder for other Gypsies and Travellers to be accepted in housing or to get permission for site development.

Some Gypsy/Traveller views on different approaches to dealing with unauthorised camping

M: ‘Well they’ve gotta have some sort of law and order for everybody, because if I owned a place and somebody went on it and I didn’t want them on it, I’d have to go to somebody to get them off – so the Council’s gotta have some law to get people off their places, haven’t they? Well really, when it’s not your place you shouldn’t be on it, so if you’re on it whatever time you get, it’s fair. Because what’s not yours is not yours – to be fair. That’s right, isn’t it?’ (Gypsy camped)

F: ‘We all pulled on this piece of ground and they come down and they give us 21 days, and the man come down and said, ‘You’ve had your 21 days and you can have that again’. Because there was no rubbish and there was no ripping the grass up, no carry on or nothing. So they were all right down there’ (Gypsy LA)

M: ‘Well they come down and give us Court Order slips and bailiffs, then they come down very strong - strong like immediately, and you have to be off the site – even if we’re going working now – say we does tree-topping or something and we gets a phone call, we have to rush back home ‘cos they don’t get no time to – and if you’re not there at the time, they’ll pull the caravans and wreck the caravans – wreck your home’ (Irish camped)

Equal Opportunities and Human Rights

A final area where local authority policies inter-relate with Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues is equal opportunities and human rights. Discussions with Gypsies and other Travellers in the case study areas revealed a widespread sense of discrimination. Many Gypsy/Travellers speak of the ways in which they feel the settled majority discriminate against them. Accounts vary, but an overall listing would include being:

- excluded from pubs, shops and other facilities (for example, ‘No Traveller’ signs in pubs).
- subjected to verbal abuse and Gypsy/Traveller epithets. Some spoke of more than verbal abuse, with stone throwing, physical attacks, threatened violence and arson involving
trailers being mentioned occasionally. New Travellers in particular spoke of groups of ‘vigis’ (vigilantes) who try to make them leave.

– put at the bottom of the priority list when they apply for things.

– denied services other people enjoy.

– generally regarded with suspicion.

– getting blamed for things other people do just because they are Travellers (for example, petty crime and fly-tipping).

– ‘tarred with the same brush’ rather than treated as individuals.

Gypsy/Traveller residents were often unsure why they are treated in this way. Some put it down to sheer prejudice on the part of non-Travellers, or lack of education or understanding about Gypsy/Travellers. Many protest innocence of behaving in ways which they feel might justify exclusion, but others suspect that pub managers or shopkeepers who exclude them may have previously had bad experiences with other Gypsy/Travellers. It is often conceded that there are some Gypsy/Travellers (a small minority) who do behave badly, but the tendency to make all Gypsy/Travellers suffer because of this minority is felt to be very unjust. Understandably, Gypsy/Travellers feel that they should be judged as individuals and treated on their own merits.

Resident discussions revealed a widespread perception that Gypsy/Travellers are less protected from abuses of this kind by race relations legislation than members of Black or Asian minorities would be. For example, it was suggested that pubs would be in trouble if they put up ‘No Blacks’ notices, but seem to be able to exclude Travellers with impunity.

Discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers by the settled community is not new. Older Gypsy/Travellers usually recall being abused and called names in their own childhood. Perceptions as to whether discrimination has got better or worse over time varies with individuals. While some think it has got better or stayed much the same, others feel it has got worse and in particular point to a more openly hostile, antagonistic or even physically aggressive attitude on the part of the public.
Gypsy/Traveller experiences of discrimination

M: “The women used to go there every Sunday, karaoke, and then cos he found out they were Gypsies he barred them”

F: “Barred ’em, for no reason at all”

F: “I was in there on me own for about half an hour waiting for me friends to come in. They served me all night until the minute the two friends walked in, they run and locked the doors and asked us to leave the premises – in front of everybody that was in there. They said, ‘Gypsies are not allowed in here’” (Gypsy LA)

M: “We’re treated like lepers. They don’t want to know, not even at school – my kid, our adopted son, he’s been called ‘gyppo’, he’s been called ‘smell’, ‘dirt’, ‘filth’. And I do tell him, ‘stand up for yourself’ – cos if they bully him all my family will go down to the school and they’ll cause trouble’” (Irish housed)

F: “If there’s one bad Traveller, then all the Travellers are classed the same. They don’t know you as a person, they know you as a Gypsy. Maybe they’ve had trouble with Travellers before we got here, and we’re all classed the same – if some Travellers cause trouble in a place and we go there, and we’ve never been before, then we’re still classed as we’ve caused trouble – ‘Get out!’”

I: “How do you feel about that?”

F: “I feel terrible about it, ‘cos if you haven’t done anything, it really upsets you, don’t it?”

F: “Yeah, very upsetting” (Irish LA)

M: “There’s another garage barred us up here for getting petrol, I asked him why, he just said, ‘We don’t serve no Travellers’. I said, ‘If you said that about a black person’, I said, ‘you’d be racist, the police would come in and choose you. Well they’re very ignorant people at this first garage up here – very, very ignorant people’” (Irish camped)

I: “How do you feel about all this, about the way the police treat you, the way you get treated in pubs and so on?”

F: “I think it’s wrong. And sometimes it do upset you, because I think to meself, ‘Well, I never did nothing to you, and I’m not rude to you, so you shouldn’t be rude to me – cos I haven’t done nothing’. Fair enough, if I’ve done something to you, then by all means be rude to me, you could only expect it – but not when you ain’t done nothing to them, they shouldn’t come round and say things to you if you ain’t done nothing to them” (Gypsy housed)

M: “Between the settled person and the Traveller I think there’s a different smell, to be honest. There must be something, there must be something – how a public bar where I’ve never been in my life, and I walk in, he says, ‘Sorry we don’t serve your kind’. What way do you think I feel when I walk in with my wife and they turn around and say, ‘No, we don’t serve your kind?’” (Irish housed)

F: “I mean I understand the normal public’s point of view towards us”

M: “But there’s a way of life innit, it’s doing away with a way of life” (Gypsy camped)

It is fair to say that many of the local authority personnel interviewed in the case studies acknowledged discrimination against Gypsies and other Travellers in much the same form as reported above. They reported, for example, highly abusive and racist letters received from members of the public complaining of unauthorised encampments. Some officers commented that abuse and threats could sometimes transfer to themselves when they were seen to support Gypsy/Travellers. They often shared the perception that racist and discriminatory attitudes
were not challenged in the same way that they would be if held against other minority ethnic groups. Some felt that their own local authority might do more in this respect, but that they personally got too little support to take action.

In this context, it is interesting to look at the quantitative findings from the postal survey on aspects of human rights and race relations policies (Box 2.5). A minority of local authorities (about 40%) have reviewed their Gypsy/Traveller policies in the light of the Human Rights Act 1998, and only about a quarter in the light of amended race relations legislation. Gypsies and other Travellers are very rarely identified specifically as ethnic groups within social housing record keeping systems.

In most local authorities Gypsy/Traveller accommodation policies are not well developed, if they exist at all. In part this reflects the lack of a specific duty to consider Gypsy/Traveller needs, and in part a tendency to equate Gypsy/Traveller accommodation with site provision – so an authority without a site has no policy. Where policies exist, they are not always comprehensive and integrated. Most policies have been developed without input from Gypsies and other Travellers. Generally, county councils are more active than other types of authority.

There is no single preferred form of corporate organisation for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation matters. The most common pattern is for responsibility to lie in an environmental health section and only one authority in seven has a specialist Gypsy/Traveller unit.
Land Use Planning: Getting planning permission for sites is often very difficult. Partly through ignorance of the system, partly because of the expectation of refusal and partly because they have nowhere else to live, many Gypsy/Travellers who buy land for a site for themselves move onto the land without applying for planning permission. They then find themselves subject to enforcement action, and may be involved in appeals. Objections from the settled public are important constraints on development.

Private Site Provision: Private site provision is an important part of government policy for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation. Further provision depends largely on the way local authorities view applications from Gypsies and other Travellers. The current importance of private site provision is very variable between local authorities. Numbers of private sites have increased since 1994, and are expected, on balance, to increase further over the next five years. Generally, local authority respondents’ perceptions of private sites are favourable.

Social Housing: Social housing policies are rarely specially geared to the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. Some authorities have significant populations of housed Travellers, but these are the exception. Important reasons why Gypsy/Travellers move into housing are a desire to settle, health reasons and facilitating education for children. There can be real problems for some Gypsy/Travellers in settling into permanent housing. There can be differences in lifestyle as well as ungrounded fears and prejudice on the part of settled neighbours. For some Gypsy/Travellers the transition to bricks-and-mortar itself is too great, for others social isolation creates problems. There are few specialist resources available to help Gypsies and other Travellers to settle.

Managing Unauthorised Camping: Gypsies and Travellers are concerned that (very unfavourable) public perceptions are formed by highly visible encampments. Experience of unauthorised camping rarely leads to local authorities planning further site provision. There are few examples of existing residential sites directly helping in the management of unauthorised camping, partly because of lack of vacancies. In most areas, managing sites and managing unauthorised camping seem to be distinct with few direct links, even where both tasks are carried out by the same officers.

Equal Opportunities and Human Rights: There is a widespread perception, on the part of Gypsies and other Travellers and the people who deal with them day-to-day, of discrimination by members of the settled community against Gypsy/Travellers. Despite this, the research suggests a generally low key approach to human rights and race relations issues within Gypsy/Traveller policies.
CHAPTER 3
Local authority gypsy/traveller sites

This chapter presents information collected in the research about the current network of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites. The first section deals with the number and location of sites, recent changes in the network and planned change for the future. The next two sections draw on the physical survey of a sample of 107 sites, first a description of sites, and secondly an assessment of site quality and costs of works needed to bring sites up to standard and to maintain them over time. The final section looks briefly at other more qualitative assessments of site quality from local authority personnel and Gypsies and other Travellers.

The Sites Network

Every January local authorities make a return to ODPM providing details of the Gypsy/Traveller sites in their area. The results are published, showing site name and address, total number of pitches and whether they are residential or transit, caravan capacity and the date the site opened. The postal survey distributed to local authorities as part of this research asked for similar basic information. This provides a check on the ODPM sites count – although only for the 80% of sites where a postal questionnaire was returned. This section uses the count information as a starting point, then draws on the survey information for indications of change in the network.

Number of Sites and Pitches

At 2 January 2002 the count revealed a network of 324 sites with 5,005 pitches, of which 4,698 or 94% are residential and 307 or 6% are transit pitches. Seven of these sites appear to be closed.

Answers to the postal survey were generally identical to the counts. Some points arose:

- Two of the count sites (34 residential pitches) have been sold to a registered social landlord. Five (117 residential and 21 transit pitches) are leased on a long-term basis to some other body or individual, and the local authority may retain very little control or involvement. One site included in the count (19 residential pitches) was returned as

1. See ODPM website: http://www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/information/index14.htm#stats
2. The count summary shows 325 sites, but the site owned jointly by two London Boroughs appears to have been counted twice.
demolished in the postal survey. This suggests that the counts slightly over-state the number of Gypsy/Traveller sites which are strictly 'local authority' owned/managed. More generally it raises questions about how the network of 'local authority' Gypsy/Traveller sites should be defined.

• The concept of 'closed' sites also bears examination. As noted, seven sites in the 2002 count are apparently closed, recorded as having no residential or transit pitches at the time of the count. The notes to the count explain that some sites have also been removed entirely where they are assumed to have been closed permanently. The postal survey asked respondents about both permanently and temporarily closed sites. The former are discussed below. Eleven authorities had one or more sites which they classed as temporarily closed at the survey date. This involved 15 sites and 248 pitches (201 residential and 47 transit) when in use – a significantly higher figure than for 'closed sites' in the 2002 counts – and included some sites removed from the counts. The main reason for temporary closure is vandalism, mentioned in connection with ten of the 15 closed sites. Other reasons include refurbishment/redevelopment, arson and lack of demand. Only four authorities were able to give an expected date for re-opening (all 2002), and it is not at all clear whether some of these 'temporarily' closed sites will ever re-open. Scoping interviews suggested that there can be several reasons for an authority to claim a site is 'temporarily' rather than 'permanently' closed including genuine uncertainty about the future, political advantage, public relations and fear of having to repay grant given for site construction. With this uncertainty, the precise size of the network is not easily quantifiable, and is likely to change over time with the incidence of vandalism or refurbishment.

• The count figures for pitches overstate the number of pitches actually in use. Respondents in the postal survey identified 27 sites with pitches not currently in use, representing 11% of all sites in responding authorities. Three of the sites with unused pitches are transit sites where site usage can be expected to vary. A total of 190 pitches (5% of all pitches recorded in the survey) were not in use. A small number of sites are mostly not in use, but still occupied and 'open'. The main reasons given for pitches not being in use are vandalism, usually coupled with lack of demand perhaps with newcomers being deterred by vandalism and site problems. A secondary reason for pitches being empty is refurbishment. When asked when pitches were expected to be in use again, many respondents were unable to give an answer.

• A few sites included in the count cannot be seen as permanent. Altogether seven sites were identified by postal survey respondents as being provided on a temporary basis – four because of a temporary planning permission and three because of a leasehold interest. These sites provided a total of 64 residential and 30 transit pitches.

Taking these points together suggest that the annual counts overstate actual usable provision, but to an unknown extent. There are fewer than 325 sites and 5,005 pitches currently available in England.

**Type of Site**

Whatever doubts there may be about accurate numbers of sites and pitches, the small number of transit pitches stands out clearly – only 6% of the total and little more than 300 over the whole country.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of transit pitches are located on transit sites where there are only
transit pitches. Just over a third (37%) are on mixed sites. Of these mixed sites, three are mainly residential, but with a small number of transit pitches; four are mainly transit with only one or two residential pitches perhaps for staff; and only three are truly mixed with broadly equal numbers of residential and transit pitches.

The case studies identified a general reluctance to provide transit sites – as will be discussed in Chapter 7. One respondent commented to the effect that his county council had decided to develop residential sites first, and had then ‘heaved a big sigh of relief’ when the duty to provide was removed in 1994 before they had got round to thinking seriously about transit provision. The figures suggest that this might have been a fairly general reaction and that there was much more attention paid to providing for Gypsies ‘residing in’ than ‘resorting to’ areas.

Size of Site
Count sites vary in size between 1 and 45 pitches, average 15.8 pitches. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of sites and pitches by size of site. While most sites (52%) might be classed as small (up to 15 pitches), small sites account for only a third (33%) of pitches.

Transit sites are slightly smaller on average than residential sites (14.9 compared to 15.6 pitches). Mixed sites are somewhat larger at 22.7 pitches.

| Size of site | Sites | | Pitches | |
|-------------|-------|-----------------|
| Number      | %     | Number          | %     |
| Up to 5 pitches | 29    | 9                | 103   | 2 |
| 6-10 pitches | 60    | 19               | 517   | 10 |
| 11-15 pitches | 76    | 24               | 1,038 | 21 |
| 16-20 pitches | 89    | 28               | 1,594 | 32 |
| 21-25 pitches | 31    | 10               | 708   | 14 |
| 26-30 pitches | 16    | 5                | 451   | 9  |
| >30 pitches | 16    | 5                | 594   | 12 |

Source: Gypsy Sites Provided by Local Authorities in England 2nd January 2002, DTLR

Date of Site
The distribution of sites and pitches by date of site opening is remarkably even (Table 3.2). Very few sites (6%) were opened during the 1960s prior to the duty to provide imposed by the Caravan Sites Act 1968. Almost a third were opened during the 1970s when there was the duty to provide but no exchequer subsidy. Just a half of sites were opened during the fifteen year period between 1980 and 1994 when local authorities had both the duty to provide and received government financial assistance. Just over a tenth of sites opened in 1995 or later.

As can be seen, sites opened before 1980 are on average larger than those opened at a later date. It is not clear whether (or how) this is related to the subsidy system after 1980.
Transit pitches are in general on sites opened more recently. Over six out of ten (63%) transit pitches are on sites opened in 1985 or later, compared with only 39% of residential pitches. This perhaps supports the comment above that local authorities tended to provide for residential needs first. However, an alternative explanation could be that earlier transit sites have since either been closed or converted to residential use. Recent trends described below provide support for the latter view.

### Geographical Distribution

About six out of ten of all local authorities (excluding county councils) have at least one site within their district. Map 1 shows the distribution of Gypsy caravans on local authority sites at January 2002. Concentrations in Yorkshire; around the Fens; in the rural West Midlands and into the south west; and in the ring around London are clear.

Table 3.3 shows the regional distribution of sites and pitches. Roughly six out of ten sites and pitches are located in the four most southerly regions (Eastern, South West, South East and London).

Other points from the table include:

- Average site size differs between the regions. It is highest in the North East (20.8 pitches), North West (20.0) and East Midlands (19.1) and lowest in the South East (12.1), the South West (13.5) and London (14.1 pitches).

- The distribution of transit pitches is notably patchy. Most significantly, there is no transit pitch provision in London. Generally, transit site provision is relatively greater in the north and midland regions which account for 60% of transit pitches and 40% of residential pitches.

### Table 3.2: Distribution of Sites and Pitches by Date of Site Opening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of opening</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Pitches</th>
<th>Average size of site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-74</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-79</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-84</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-89</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-94</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 1994</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gypsy Sites Provided by Local Authorities in England 2nd January 2002, DTLR
Recent Changes in Site/Pitch Number and Quality

The postal survey asked about changes to site provision since 1994, and we draw on this source of information below. This accounts for around four-fifths of sites. The survey covered both changes in numbers and site quality since 1994.

Change in Numbers of Sites/Pitches
The postal survey itemised the following changes since 1994:

**New sites provided**: 35 sites with 484 pitches, of which 3 are transit sites with 53 pitches. Of the 35 sites, 26 are new sites, 8 involve extension or major upgrading of an existing site and one is a change from transit to residential use.

**Change of use of pitches between residential and transit use**: 10 sites affected. Details provided for 9 sites only show in aggregate a loss of 47 transit pitches and a gain of 26 residential pitches.

**Change in number of pitches on existing sites**: 27 sites affected, producing a net loss of 94 residential pitches. The main reasons for loss of pitches were given as lack or changing demand, vandalism and to improve site layout and design. The consequence of pitch loss (on this evidence) should be improved sites, better fitting patterns of demand.

**Permanent site closure, leasing or sale**: 11 sites (139 residential and 40 transit pitches) closed; 2 sites (15 residential and 28 transit pitches) sold; 4 sites (111 residential pitches) leased. In addition 1 site has been the subject of a land swap with a Gypsy. Sales and leasing involved no loss of accommodation; most involved a Gypsy/Traveller individual or organisation. Site closure has meant a loss of accommodation since closed sites were very rarely replaced.

The effect of these changes are shown in Table 3.4. The final row is an estimate of the effect grossed up for England as a whole on the basis that the postal survey response covered 80% of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Pitches</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>Transit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humberside</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gypsy Sites Provided by Local Authorities in England 2nd January 2002, DTLR
sites. It implicitly assumes that changes on responding and non-responding sites have been similar.

This shows an estimated net increase of just over 210 pitches since 1994, fuelled by the excess of new site provision over site closures and decrease in number of pitches on existing sites. Within the total there has been a net loss of transit pitches brought about by closure and transfer to residential use exceeding new site provision over the period.

These calculations take no account of pitches not currently in use on sites or sites recorded as ‘temporarily’ closed at the survey date. As noted above, it is not at all clear how many of these pitches should be included in the national stock. If half of the unused pitches and half of the temporarily closed sites are counted as losses, the net effect of change since 1994, grossed for England as a whole turns into a loss and is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Residential pitches</th>
<th>Transit pitches</th>
<th>All pitches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New sites</td>
<td>+410</td>
<td>+53</td>
<td>+463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of use between residential &amp; transit</td>
<td>+26</td>
<td>−47</td>
<td>−21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net gain/loss of pitches on existing site</td>
<td>−94</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>−94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent site closure since 1994</td>
<td>−139</td>
<td>−40</td>
<td>−179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net effect</td>
<td>+203</td>
<td>−34</td>
<td>+169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated effect grossed up to England</td>
<td>+254</td>
<td>−43</td>
<td>+211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If all the unused pitches and temporarily closed sites are counted as losses the grossed up effect is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential pitches</th>
<th>Transit pitches</th>
<th>All pitches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>−100</td>
<td>−165</td>
<td>−335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grossed-up figures now range from a gain of around 210 pitches (with no account of unused pitches and temporarily closed sites) to a loss of 335 pitches across England since 1994.

There are two further factors which could be built in:

- If only entirely new sites are considered as a net gain, ignoring those which were extensions or re-developments of existing sites, this has the effect of reducing gains through new sites by around 150 pitches.

- If sites sold or leased to non-local authority individuals or bodies are counted as a loss (even

![Table 3.4: Effect of Changes to Pitch Numbers since 1994](table.png)
though there has been no loss of accommodation overall), this could mean a further 190 pitches lost overall.

Under all assumptions there has been a net loss of transit pitches. The following points are significant:

• New provision has been critical in increasing the number of pitches provided. Most of this can be regarded as a hang-over from the legal and funding regime prior to 1994. All the indications, including from this research, are that without central government funding new site provision is unlikely on any significant scale.

• The estimates highlight the critical importance of ensuring that currently closed pitches and sites are brought back into use in order to maintain pitch numbers.

• Transit pitches made up a minority of all pitches in 1994, but have shrunk in number still further since then.

Changes in Site Quality
There are strong impressions among organisations who work with Gypsies and other Travellers that the network of local authority sites has both shrunk and deteriorated in quality since 1994. The calculations above suggest that overall pitch numbers may have increased slightly rather than decreased because of the hang-over from pre-1994 site development approvals – although this is very vulnerable to continuing pitch and site closures, and sites may be less under the direct control of local authorities because of sale or leasing.

No similarly detailed questions were included in the postal survey about site quality changes. Respondents were asked to identify sites with significant changes in physical condition over the last two years (101 authorities replied). Analysis at site level shows that 29 sites were identified as having improved significantly and 22 as having deteriorated. This suggests that more sites are thought to have improved than deteriorated recently, although the inclusions of the word ‘significant’ in the question could hide a general gradual deterioration because of increased site age.

Future Plans for Sites
The postal survey asked local authorities about firm plans affecting the number of sites/pitches in their area, and site improvement or refurbishment.

Plans Affecting Number of Sites/Pitches
Box 3.1 shows detailed answers about firm plans affecting the number of sites or pitches. Unfortunately, respondents often did not give an indication of the number of pitches involved. The figures in Box 3.1 are minima.

Proposals for new sites, site closures, extra and reduced pitches and changes between residential and transit use together indicate a net gain of 52 pitches (46 residential and 6 transit). The indications are that the net direction of planned change is upward, although modest. Bearing in mind under-counting of pitches among responding authorities plus the element of non-
response, it might be fair to assume a grossed up national modest increase of up to 100 pitches (mostly residential) in firm proposals.

Proposals also indicate plans to lease or sell sites. The effect of these plans (perhaps just under 300 pitches grossed up) would be significantly greater than the modest effects on total number of sites/pitches on the ‘local authority’ network. Such plans may have no effect on availability of site provision, but would rather affect its ownership and/or management.

**Refurbishment or Improvement Plans**
Plans for site improvement and refurbishment are more common than changes affecting site/pitch numbers, and are largely geared to Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant (GSRG).

Seven out of ten site owning authorities answering the postal survey said that they had some plans to improve or refurbish one or more site in their area. A quarter of authorities had benefitted from the first round of GSRG, and 52% intended to apply for future rounds of grant. About one authority in ten planned to carry out works from their own resources. The management survey, linked to sites rather than authorities, showed that there were plans to improve/refurbish four out of ten sites.

We might conclude that authorities have plans to carry out improvements or major repairs on around half of the current sites in England. These plans are probably dependent on the continuing existence of government financial assistance in some form.

**A Description of Gypsy/Traveller Sites**

This section draws on information collected in the course of the physical site survey carried out by FPDSavills. A sample of 107 sites was surveyed, of which 97 (91%) were residential sites (the
remainder were either transit sites or mixed transit and residential). Because sample numbers for transit and mixed sites are so small, the analyses below relate to residential sites only.

## Residential Sites: Location and Environment

A common perception of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites is that they are often located remote from amenities and services, and in poor quality areas which would be unacceptable for other residential use. The physical survey collected information about location and site environment to check these stereotypes.

Most sites are located in fringe areas of towns or villages (70%), and a further fifth (19%) are in rural areas\(^3\). Only 3% of sites are located in suburban residential areas and 8% in fully urban areas. Not surprisingly, the most common adjacent land use (for 60% of sites) is a working farm. The next most significant adjacent land uses are commercial (18%); ‘other’ (10%); and industrial (9%). Only 11% of sites have residential or mixed residential land use next to them. Clearly, local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites are mostly located in non-residential areas, and are thus very different from bricks-and-mortar housing – the English House Condition Survey 2001 showed that 80% of dwellings surveyed were in city centre, urban or suburban residential areas where only 11% of Gypsy/Traveller sites are located.

Given the locations described above, it is no surprise that most sites are located at a distance from some common services: 68% of sites are more than 1 kilometre from a primary school and 55% are more than 1km from a post office. Over a third (38%) are over 1km from public transport. Access to everyday facilities could be an issue for residents on many sites if they do not have regular use of vehicles.

Table 3.5 compares Gypsy/Traveller sites and the English housing stock on environmental problems in the surrounding area. As can be seen, Gypsy/Traveller sites are more likely to suffer most of the listed problems than bricks-and-mortar housing. The exceptions are ambient air

### Table 3.5: Problems in the local area: comparison of gypsy sites and the english housing stock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>% assessed as a problem on factor (code 3-5 on 5-point scale where 1 = no problem and 5 = major problems)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gypsy sites</td>
<td>English housing stock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter/rubbish/dumping</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy traffic</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway/aircraft noise</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scruffy gardens/landscape</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrusion from motorways/arterial roads</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambient air quality</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog excrement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrusive industry</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant/derelict sites/buildings</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuisance from parking</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conforming land uses</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: English House Condition Survey 2001 and physical survey; base = 97

\(^3\) There were a small number of blanks in the site survey where answers to questions were not recorded. All percentages here are calculated on the base of sites/pitches with an answer recorded rather than on the whole sample base.
quality, graffiti and non-conforming land-use where proportions suffering a problem are similar, and nuisance from parking where Gypsy sites are significantly less likely to suffer. Differences between sites and housing are particularly marked for litter/rubbish/dumping, vacant/derelict sites/buildings, vandalism and intrusive industry.

Around half of all sites suffer from problems from adjoining land or activities to some extent. The more common source of problems are motorways or major roads (26% of sites), followed by railways (13%); rubbish tips (12%); industrial or commercial activity (8%) and sewage works (3%). This offers some support for the view that Gypsy/Traveller sites are more likely than permanent housing to be located near to unpleasant land uses or activities.

Combining problems from adjoining land uses and isolation (sites more than 1km from public transport, post office and primary school) shows that just over a quarter of sites suffer neither problematic neighbouring uses nor isolation. Just under four out of ten have problematic neighbouring uses but are not isolated and around a fifth are isolated but do not have problematic neighbouring uses. Around one in six sites suffer both problems.

Despite the extent of problematic neighbouring uses, the surveyors assessed the visual quality of the local area in which the site is set quite favourably. Over four out of ten sites (41%) are in local areas judged excellent or very good visually, and a further 33% are in areas judged good. Just a quarter of sites are in areas judged average or poor. Sites located in the urban fringe are particularly likely to be in local areas judged average or poor.

Size of Sites

Survey residential sites varied in size between one and 42 pitches (average 15.2, near to the overall average – see above). In terms of area, sites varied from 100 square metres (a site comprising one double pitch) to 260,000 square metres (an unusual site apparently including a large area of grazing land and other open space). The median size of site is 5,000 square metres and 80% of sites fall between 1,000 and 12,500 square metres. More information on pitch size is given below.

Quality of Site

Surveyors made a number of general assessments of sites. In terms of visual quality, surveyors assessed over half as either very good or good:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is an association between visual quality of the site, and of its local area. Visually poorer sites are more likely to be found in visually poorer localities and vice versa.

The survey listed 13 potential problems. The most significant problems, each experienced on more than 10% of sites are:
Litter/rubbish/dumping 47%
Dog excrement 28%
Vandalism 25%
Heavy traffic 25%
Railway/aerial flight noise 23%
Scruffy gardens/landscape 17%
Ambient air quality 13%
Graffiti 12%

Litter, rubbish and dumping is clearly the most significant problem experienced. Dog excrement, vandalism, scruffy gardens and graffiti relate to site care and management by residents and site managers, while traffic, noise and air quality are related to locational factors. Internal and external factors are both important here.

Surveyors thought that normal wear and tear contributed to site problems (generally) on 87% of sites. Inadequate maintenance was thought to contribute on 12% of sites and inappropriate use on 8% of sites. Poor design or specification contributed on only 4% of sites.

Residential Sites: Boundary Treatments and Entrance

The treatment of site boundaries can be contentious. On the one hand it is important to prevent the site spreading through unauthorised encampments, on the other hand some treatments are perceived as making sites into prison camps. Bunds, walls or fences can be seen as protective for residents, or as screening an unwelcome land-use from those outside.

The survey found that the great majority (92%) of residential sites are contained on all sides. Almost half (45%) have an earth mound at the boundary, and around six in ten have some form of boundary landscaping of hedges, shrubs and/or trees. Most are fenced in some way with chain link, timber panel and galvanised steel panel fencing the most common treatments. Almost one site in ten (9%) has an unprotected watercourse on the boundary (specifically advised against in the DoE site design guide (DoE 1979) on grounds of child safety and pollution risk).

Some form of entrance control is common, especially to prevent unauthorised entry (or exit) of caravans. Almost half of sites (49%) have an entrance gate or barrier, and 6% have some sort of entrance control building.

Surveyors assessed 81% of sites as having safe access and exit. Around a third of sites have an access from a private road rather than directly from the public highway. Almost a third of sites (31%) have adequate entrance signage.

Residential Sites: Site Roadways and Paths

The site design guide recommended that site roads should be designed to allow two lorries to pass each other, and to allow caravans to be manoeuvred onto pitches (DoE 1979). Almost six in ten sites (59%) have site roads less than 5 metres wide. Three-quarters have adequate turning
circles. Most sites have some form of traffic calming measure, especially speed bumps (on 75% of sites). Most site roads are constructed of tarmac (63%) or concrete (33%).

Over three-quarters of sites (76%) do not have footpaths, and where footpaths exist, most are less than the 0.75m width recommended in the site design guide. Only a quarter of sites are judged to have clear and safe vehicle/pedestrian segregation. Site lighting is judged to be adequate on 57% of sites.

It is relatively rare for parking provision to be made except on individual pitches. Only one site in the survey had a garage provided.

Residential Sites: Drainage, Water and Other Infrastructure Services

Box 3.2 provides basic survey information about services and other site infrastructure. As can be seen, the great majority of sites have been judged adequate on all these measures. Areas of potential concern are storage of LPG cylinders which are used on almost all sites but rarely catered for formally, and surface water drainage where almost one site in five is judged to be poor. Around one site in five (all in fringe and rural areas) have some form of non-mains sewage treatment. These can lead to particular management costs and/or problems.

### Box 3.2: Residential Site Services and Infrastructure

- **Water supply:**
  - mains supply on almost all sites
  - supply adequate on 94% of sites
- **Mains electricity:**
  - mains supply on almost all sites
  - cabling all underground on 93% of sites
  - supply adequately earthed on 99% of sites
- **Gas:**
  - mains gas supply on 5% of sites
  - LPG used on 95% of sites
  - LPG storage facilities provided on only 6% of sites where used
  - LPG storage meets H&S regulations on only 5% of sites where LPG is used
- **Surface water treatment:**
  - surface water drainage good (54% of sites); fair (28%); and poor (19%)
  - storm water drain installed on 73% of sites
- **Sewerage:**
  - sewage disposal adequate on 98% of sites
  - sewage treatment by mains (79% of sites); treatment plant (9%); septic tank (7%); and cesspool (4%)
- **Refuse disposal:**
  - refuse disposal adequate on 96% of sites

Source: Physical survey

Residential Sites: Fire Protection

Model Standards for caravan sites require fire points on sites and specify their spacing and equipment. Fire points are provided on only 54% of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites. Where there are fire points, surveyors judged 48% to be inadequate, mainly because some pitches are more than 30 metres from a fire point; poor maintenance; and/or an inadequate fire
alarm is provided. Over four sites in ten (43%) have no formal fire fighting equipment. There are extinguishers on a third of sites, hose reels on just over a quarter (26%) and fire blankets on 3%. Just 9% of sites have a fire alarm.

Model Standards for caravan sites require all caravans in separate occupation to be at least 6 metres apart. Spacing is rarely a problem on local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in that caravans are able to be at least 6 metres apart on 91% of sites.

These findings suggest that sites often do not meet basic fire safety standards required of caravan sites. Site visits during the research demonstrate that some sites rely on garden hoses provided to each pitch, to be used with an outside tap by residents in case of fire. Such provision was reported to have been approved by local fire officers.

Residential Sites: Communal Provision

Box 3.3 shows that the provision of communal facilities is relatively rare on sites. Play areas – the most commonly provided communal facility other than open land – are provided on a quarter of sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3.3: Provision of Communal Facilities on Residential Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Communal work area are provided on 6% of sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– two-thirds of these are in use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communal stores are provided on 4% of sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Animal grazing land is provided on 13% of sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other open land is provided on 34% of sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public telephones are provided on 2% of sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– one is working and one is not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Play areas are provided on 25% of sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– of these, 82% are in use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– 67% are judged to be safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– 65% have fixed play equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– most are grassed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Residential Sites: Communal Provision

Box 3.3 shows that the provision of communal facilities is relatively rare on sites. Play areas – the most commonly provided communal facility other than open land – are provided on a quarter of sites.

Details were collected in the physical survey on 1,456 pitches on residential sites.

Shape and Size

Just over half of all pitches (51%) are oblong (rectangular), while 38% are square and around one in ten are irregular or random in shape.

The site design guide (DoE 1979) recommended that pitches should be not less than 12 metres wide in order to allow some flexibility in the arrangements of living trailer and vehicles, and to allow the introduction of a second trailer where needed. The survey found that about four in ten residential pitches are less than the recommended 12 metres wide, although the median pitch width is 12 metres. Around 15% of pitches are less than 10 metres wide, which offers very
little flexibility in use. The median area of pitches surveyed is 195 square metres, with around a
quarter of pitches having an area less than 130 square metres.

Surveyors assessed almost all the pitches on residential sites to be adequate in area and shape.

**Pitch Surfaces**
Most of the area of most pitches is made up of hard surfacing for stationing the living trailers
and other vehicles used by residents, and for vehicular and pedestrian movement. The most
common materials for these vehicular/pedestrian areas are concrete (71% of pitches) and
tarmac (29% of pitches). Other materials used for such areas on a minority of pitches are grass/
earth, crushed concrete and gravel.

Over half of pitches (54%) include nothing but areas for vehicular/pedestrian movement. Over
a third (38%) have an area of garden, 15% have a clothes drying area, 4% a play area, 2% an
animal grazing area, and just 1% a designated work area on the pitch.

**Pitch Boundaries**
Pitch boundaries are clearly defined on 85% of sites. Pitch boundary treatment is consistent
across the site on 77% of sites. Most pitches have some form of fencing or walling with timber
panel fencing the most common (30% of pitches), followed by chain link fencing (21%) and
post and wire (15% of pitches). Most fences or walls are between 1 and 1.5 metres in height.

**Pitch problems**
Surveyors judged that surface water drainage was not adequate on 17% of pitches, and that 12%
of pitches suffer from natural flooding.

Wear and tear contributes most to pitch problems (not specified) – on 90% of pitches. The
contributions of inadequate maintenance (12% of pitches), inappropriate use (3%) and poor
design and specification (2%) are judged to be much less significant.

**Amenity Units**
Virtually all residential sites provide amenity units with WC and washing facilities for all
residents on the basis of one unit per pitch. The survey did not collect information on whether
these are detached, semi-detached or built in terraced or block form. Most (97%) are brick- or
block-built with pitched roofs.

**Size and Internal Arrangement**
The 1979 DoE site design guide did not recommend a minimum floor area for amenity units,
although specimen drawings of layout and accompanying comments suggest a preference for
more-than-basic space standards including provision of a day room as well as bath or shower
and a separate WC. Comments in the guide suggest around 9 square metres as a desirable
minimum floor area. The survey found that almost three in ten amenity units have a gross
internal floor area less than 9 square metres. The median size of unit is 10 square metres. Only
around 15% of units have an area of 15 square metres or larger, similar to the units including a
dayroom illustrated in the design guide.
The great majority of amenity units (95%) have three or fewer habitable rooms – which may be a kitchen/living area, bath or shower room and WC, or kitchen/living area with combined bath/shower and WC.

The design guide recommends separate provision of a bath/shower and WC. The majority of units are arranged in this way, although 40% have combined provision. Gypsy/Traveller cultural requirements suggest that the access to a WC should be kept quite separate from an area where food is prepared. However, 45% of amenity units are arranged in such a way that access to the WC is directly from the kitchen area, while 34% have direct access to the WC compartment from the outside (the arrangement said to be preferred by many Gypsies and other Travellers). Not all amenity units, therefore, seem to conform to the cultural norms of their residents.

Facilities and Amenities
Box 3.4 summarises other survey findings on the facilities provided in amenity units. As can be seen, very few have disabled access. It is the exception to have a fully fitted kitchen, and a significant minority of units lack heating in some rooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3.4: Faculties Provided in Amenity Units on Residential Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Only 2% of amenity units have access suitable for a disabled person/wheelchair user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• External electrical sockets are provided with 91% of units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a light at the entrance of 76% of amenity units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Around seven out of ten units have some form of heating to all habitable rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where there is provision, 83% of amenity units have a satisfactory kitchen layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Showers are slightly more common than baths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A small minority of units have stainless steel rather than vitreous china WC and wash hand basin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Just over a third of amenity units (38%) have an extractor fan fitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Physical survey

Condition and Problems
Surveyors judged the general condition of amenity units as good (43% of units); average (41%) and poor (16%). They judged 10% not to be fit for their purpose (this seems to be related to smallness and poor conditions). Vermin problems are evident in 18% of units.

As for the site as a whole and for pitches, the major contribution to amenity unit problems is from wear and tear (86%), then inadequate maintenance (12%); poor design (6%); and inappropriate use (2%).

In terms of decorative state, surveyors assessed external condition higher than internal condition (50% good (external) compared with 34% good (internal)). One amenity unit in 20 is in poor external decorative condition, and 18% are in poor internal decorative condition, with the remainder assessed to be average.
Condition of Gypsy/Traveller Sites

The main objective of the physical survey was to assess how much needs to be spent now and over the coming years to bring local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in England up to standard and to maintain them there. FPDSavills adapted the method used previously in bricks-and-mortar housing for making such estimates. Sites, pitches, amenity buildings and other buildings on site were broken down into various construction elements. The condition of each was surveyed in the field. Condition problems were converted into cost estimates for remedial action using cost tables and estimated 'lives' for each element. The schedule used in the survey is reproduced in Appendix 2 and indicates the nature of the information collected, the costs used and assumed life of elements. Survey results were extrapolated to the national stock of sites distinguished by region and site type (residential, transit and mixed).

The total stock of sites was taken to be 308 sites known to be open and occupied in early 2002. This figure is different from that quoted earlier from the ODPM count of local authority sites for January 2002 for two main reasons:

- Sites known to be closed and unoccupied are excluded (these sites were not included in the survey).
- Sites known to have been sold to non-local authority bodies or disposed of on a long lease are also excluded. It is not clear what long-term expenditure commitments local authorities would have for such sites.

These exclusions mean that the cost of bringing sites which are currently closed back to standard and into use are additional to those quoted below.

Four further background points are relevant:

- In most instances, surveyors will have costed maintenance work on the basis of 'like for like' replacements. In the section of the schedule headed 'Improvement' (second last page) there are a number of items where the surveyor can record (and cost) the need for a missing element to be provided. These include external site signage; entrance barrier; traffic calming measures; site lighting; fire alarm; additional fire equipment; and additional amenity buildings if there is less than one per pitch on a residential site. There is also the opportunity to note (and cost) a redesign of site layout where there are obvious problems and a clear solution. The costings below do not allow for more fundamental upgradings of, for example, very small pitches or amenity units which local authorities and residents might think desirable. Such works might well require a reduction in the number of pitches, and can only be assessed on a site by site basis. The cost of such works would be additional to the estimates presented below.
- Only elements with a cost against it in the schedule in Appendix 2 are included in the estimates. There are some elements, for example site drainage, where a site may be recorded as being poor but no remedial cost is included.
- All estimated expenditure is expressed in current money terms. There is no allowance for inflation.
- There is no allowance in the estimates for ongoing routine site repairs and maintenance.
Taken together, these points suggest that the survey will have under-estimated the costs of bringing sites up to a fully satisfactory condition, especially where that involves enhanced design standards.

Table 3.6 summarises estimated maintenance/improvement expenditure needs over a thirty year period by region. It also shows the average annual expenditure per site per annum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of sites</th>
<th>Total expenditure</th>
<th>Av per site per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>£5,394,974</td>
<td>£13,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humberside</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>£17,806,955</td>
<td>£18,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>£8,151,486</td>
<td>£15,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>£12,789,853</td>
<td>£13,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>£7,143,947</td>
<td>£17,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>£22,090,117</td>
<td>£12,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>£13,483,237</td>
<td>£12,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>£24,563,003</td>
<td>£11,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>£12,052,596</td>
<td>£11,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>£123,476,168</td>
<td>£13,363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Physical survey

The grand total over the full thirty year period is £123.5 million, equivalent to £13,363 per site per year. Expenditure needs per site per year are above average especially in Yorkshire & Humberside, the East Midlands and North West, and below average especially in the South East, London and East. In terms of total expenditure needed, the South East and East have the highest requirements (these regions have the highest numbers of sites) and North, East Midlands and North West the lowest.

Because residential sites outnumber transit and mixed sites greatly, the great majority of the total maintenance/improvement expenditure needed relates to residential sites – £117,182,390 out of the total of £123.5 million, or 95%. Total maintenance/improvement expenditure needed on transit sites is £2,660,524 (2%), and on mixed sites is £3,633,254 (3%).

Total thirty year maintenance/improvement expenditure needs can be split between the different survey categories as follows:

- Environment: £2,059,600 (2%)
- Site: £29,700,683 (24%)
- Pitch: £45,876,434 (37%)
- Amenity buildings: £44,323,635 (36%)
- Other site buildings: £1,515,816 (1%)

Table 3.7 looks at maintenance/improvement expenditure needs by region and five year time periods across the thirty year period. As can be seen, expenditure needs rise from £16,780 million in years 1-5 (2002 to 2006), to over £24 million in years 11-15 (2012 to 2016) and 16-20 (2017 to 2021) before falling between years 26-30 (2026 to 2031). This profile takes
account of current backlogs of expenditure needs, and the need to repair and renew elements as they come to the end of their life.

Expenditure needs in years 1-5 are £3.356 million a year. This might be compared with the £17 million Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant challenge fund established for a three year period from 2001/2, intended to meet 75% of approved project costs for successful sites, thus generating a total of £22.67 million, or £7.56 million a year. This suggests that the GSRG will have made a very valuable contribution to bringing sites up to standard, but that expenditure needs to be sustained and spread over all sites that need it.

The expenditure profile figures in Table 3.7 suggest that there is a backlog of maintenance/improvement needs especially in the North West, Yorkshire & Humberside and London. The biggest contributions to early spending needs in these regions are:

- North West: Works to pitches and amenity buildings
- Yorkshire & Humberside: Works to amenity buildings
- London: Site works and works to amenity buildings

Above all, the estimated expenditure profile shows that sustained investment is needed to maintain local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in good condition.

### Other Perceptions of Site Quality

This section looks at perceptions of site quality held by local authority personnel (from the postal survey) and Gypsies and other Travellers involved in discussions in the case studies. The section focuses on reactions to sites as they exist now; Chapter 7 looks beyond this to ‘ideals’ and lessons drawn by respondents for site design and construction.
Perceptions of Site Quality: Local Authority Personnel

The postal survey asked respondents to assess their sites on a number of factors according to a five point scale (1 = very good to 5 = very poor). The factors were: general surroundings and environment of the site; location in relation to transport access and services; general appearance of the site; physical condition and maintenance of the site; provision of amenities (general infrastructure and amenity blocks); standard of site management; and resident satisfaction. These are, of course, subjective judgements with no guarantee that officers will have applied the same standards, or indeed been equally honest in their assessments. Despite these shortcomings it was thought useful to include such an assessment.

Table 3.8 shows the results of these assessments. The great majority of respondents assess their sites as being 3 or better. Assessments are worst (highest average score) on appearance and physical condition and, perhaps not surprisingly from this group of respondents, best (lowest score) on site management. In the absence of any obvious comparitors for this kind of assessment, it is hard to say whether these assessments are ‘good’ or ‘poor’.

Assessments on physical condition of the site for sites of different size show that the best average assessments relate to sites with between 16 and 30 pitches. Smallest sites (up to 10 pitches) are second only to the largest sites (over 30 pitches) in having high scores (low quality assessment):

- Up to 10 pitches: 2.78 average score on physical condition
- 11 to 15 pitches: 2.68 average score on physical condition
- 16 to 20 pitches: 2.48 average score on physical condition
- 21 to 30 pitches: 2.47 average score on physical condition
- Over 30 pitches: 3.25 average score on physical condition

Sites owned and managed by the same authority have an average score on physical condition of 2.62, slightly better than scores for those managed by another authority (2.68) and those

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.8: Site Quality Assessments by Local Authority Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Postal survey

42 sites were included in responses from both counties and districts. In such cases, assessments were averaged. This accounts for the scores involving 0.5.
managed by a non-local authority body (2.76). This is an interesting finding, but does not necessarily mean that in-house management leads to the best site conditions. Respondents may be more reluctant to score sites badly when they are directly responsible. In addition, scoping interviews suggested that in some instances management has been contracted out to others because the site has problems.

The postal survey asked respondents who rated one or more of their sites as fairly or very poor on physical condition and maintenance to tick boxes to identify the main reasons (Table 3.9). They identify age and usage, and vandalism as the main reasons. Initial design and construction seem to be thought more important than inadequate management or poor site management. Inadequate funding could contribute to both initial construction and subsequent maintenance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>% of LAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age and usage</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor initial design</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funding</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor initial construction</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate maintenance</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor site management</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor materials used</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the very different ways in which site condition information was collected in the physical and the postal surveys, it is not possible to compare the findings from the two sources.

**Gypsies and Other Travellers**

This sub-section explores Gypsy/Traveller perceptions of sites. Residents involved in case study discussions were living on sites which varied greatly in terms of location, size, design, amenities, maintenance, cleanliness and ‘quality’. While in no way a resident satisfaction survey, the discussions illustrate residents’ perceptions of their sites. These are described under the headings: location and environment; construction and maintenance; site design; site infrastructure and services; the pitches; and the amenity ‘sheds’. More general resident preferences on these and other aspects of site design are included in Chapter 7.

**Site Location and Environment**

Most of the residential sites included in the research with residents are located in or near urban areas. However, they tend to be in out-of-centre wasteland rather than in central or suburban sites. Participants did not express a lot of discontent about the site’s location, although some were a little way from the shops. Indeed one of the best-liked sites was in a rural area several miles out of town, and perhaps a mile or so from the nearest villages – no-one reported this as a problem.
Residents on some sites were much more critical of site environment. Some sites are situated on wasteland with a poor standard of local environment, for example several are next to or sandwiched between – or in some cases almost under – motorways or other major roads. This is sometimes of concern to residents on account of traffic noise and disturbance which sometimes extends through the night, and pollution. Lead pollution in particular was sometimes mentioned, and its possible effects on children; lead levels have apparently been investigated at some sites. A further concern on sites very near to major roads is what might happen if cars or lorries crash off the road and fall on the site. Other problematic environments included a site next to a factory estate, with noisy all-night deliveries, and one next to an old airfield on which fires are often lit. Apart from any concerns about the effects of the site environment, some residents feel they have just been stuck in places where no-one else would want to live.

Resident perceptions of site environment and location

M: “And certain times, boss, over here it’s terrible with the black smoke where they’re burning it, the old motors and things”
F: “On the aerodromes and things – asthma and that”
F: “They talk about pollution, they’re polluting us seven days a week”
M: “When they burn for the fire brigades, to practise, it burns loads of tyres”
F: “If some of us has got asthma and that, it’s not good for us – I lost my husband over it anyway” (Gypsy LA)

F: “It’s not the site, it’s the area it’s on, where it is and all. Well you just go there, I’d like you to go there, get a caravan and sleep there one night in your caravan – and see if you can sleep. You got vroom, vroom, vroom all night, lorries going up the road – you thought the lorries was coming over the gate to yer, it was terrible there” (Gypsy housed)

M: “They build the site where they wanna build it”
F: “And do you know where the majority of them’s built? On old tips, old rubbish dumps”
M: “They build it where they want, they don’t ask the people where they’re gonna build it”
F: “It causes so many problems with young children now. If it’s not discrimination what else is it if they can’t give them a decent place? They choose rubbish tips, sewage pits or motorways to make the sites in – and at the end of the day we’re second-class citizens to the authorities, and that’s never gonna change. We’re never gonna be like anyone else, that’s never gonna change” (Gypsy camped)

F: “The site’s a bit far from the shops so if the kids wanna walk – we’ve got no footpath to walk to the shop down this little bit of road here – and it’s a very dangerous road. So the young fellas now is inclined to wander to the shops”
F: “It’s nice to have a site in walking distance to shops” (Irish LA)

The message from locations in poor residential environments reinforces other aspects of stigmatisation perceived from having a Gypsy site as an address. Some sites are thought to have a bad reputation in their locality. This is seen as a problem because it makes it harder to get services to call at the site (for example, taxis, deliveries or tradesmen) or to get credit. It feels degrading and depressing to find that outsiders are not prepared to visit the place you live and are unwilling to trust anyone that comes from it (see Chapter 5 for reports of repair contractors and social service providers being reluctant to visit sites). Residents are sensitive about the form of the address of some sites, for example where they are listed as ‘. . . Gypsy Caravan Site’.
Resident perceptions of site reputation and stigma

F: “As soon as you give the postcode, they say, ‘Oh, the Gypsy site’ – it’s down in the computer as – the postcode actually states ‘Gypsy caravan site’”

M: “But yet there’s sites around, that’s not Gypsy sites, which is residential sites with mobile homes on, which is council, and it comes back as a residential site. And this should be called a residential site, not a Gypsy site. Obviously I’m not ashamed of being called a Gypsy, I am a Gypsy, but it’s a discrimination to other people”

M: “Yeah – it’s putting you in your place straightaway” (Gypsy LA)

F: “It’s embarrassing if there’s like a queue behind you and they say, ‘What’s your post code? Oh yeah, ———————— Gypsy Site’”

F: “‘Oh that’s the Gypsy site’ – and you’re trying to keep it as low, but she shouts all over the place so the whole building hears her” (Irish LA)

Construction and Maintenance

Residents sometimes complained about poor build quality on their site – sometimes for the older elements of the site, but sometimes also for newly complete work. The most important example was the construction of the ‘sheds’ (amenity units) which house bathroom and toilet facilities. Some were felt to be very badly built. The complaints include cracks and damp. Complaints included recently rebuilt or refurbished sheds on some sites.

Resident perceptions of construction quality

I: “Are they not well built?”

F: “I don’t think so, no”

F: “Go outside and look round those sheds, they’re all falling to pieces”

F: “They ain’t done them properly” (Gypsy private)

I: “What sort of job did the council make of it?”

M: “A very poor job, it’s still a poor job now”

F: “Yeah, because the concrete, they put it leaning like that – the vans ain’t level”

F: “Slantways, they’re on slants”

F: “Nothing’s ever level on it. I’m falling over all the time, with how my slab is. It’s all holes and that, when I come out at night, tripping over. It’s wicked” (Gypsy LA)

Build quality was also sometimes mentioned as an issue with other elements of site provision – for example, hardstandings (uneven or deteriorating); fences; and fire safety provision. Poor quality provision is unsatisfactory in various ways. It does not function well, does not last and may be more expensive in the long run. It can be disillusioning and depressing and can take the pleasure off what would otherwise be welcome improvements. And it makes residents feel they are being treated as second-class citizens.

Quality complaints were sometimes acknowledged by site operators who admitted that there had been budgetary difficulties with some of the refurbishment, which had led to cutbacks on the planned work.
As in many studies of social housing, maintenance emerged as one of the most common problems on some sites. Many of the problems and criticisms related to the condition and maintenance of the site. There were often complaints about delays or non-fulfilment of promises. Requested repairs and improvements were often said to be slow in coming, and sometimes nothing ever seemed to happen. Repair problems are sometimes less acute than in brick-and-mortar housing to the extent that the core living accommodation (the trailer) is owner-occupied, and the site operator is not therefore responsible for it. Repair and maintenance issues are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Site Design
Residents did not often express spontaneous or decided views about the layout of their sites. This tended to be less front-of-mind than the condition of the site and the types of facility provided. The impression was that few people had given much thought to it. Size of site was seen as more important, with figures between 12 and 20 pitches being often mentioned as suitable. The largest site where interviews were carried out has nearly 40 pitches and seemed one of the most problematic sites with lowest residential satisfaction. Other aspects of site design and layout including provision of space for children’s play and workspace are referred to in Chapter 7.

Site Infrastructure and Services
Points were made about a number of aspects of site infrastructure and services:

• Many residential sites are said to have little or no street lighting – either because it does not work or does not exist. This is sometimes perceived as a problem, particularly on sites where there have been security concerns.

• Residents on some sites reported difficulties with site drainage. The symptoms reported included flooding or puddles in some parts of the site and occasionally smells from drains. The causes were variously put down to drains not being cleared out often enough (or at all); to old, worn-out or broken drainage systems; and to insufficient drains at low points in the site surface. These problems may be exacerbated by the fact that many sites are virtually all hard-surfaced and some are uneven, with plots developed at different times, so that there is some tendency for water to collect.

• On a few sites reported problems with arrangements for foul sewage. In one case sewage was said to overflow from a septic tank on occasion.

• On some sites there were complaints that the site roads are swept too infrequently (or not at all). Many Gypsies say they not only sweep but also hose or disinfect their own plots but the management do not play their part by sweeping the roads.

• On the whole residents approved of humps on site roads designed to slow traffic speed. Reducing traffic speed in this way is thought particularly important to children’s safety, and some wanted more speed humps. However, some of the humps provided were seen as unnecessarily aggressive, and were thought to make services, taxis or trades-people reluctant to enter the site, as well as being difficult for residents.

• There were some comments about inadequate parking for visitors, but this was not usually presented as a major issue. Residents normally park on their own plots. Some would rather
have bigger plots to facilitate more parking for each households, rather than increasing communal parking space which, it was sometimes felt, could get used for storing rubbish. However some feel that visitor parking is necessary

- Many sites are said to have poor or inadequate fire precautions. Points raised include poor water pressure, too few hoses, hoses too small or not long enough and no alarms. Some unlagged pipes were thought liable to freeze in cold weather. There had been fires on some sites.

### Resident perceptions of fire equipment

F: “We’ve got not one fire point on this site, we’ve got the tap on the side of the wall – if a fire did break out here that would not dealt it, because the pressure ain’t there – there’s not even water pressure, it trickles out”

F: “That’s right, we haven’t even a hose pipe – we have to buy our own hose pipe” (Gypsy LA)

- On some sites there is a central trip switch for the electricity supply rather than plot-based individual trips. On one site residents complained that they had to wait for the (non-resident) warden to come and reset the system when it tripped which could mean some hours without electricity.

- On some sites there were complaints about the taste of water.

### Pitches

Pitches – generally referred to as ‘plots’ by residents – vary in size. Some are judged to be of good size, but others are thought to be rather small. The plot has to house the household’s trailer or trailers (larger families sometimes have two or more) and motor vehicles (cars and/or trucks). There must be room to swing trailers on and off the plot when people leave, arrive or travel.

The hardstanding which forms the base of the plot was usually referred to as the ‘slab’. On some sites the slabs were said to be uneven, badly laid or badly patched. This can pose various problems. It is difficult to get trailers level and leads to dangers of tripping. In some cases the slabs were said to have been badly laid from the first, but in other cases the problem apparently arose when renovations were carried out without taking care to level new and old surfaces.

Many plots are surfaced almost entirely with concrete or tarmac. Areas of grass, shrubs or a garden were generally appreciated where they existed. Where they did not exist, they were rarely spontaneously requested, and some foresaw problems with maintenance and vandalism.

### ‘Sheds’

Amenity units are almost universally referred to by residents as ‘sheds’. The size, content and layout of sheds vary. On sites where residents were interviewed, all contain toilet and bathroom facilities and many have at least basic kitchen spaces. Some are much larger with ‘dayrooms’ in which the family can sit, eat and so on. Dayrooms were usually much liked by participants.
Complaints about sheds varied from site to site, but the overall list includes:

- too small with little space for appliances, storage, cooking etc.
- lack of storage.
- poorly built.
- damp.
- infested with mice or other vermin.
- unheated, or with heating which is said to be inadequate, non-functional or too expensive to run.
- problems with plumbing or electricity supply.

Resident perceptions of problems with ‘sheds’

M: “All the taps are leaking – one of them won’t turn off. And also a lot of them sheds have got damp in them” (Gypsy private)

F: “They’ve put cupboards in, but I think what they’re really needing is radiators in there, because it’s very cold in there for the kids, with all tiles”

F: “Specially in the wintertime when we’re doing the cooking in there”

I: “Is there no heating in the sheds at all?”

F: “There’s a blow-out heater, but we can’t afford for the price of electric, ‘cos it’s so expensive” (Irish LA)

F: “I would like the sheds to be a bit bigger as well. I don’t cook in the shed, because it’s too small, I have ten kids, so I cooks in here, and I have another two caravans out there. The bathing and washing and things I do in there, washing me clothes, kids’ clothes in there” (Irish LA)

Summary

This chapter presented information about the current network of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites.

At 2 January 2002 the bi-annual count carried out by local authorities on behalf of ODPM revealed a network of 324 sites with 5,005 pitches. This over-estimates both the number of sites and pitches. There are only around 300 transit pitches (6% of the total) – none in London.

There has been an estimated net increase of just over 210 pitches since 1994. However, the apparent modest gain in pitches is reversed with different assumptions, especially whether unused sites/pitches are brought back into use. Under the most pessimistic assumptions, there could have been a net loss of 675 pitches on local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites. Under all assumptions there has been a net loss of transit pitches.

Nationally, a net increase of about 100 pitches (mostly residential) is estimated from firm development or extension plans. The net effect of firm plans to sell or lease sites would be greater than this. There are plans to improve/refurbish perhaps four out of ten sites.
97 residential sites were included in the physical survey:

- **Location and environment**: most sites are located in fringe areas of towns or villages, or in rural areas. Most sites are located more than 1 kilometre from a primary school and/or post office. Sites are more likely than bricks-and-mortar houses to have environmental problems. Around half of all sites suffer from problems from adjoining activities to some extent (eg, major roads; railways; or rubbish tips).

- **Quality of site**: only one site in ten was assessed as visually poor or very poor. The most common problems on sites – experienced on a quarter or more – are litter/rubbish/dumping; dog excrement; vandalism; and heavy traffic.

- **Boundary treatments and entrance**: the great majority of residential sites are contained on all sides and most are fenced in some way. Some form of entrance control is common. Eight in ten sites have safe access and egress.

- **Site roadways and paths**: most site roads are constructed of tarmac or concrete, often with speed bumps. Only a quarter of sites are judged to have clear and safe vehicle/pedestrian segregation. Site lighting is judged to be adequate on 57% of sites.

- **Drainage and other infrastructure**: the great majority of sites are assessed as adequate on basic infrastructure provision including water and electricity supply. Surface water drainage is fair or poor on almost half of sites. Another area of potential concern is storage of LPG cylinders.

- **Fire protection**: sites often do not meet basic fire safety standards required of caravan sites, either because fire points are not provided or are inadequate.

- **Communal provision**: very few sites have areas set aside for work purposes or animal grazing. Play areas are provided on a quarter of sites.

- **Residential pitches**: surveyors assessed almost all the pitches on residential sites to be adequate in area and shape. However, about four in ten pitches are less than 12 metres wide (as recommended for flexible use). Most of the area of most pitches is made up of hard surfacing. Most pitches have some form of fencing or walling. A minority of pitches are not adequately drained.

- **Amenity units**: virtually all residential sites provide amenity units with WC and washing facilities on the basis of one unit per pitch. Around three in ten units have a gross internal floor area less than 9 square metres. A significant minority of units fail to meet Gypsy/Traveller cultural requirements that access to a WC should be kept quite separate from an area where food is prepared. Surveyors judged a tenth of amenity units not to be fit for their purpose.

FPDSavills adapted a method used previously in bricks-and-mortar housing for making estimates of the amount of expenditure needed to bring sites up to standard and maintain them at this level. The grand total over the next thirty year period is £123.5 million, equivalent to £13,363 per site per year. Estimated expenditure required rises from £16.780 million in years 1-5 (2002 to 2006), to over £24 million in years 11-15 and 16-20. Survey methods used mean that these figures will under-state the total amount which needs to be spent to bring sites to a fully
satisfactory condition, especially if this involves incorporating higher design standards than currently exist.

The great majority of local authority respondents assessed their sites as being average or better. Assessments were relatively worst on appearance and physical condition and best on site management.

Gypsy/Traveller residents were much more critical of sites for poor environment than for remoteness from services. Residents sometimes complained about poor build quality on their site, especially the amenity units. Some commented on poor site drainage. Many sites were said by residents to have poor or inadequate fire precautions.

Some pitches are judged by residents to be of good size, but others are thought to be rather small. On some sites the hardstandings were said to be uneven, badly laid or badly patched. Dayrooms in amenity units were usually much liked by participants. Complaints about amenity units varied from site to site, but the overall list includes size (too small); lack of storage; poor build quality; damp; infestation with mice and other vermin; problems with plumbing or electricity; and heating.
CHAPTER 4  
Organising for site management

There are no specific legal requirements for Gypsy/Traveller site management. How it is organised and what policies and practices are followed is a matter for local discretion. This chapter – the first of two devoted to aspects of site management – looks at how local authorities organise site management. The first section considers in-house and contracted management arrangements. The second describes the organisational location of site management responsibilities, and the third looks at staffing issues, with particular reference to the role of the ‘site manager’.

Managing In-House and Contracting Out

Under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 (CSA), the normal pattern of site management was for sites developed by London Boroughs and other authorities in single-tier local government areas to be managed directly, while district councils managed county council owned sites in the two-tier areas. A small minority of sites were managed by some other body under contract or on a leasehold basis. The repeal of the site provision elements of the CSA in 1994 made county councils responsible for management of their sites, although they were still able to commission district councils to carry on with site management. During the 1990s there was a trend towards greater contracting out of council services, potentially including Gypsy site management.

The postal survey revealed quite a variety of management arrangements (Box 4.1). Overall, the most common pattern is for sites to be owned and managed by the same authority, followed by the site being owned by one authority and managed by another – most usually a district council managing a county council site, but very occasionally the reverse. A significant minority of local authority sites are managed by a non-local authority body. The main commercial company in this field is Westgate Managed Services. The Gypsy Council manage a number of local authority sites while others are managed by Gypsy/Traveller individuals. Avalon Community Enterprises, a member of the registered social landlord (RSL) Novas Ouvertures Group manages a number of sites; other RSL managers appear to be stock transfer associations following large scale voluntary transfer of the council housing stock.

Very few local authorities that manage sites in-house (16% in the postal survey) have a detailed specification for management and maintenance standards. This may be lower than is commonly found in local authority housing management where standards were set for Compulsory
Competitive Tendering (CCT), and where some authorities have agreed levels of service with tenants, set performance targets through Best Value and so on.

The proportion of authorities with a specification of management standards rises where site management is contracted out (62% in the postal survey). The management survey showed that, where ownership and management are separate, 76% sites have a formal contract between the site owner and the manager which specifies the standard of service to be provided. This conceals significant difference between the type of manager; there is a formal contract for 64% of sites managed by another local authority, and for 94% of sites managed by another body. This difference in degree of formality is also apparent in terms of contract monitoring. One third of sites managed by another local authority have formal contract monitoring arrangements compared to two-thirds of ‘other’ managed sites.

Table 4.1 shows the extent of manager responsibility for different aspects of site management in areas where management is contracted out. The factors are ranked according to the percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>% ‘manager’ responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allocating pitches</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorising day-to-day repairs</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evictions</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining pitch allocation policies</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison with neighbours in settled community</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting day-to-day repairs budgets</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison with health, education services etc</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deciding the terms of the site licence</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorising planned maintenance</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining staffing levels for management</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting budgets for planned maintenance</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting rents/licence fees</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorising site improvement/refurbishment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing need for site improvement/refurb</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Management Survey; sample number = 42
of cases where responsibility lies with the manager rather than with the owning authority or exercised jointly.

As can be seen, pitch allocations and day-to-day repairs are almost always the prerogative of the manager alone. The areas where the site-owning local authority retains most sole or joint responsibility are setting budgets for planned maintenance, setting licence fees, and authorising and setting budgets for site improvement and refurbishment. Three of these are clearly related to the site as an asset and properly the concern of the owner. The position of the site owner in setting licence fees is interesting. Making evictions comes high in the list, with managers having sole responsibility on 69% of sites. An interviewee at the scoping stage was insistent that a site manager must have – and must be seen to have – powers to exercise this final sanction in order to demonstrate their authority with residents.

There are differences in the degree of sole manager responsibility between other authority and ‘other’ site managers. Other authorities have relatively higher levels of sole responsibility for deciding the terms of the licence, evictions, liaison with settled neighbours and other services. ‘Other’ site managers have relatively higher degrees of sole responsibility for determining staffing levels, setting budgets for and authorising planned maintenance.

The Case Studies

Seven of the ten case study sites are managed by the owning local authority (all the single tier authorities and one county council). The three that do not manage in-house are all county councils. In one of these, all sites are managed by district councils or stock transfer RSLs. The county council wanted to develop a Service Level Agreement with all managing districts, but this could not be agreed. A Memorandum of Understanding has been developed as a sort of workable compromise, covering such matters as financial arrangements, guidance on evictions and dealing with arrears. The last of these was difficult to achieve as the districts have their own housing management approaches which they are reluctant to abandon. All districts use a common county-wide licence agreement and conditions.

The remaining two county councils (Box 4.2) have contracted out site management, one to a private company on a five-year management contract and the other to a Gypsy/Traveller body. At the time of the case study interviews, the latter arrangement was covered by a recently signed long-term lease. In both cases the contracting arrangement was entered into when the district councils, which were responsible previously for site management, informed the county council that they no longer wished to manage the site after the CSA arrangements were removed. In both cases the option of managing sites in-house seems to have been rejected on grounds of lack of experienced staff; both authorities have contracted out many other local services so this is quite a normal arrangement for them.

Case Study Views on Contracting Site Management

Looking across the case studies as a whole suggests that views about whether it is appropriate to contract out site management are polarised, and very dependent on arrangements in place locally. Thus respondents in case study authorities managing in-house generally think this the best option, while respondents in areas with contracted-out management generally see the advantages of their arrangement. This was particularly true of County B (Box 4.2 above) where
there were no dissenting voices to either the principle of contracting out management or the local contractor.

Opinion in County A (Box 4.2) was more mixed. Some respondents were strongly in favour and identified advantages:

- The arrangement with the commercial company has saved the county council money because district councils were previously running the sites with a deficit, which the county had to pick up.

- The county was able to tap into years of specialist site management experience by employing this particular company.

- On a personal note, a respondent commented that ‘it takes some of the aggro out of a local authority officer’s life to know you are not going to be rung up at the weekend about cable burning or something’.

- A private company can sometimes act more quickly than a local authority where there are many people and departments involved.
A specialist company only carries out site management, so can be more expert and focused than a local authority where site management is one small task among many.

Inevitably, a local authority with contracted-out management is not so directly in control as one managing in-house, and is reliant on the contractor doing a good job. In County A there are differences in perception about contractor performance, especially in some of the ‘softer’ areas of site management such as dealing with crime on site or countering social exclusion. The current management contract has proved inadequate to the task of actually quantifying performance and perceived performance shortfalls, hence the development of a protocol to fill some perceived gaps. There are also some serious inter-personal tensions between client and contractor in County A which make contract monitoring more problematic.

Perhaps the main conclusion here is that contracting out site management works well so long as things run smoothly. If things go wrong – or are seen to go wrong by one side or the other to the arrangement – it may be hard to resolve differences and sort things out. Where management is contracted out, local authority staffing resources are apparently calculated on the basis that contract monitoring will be unproblematic. In these circumstances there is an understandable temptation to leave matters to the contractor and not ‘open potential cans of worms’ by looking too closely at detailed site management issues – especially in an area where, as will be seen, there is little consensus on what ‘good’ site management is.

Management by Gypsy/Travellers?
Opinions among local authority personnel (and indeed among Gypsy/Travellers themselves) seem to be still more polarised on whether Gypsy/Traveller bodies are appropriate site managers. Those opposed often refer to perceived harsh management regimes, management by fear, and exclusive and factional allocation policies, but rarely quote specific evidence.

Respondents in County B (Box 4.2) argued enthusiastically for site management by Gypsy/Travellers. They argued that sites are better managed by people who are fully familiar with and understand the culture of the residents. Residents will sort out problems if ‘told by the boss’. Some respondents in County B see snags in potential ‘clannishness’, but generally feel that the advantages far outweigh any potential drawbacks. They pointed to the fact that local sites are full, have a waiting list, are clean and tidy and generate very few complaints from residents to the council. It is also worth pointing out that the case study site in County B emerged as one of the best liked sites in interviews with residents.

Organisational Arrangements for Site Management

Chapter 2 showed that there was wide variability in the local authority department or section given responsibility for Gypsy/Traveller matters generally. Similar variability is apparent in arrangements made for site management.
Box 4.3, which presents findings from the postal survey, shows that responsibility for site management is most likely to lie in environmental health sections/departments or specialist Gypsy/Traveller units (a specialist Gypsy/Traveller unit was always counted as such, regardless of its wider departmental location). A housing management section/department is responsible in just under a fifth of local authorities. This is not because of the importance of county councils which are not housing authorities – even in local housing authorities a minority locate responsibility for site management in housing management sections.

Site Management Staffing Issues

This section looks first at staff numbers and salaries. More detailed findings on time spent on-site follows. Finally issues around residential and non-residential, and Gypsy/Traveller versus non-Gypsy/Traveller management are discussed.

Staff Numbers and Salaries

Information on staff numbers is taken from the management survey. Respondents were asked how many staff in total (site and office based) are involved in management of the survey site, distinguishing where appropriate between those employed by site owning and managing bodies. Respondents were also asked to give the full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing levels in the same categories. Generally this question was not well answered and less than half of authorities were able to give an estimate for FTEs (45 authorities or 48%).

Combining owner + manager FTEs for managing the survey site gives the following distribution:

- < 0.5 FTE: 7, 16%
- 0.5 and <1 FTE: 7, 16%
- 1 FTE: 15, 33%
- >1 and <2 FTE: 8, 18%
- 2 FTE and over: 8, 18%

This shows a wide range of staffing levels from 0.05 to 3.0 FTEs. Some FTE estimates are
extremely low. There is, not surprisingly, a relationship between FTE staffing levels and survey site size:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitches</th>
<th>FTE Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 30</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures are significantly higher in terms of staff per unit managed than those commonly found in social rented housing. On average, they imply about 1 FTE for 16 site pitches. One larger regional RSL, in comparison, has over 60 properties for each FTE involved in management and maintenance of the stock.

Total employee numbers involved in site management are normally higher. This might be seen as a potential problem where site management is fragmented between a number of posts, but can be an advantage where there is a team of people with similar responsibilities who can support each other and provide ‘critical mass’ in building up expertise. In this respect there are advantages in owning and managing several sites, and the greatest danger of isolation lies where an authority has a single site.

The Site Manager

In order to understand more about how local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites are managed day-to-day, the management survey included a sequence of questions about the ‘site manager’ who has front-line, day-to-day responsibility for site management and contact with site residents. Example job titles were given in the question, including ‘caretaker’ and ‘warden’. By framing the question in this way, we hoped to get consistent answers across local authorities. However it is apparent that different authorities interpreted it in different ways – for example some authorities employing a full-time caretaker or warden for the site referred to this post for the ‘site manager’ questions while others referred to a more senior office-based post as ‘site manager’. We have no means of knowing whether these differences reflect real differences in managerial autonomy.

These inconsistencies may be partly responsible for the wide range of salaries paid to ‘site managers’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under £10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£10,000 to £11,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£12,000 to £13,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£14,000 to £15,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£16,000 to £17,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£18,000 to £19,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,000 and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not waged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 4.4 presents some further findings from the management survey on ‘site managers’. Acting as ‘site manager’ for the survey site is generally a part-time activity, coupled with other duties – which is not surprising given the FTE figures devoted to site management above. It may be hard...
for a ‘site manager’ to develop expertise and focus on site management where this task represents a small part of his/her job and is linked with other quite different duties.

Despite possible inconsistencies in replies to the survey, considerable consensus is apparent on what tasks form part of the ‘site manager’s’ job (Table 4.2). ‘Site managers’ carry out the bulk of day-to-day management tasks, but not cleaning or minor repairs. This suggests a ‘generic’ approach to site management. It is perhaps interesting that evictions and liaison with the settled community are less frequently part of the site manager’s job. This may reflect the relative rarity of those tasks actually arising (see Chapter 5 for details of actual evictions).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>% part of job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enforcing site rules</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising/supporting residents</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letting pitches</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident consultation</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs ordering</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare for residents</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting rent/licence fees</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving neighbour disputes etc</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liasing with other services (eg health, education)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling rent/licence fee arrears</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping site waiting list</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site security</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evictions</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liasing with the settled community</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling electricity cards/tokens</td>
<td>53*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning/litter picking</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying out minor repairs</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling/opening site barrier</td>
<td>31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These figures are relatively low because not all sites require or provide this service.
On-Site Staff Contact Hours

We tried to identify – through the management survey – how frequently managing officers were present on site. We linked this to the post of ‘site manager’. Unfortunately because of the different interpretations of this role noted above, this is not necessarily an accurate indication of on-site management presence.

Not all respondents were able to estimate how long on average the ‘site manager’ spent on site in a week (84 out of 97 could). Of those who could, 19% are either resident on site or spend all normal working hours on site. At the other extreme, one site manager is on site for less than an hour a week. Altogether, 35% spend up to 5 hours a week on site, 19% spend between 6 and 10 hours, 7% between 11 and 15 hours, 14% between 16 and 20 hours and 20% more than 20 hours a week on site. Five per cent said the time varies too much to be able to give an average.

On 13% of sites a nominated resident has some management or maintenance task. Tasks commonly performed by residents are litter picking and clean-ups, selling electricity cards, opening the barrier and general liaison and assistance to the site manager. Most are paid a wage (55%) rather than receiving a free or reduced pitch fee.

Residential Management and Gypsy/Traveller as ‘Site Managers’

A minority of site managers live on site (18%) or are Gypsy/Travellers (15%). Perhaps not surprisingly there is an association here: 85% of Gypsy/Traveller managers live on site while 65% of resident managers are Gypsy/Travellers. They tend to be less well paid than non-resident, non-Gypsy/Traveller site managers.

Points from the Case Studies

Responsibility for case study site management is located in a number of different sections/departments, but mirrors the national picture with an emphasis particularly on environmental health and property services sections. The case studies also vary on use of specialist Traveller units for site management. Box 4.5 illustrates some contrasting approaches. Authority A shows some of the advantages of having a dedicated specialist team dealing with site management. In Authority B site management is located for historical reasons, meaning that non-specialist officers deal with a low status and generally unpopular function; this is being reviewed. Authority C highlights, by exception unique among the case studies, the low level of organisational sophistication and general documentation associated with site management in many other areas.

A number of points from the case studies amplify and complement the survey material:

- As noted above, a fairly common pairing within a job description for a ‘site manager’ is dealing with unauthorised camping. This is true in several case studies. In two cases in particular respondents commented that this could put pressure on the time available for site management matters. Dealing with unauthorised camping is largely a responsive task which can divert staff from site management when there are a large number of encampments, especially where overall staffing levels are tight.
Cover during holidays and sickness emerged as an issue in some case studies where the bulk of responsibilities fell on one person. One authority had appointed a second Traveller Officer about a year prior to the research, and respondents felt that this greatly improved both the service being offered and staff well-being. Apart from obvious advantages in providing cover, just having someone to talk to who understands the rigours of the job is very helpful. Stand-alone officers have a particularly difficult task.

Staff turnover was not discussed, although it was apparent that many of those interviewed had been in post for many years. However, difficulties in finding suitable staff for site management, especially wardens, were referred to in several places (and emerged as a recognised management problem in the postal survey). Site management is acknowledged as a potentially stressful job, requiring a wide variety of skills. Site managers interviewed have a wide variety of backgrounds. Some spontaneously mentioned that they had had no training for the job and had learnt by doing. Successful site managers are obviously highly committed, and examples were quoted of people doing things in their own time to help residents.

Staff safety was mentioned in several interviews. At the extreme, the Traveller Liaison

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**Box 4.5: Examples of Organisation for Site Management**

**Authority A:** is a unitary authority with a commitment to developing a holistic approach to Gypsy/Traveller matters. There is a specialist Traveller Unit located within the Chief Executive’s department which signals the political importance for the service. Authority A is in the process of transferring site management from the housing department to the Traveller Unit. Particular advantages claimed for the new structure are that cover should be easier in a specialist unit, people should be easier to get hold of, and that the site management budget does not have to compete against housing needs. Site management staff will be located with other officers with similar interests and duties.

**Authority B:** is a metropolitan district. Site management is located within a section of environmental health because of their role in site licensing and environmental protection. Until 5 years ago, this section was part of a separate Environmental Health Department (EHD) which had its own committee. The change to a Cabinet system saw EHD come within a much wider department which includes planning, and this department in turn is represented by one Cabinet member responsible for ‘Development’. As a result, Traveller issues have tended to become buried among a much wider range of concerns and the section dealing with site management is not represented on the Senior Management Team. This apparent marginalising of Traveller issues is felt by officers concerned with site management. Officers admit that none of the ‘old’ EHD managers were Traveller experts, but were at least in touch with the concerns of their colleagues in the same Department. This is now felt not to be the case. The problem is further compounded by site managers’ belief that Traveller matters should no longer be their responsibility in any case. Future location of site management is being discussed with concern to locate the function where it can most effectively be performed. The possibility of contracting out management being considered as an option. The option of transferring site management to the housing management department appears unlikely because that large and powerful department is reported to be reluctant to take on the duties.

**Authority C:** is a county council that has adopted a specialist approach to site management and other Gypsy/Traveller matters. This county manages several sites and has a specialist team of seven Site Officers, plus one part-time Site Officer for cover, under a Senior Site Officer. There is also a Rents and Tenancy Officer and administrative support, all under a Head of Section. The Site Officers spend around half of their time on site(s), collecting rents, reading electricity and water meters, tidying the site, carrying out small, or reporting larger, repairs and liaising with residents. Two days per week the Site Officers come together as a group to carry out larger (‘non-technical’) repairs such as concreting or fencing repairs. Following expected practice within business centres in the county council, the Gypsy Section has sought and received ISO 9000/9001 accreditation. One respondent argues that ISO documentation gives prompts to management in remembering their responsibilities and in monitoring, risk assessment and taking appropriate action if necessary and is clearly superior to ‘bumbling along’ which the Section was previously doing. The documentation on procedures and policies is now extensive, covering, for example, Site Officers’ responsibilities and guides for action, allocation procedures and site assessment. In the view of a respondent from the operational side: ‘There is an awful lot of paper, but I suppose it was necessary – We couldn’t carry on as before and, yes, the organisation is better now.’

Source: Case studies
Officer in one authority was unable to visit sites at the time of the case study interviews because of threats of violence. In another area, officers always visit sites in pairs following earlier threats and assaults. Elsewhere safety concerns seem to arise infrequently when 'things can get a bit heated', and are dealt with on a much less formal and more pragmatic way. In most cases, officers visit sites alone without problems or may ask a colleague to accompany them in less certain circumstances. One experienced female officer, if facing aggression 'simply walks away' and residents, knowing that this can lead to eviction, are normally quick to apologise. Safety issues clearly can arise on occasion. A major factor in successful site management appears to be building and retaining trust between residents and managers.

- Safety issues are also one consideration in the resident versus non-resident manager question. Only one of the case study sites – that managed by a Gypsy/Traveller organisation – has a resident site manager. In this instance, on-site management presence is seen as important in the management approach, ensuring that the manager is aware of, and in a position to control, things happening on the site. Most other respondents argue against residential site managers, sometimes on the basis of past experience. There are two strands in the argument: first that a residential site manager's job can be extremely difficult and stressful; second that, in principle, the idea that Gypsies/Travellers need someone to look after them 24 hours a day is inappropriate, and implies that they cannot look after themselves.

- In practice, relying on someone resident on the site to carry out minor management tasks like opening the barrier or selling electricity cards seems to depend on identifying someone the landlord can trust and whom other residents will deal with, support and respect. There are a number of examples in the case studies where authorities have found such a person on one site but not on another.

- Frequency, duration and timing of site visits by managers all differ in the case studies. The manager of the transit site likes to visit every day at some time, and finds it hard to get away because residents want to talk, seek advice etc. Some distinguished between regular visits at known times to collect licence fees or other charges or to sell electricity cards, and visits at different times of the day and different days of the week to 'keep an eye on what is going on'. Some felt very strongly that you 'can't manage a site 9 to 5' or just within office hours, but have to make some surprise visits to know what is happening on site.

- The resident site manager described above is also a Gypsy/Traveller. One member of the team in another authority is a Gypsy/Traveller, which is felt to be very helpful. There are no other case study examples of Gypsies or other Travellers managing sites. One respondent stated that Gypsies and other Travellers do not like to be managed 'by their own', and others seem to share this view less explicitly. The Gypsy/Traveller perspective on this is described below.

Gypsy/Traveller Views

Site residents commonly spoke of two main officials: a site manager with overall responsibility who probably does not routinely spend much time on the site, and someone who actually handles matters on the site from day-to-day who is usually referred to as a 'warden' (a term disliked by some as it smacks of prison). It is interesting that these perceptions directly reflect
the difficulties we experienced in the management survey in getting consistency about the 'site manager'.

On many (but not all) sites the residents seem to have good personal relations with their warden. Wardens often give the impression that they are trying to help and it is often assumed by residents that delays in meeting requests or non-fulfilment of promises are due to people higher up the chain – ‘he does his best’. This is reassuring to some extent – but does not always result in effective service delivery.

In a few cases the more senior site manager was seen as being hostile to or dismissive of Traveller residents, and this understandably tends to be resented. One of the most important features is that residents should feel that site officials ‘respect’ them – not that they should be deferential, but that they should always treat residents as human beings and not just as ‘a problem’.

Some contrasting views of wardens and site managers

F: “He was no good, our worker, he was a no-good. No, wouldn’t do nothing for yer. If you had a repair to be done you had to wait so long to have it done – no he weren’t good. We’re Gypsies again see, they don’t bother with us, do they? Put us in a corner and leave us, like little mice in an ‘ole – that’s what they used to do with us, push us to one side” (Gypsy housed)

I: “What’s your warden like here?”

F: “He’s a godsend – he is, God love him. We have a laugh and joke a bit, he comes and has a cup of tea. If you’ve got any mail and – we ain’t the best of readers, ‘Read that for me’, he’s always got time to read and explain, tell you how to go about it, that kind of thing” (Gypsy LA)

F: “You tell him (about a repair) and he writes it down, but that’s it, then you could be a few years waiting then. Himself is very nice. I don’t know what happens, how he can’t get it done”

F: “There’s a fella who’s over him and he is like an ignorant – ! All that rubbish is on here since we pulled on here, four year, and he blames us for throwing it over” (Irish LA)

There were very mixed views about whether the warden should be a Traveller or non-Traveller. On the whole, the opinion tended to be against having Travellers as wardens mainly because of the risk of partiality between families on the grounds that Travellers might naturally tend to favour ‘their own’ (or be suspected of doing so); outsiders would be more detached and hence fairer. In some cases residents thought Traveller wardens might either be too strict or not strict enough, or not look after the sites properly; some feared that they might not be able to get things fixed.

However some residents thought that Travellers would make better wardens since they would understand ‘our ways’ and would be tough enough to stand up to ‘bad families’. One of the best-liked sites in the research is managed for the local authority by Travellers.
Views on Gypsy/Travellers as wardens or managers

F: “If you’ve got one Gypsy telling the other Gypsies what to do they’d be fighting all the time” (Gypsy housed)

I: “This site I think is managed by Travellers, isn’t it? Is that a good thing or not?”
F: “Yes, definitely, they know the way you go on – yes”
F: “He’s been on camps before, so he knows how people is”
F: “And the Travellers will think to themselves, ‘Well he’s like us, he won’t let you get away with like putting rubbish on your slab’. See a lot of people would be frightened to manage Travellers sites and go to people and chastise them, so people would run riot” (Gypsy LA)

Another issue is whether the warden should be resident on site or not. Few of the sites visited currently have resident wardens although some have had these in the past. Many residents prefer non-resident wardens; they see the warden as an authority-figure, and do not want to feel under scrutiny 24 hours a day. Some also feel this would be a strain on the warden, particularly on more difficult-to-manage sites. However it seems desirable for the warden to spend a reasonable amount of time on the site. This makes them more accessible in case of repairs or other needs and facilitates handling of matters like postal deliveries. Extended warden presence can also have a useful deterrent or policing function in case of trouble including unauthorised trailers pulling on.

Resident wardens?

F: “They should live there all the time”
F: “Yeah, to keep an eye on what was going on and what weren’t” (Gypsy housed)
M: “Well if they live on the site it’s like a concentration camp isn’t it?”
I: “It’s better to have someone come in from outside?”
M: “Come in from outside every morning” (Irish housed)

On some sites there is a warden’s office. Where this is not the case the warden probably tends to make flying visits rather than establishing a more consistent presence. In some cases wardens give residents their telephone number so they can report needs or occurrences even in the warden’s absence.

Summary

This chapter looked at how local authorities organise site management.

There is a wide variety of site management arrangements. The most common pattern is for sites to be owned and managed by the same authority, followed by the site being owned by one authority and managed by another. A significant minority of local authority sites (13%) are
managed by a non-local authority body. Where site ownership and management are separate, a formal contract is much more common where a non-local authority body is involved.

Respondents in case study authorities managing in-house generally thought this the best option, while respondents in areas with contracted-out management usually saw distinct advantages in that arrangement. Contracting out site management works well so long as things run smoothly. Where management is contracted out, local authority staffing resources are apparently calculated on the basis that contract monitoring will be unproblematic.

Opinions among local authority personnel are very mixed on whether Gypsy/Traveller bodies are appropriate site managers. The views of Gypsies and other Travellers were also mixed on the question of Gypsy/Travellers as site owners or managers.

Responsibility for site management is most likely to lie in environmental health sections/ departments or specialist Gypsy/Traveller units. A housing management section/department is responsible in just under a fifth of local authorities. Staffing levels seem to be around 1 FTE for 16 site pitches.

Information collected about the 'site manager' proved inconsistent. ‘Site manager' salaries show a wide range, as do estimates of time spent on site. Many 'site managers' have other responsibilities, often bearing little relationship to site management. There is consensus that the 'site manager’ task includes the bulk of day-to-day management tasks but not cleaning or minor repairs. A minority of 'site managers' live on site (18%) or are Gypsy/Travellers (15%).

Site residents interviewed spoke of two main officials: a site manager with overall responsibility who probably does not routinely spend much time on the site, and someone who actually handles matters on the site from day to day who is usually referred to as a 'warden'. On many (but not all) sites the residents seem to have good personal relations with their warden. In a few cases the more senior site manager was seen as being hostile to or dismissive of Traveller residents.

There were very mixed resident views about whether the warden should be a Traveller or non-Traveller. On the whole, the opinion tended to be against having Travellers as wardens. Many residents prefer non-resident wardens; they see the warden as an authority-figure, and do not want to feel under scrutiny 24 hours a day.
CHAPTER 5
Site management

As noted, there are no specific legal requirements for Gypsy/Traveller site management; what policies and practices are followed is a matter for local discretion. This chapter looks at how local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites are currently managed. The emphasis is on residential sites. We have little information about transit site management because there are so few, so survey sample numbers are very small. The transit site which is the base for a case study is unusual since it caters for New Travellers and sets a fairly long normal maximum stay (6 months).

The main part of the chapter is concerned with different aspects of site management, ending with an assessment of management performance measures and a consideration of what is ‘good’ site management. First, and as a context for what follows, the chapter describes site occupancy and resident characteristics. The chapter draws on all elements of the research, and Gypsy/Traveller views from the resident discussions in some of the case study areas are reported at appropriate points throughout the chapter.

Site Occupancy

Information on numbers of site residents and their ages is collected through the bi-annual Gypsy Count, but is not published. This section uses material from the management survey and case studies to look at some characteristics of site residents and site dynamics.

Ethnic Groups Housed

Respondents in the management survey were asked to identify which broad grouping(s) of Gypsy/Traveller lived on the sample site, distinguishing between English Gypsy, Irish Traveller, New Traveller and other. The majority of sites (78%) cater for a single broad group of Gypsy/Traveller, while 22% house more than one of these broad groups.

English Gypsies are the group most widely catered for – they live on 92% of the survey sites. Irish Travellers live on 28% of sites and New Travellers on 3%. Just over seven out of ten (71%) of survey sites are single group sites occupied by English Gypsies, while just 7% are single group sites occupied by Irish Travellers and 1% exclusively occupied by New Travellers.

Because there is no information on the overall composition of the Gypsy and other Traveller population in England it is impossible to say to what extent this pattern favours a particular group in proportionate terms. However, it seems likely that the current occupancy pattern over-

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1 One site in the survey was exclusively occupied by New Travellers. This was a transit site.
represents English Gypsies, and under-represents Irish Travellers. It is not clear whether there is a similar under-representation of Irish Travellers who would like to live on a residential site. This is still more true of New Travellers – apparently grossly under-represented on sites; research discussions with New Travellers revealed little or no desire to live on formal residential 'sites'.

The Case Studies
Most of the case study sites house English Gypsies only. One such was previously split around half and half between English and Irish Travellers. There were severe management problems which have eased somewhat since the site became wholly English.

One site houses only Irish Travellers. This stemmed from initial lettings, but it is not clear to current managers whether this was intentional. This site is reported to function well.

Three sites house both English Gypsies (mainly) and Irish Travellers (a few families). On one site, an Irish woman is said to have come to the site specifically to get away from her own 'troublesome' family.

Most site managers who were prepared to talk about ethnic distinctions thought that, in general, mixed group sites do not work, leading to friction between residents and at the extreme to one group seeking to make the other leave through harassment. However, most experienced managers also seem able to quote examples of mixed-group sites which work well because the actual families have similar lifestyles and live together happily. Two of the mixed case study sites are reported to work well, with few neighbour disputes, low turnover and high resident care of their plots and amenities. The third is much more problematic in terms of vandalism and general resident behaviour, but this is not attributed to the mix of residents – indeed a manager commented that the site had settled down since the Irish families had arrived. All these sites house a few Irish families among the majority of English families. It may be that this creates a more stable situation than the near equality of groups which apparently caused particular problems in one case study. This is perhaps another example of the impossibility of making generalisations in Gypsy/Traveller site management issues.

One further case study site is occupied exclusively by New Travellers. New Travellers are often thought not to want a 'site' along normal local authority Gypsy site lines. This site was designed in consultation with New Travellers, and is very different in concept and appearance from the norm. However, its occupancy by the single group is slightly contentious locally, and some respondents said that this had not initially been the intention. Pitches have been offered to other groups, and refused. The conventional wisdom that 'ethnic' Gypsy/Travellers will not live with New Travellers seems to hold in this instance, but may once again be dependent on individuals.

On some of the case study sites, most or all residents come from a single extended family. This can lead to very stable sites, but can also have drawbacks. It is natural that residents' children will want to live on a 'family' site too when they marry, but this may not be possible if the site is full. On the other hand, a vacant pitch may be difficult to let if there is no family member who currently wants it. Housing a single extended family does not necessarily rule out neighbour disputes or even violence on the site – as one officer put it: 'Just because they're the same family doesn't mean they like each other'. Some local authority respondents saw sites housing a single extended family as the ideal, others thought this too inflexible for general public provision since it makes access too difficult for non-family members.
Gypsy/Traveller Views

Resident discussions made clear that ethnic groupings are often important to Gypsy/Travellers, who have their own ethnic stereotypes. Most New Travellers tend to avoid born Travellers, and vice versa. Their lifestyles, attitudes and manners are different in some respects. Both English Gypsies and New Travellers sometimes allege that those responsible for many of the worst problems are often Irish Travellers.

Some ethnic stereotypes

**F:** “But look at the mess they’re leaving (Irish tinkers). And that’s what’s give us the bad name. And these New Age Travellers, I mean they’re filthy.”

**M:** “And they’re not Travellers at all, they’re house dwellers they are. They’re what we call Gorgios, them” (Gypsy LA)

**M:** “We don’t associate with Gypsies and they don’t associate with us. In other words they have their way of life and we have our way of life”

**I:** “And what about the new age Travellers?”

**M:** “I don’t tolerate them at all. They’re scruffy, dirty – we call them vermin, they have these dreadlocks, and I don’t think they know what soap and water is” (Irish housed)

**I:** “Do you often find yourself stopping alongside with Gypsies or Irish Travellers?”

**M:** “Oh no, no”

**M:** “I try not to, try not to – they nick off yer”

**M:** “Try not to – and it causes trouble, it causes trouble” (New camped)

Stereotyping is clearly unhelpful and can be damaging. However, the quotations above suggest that many Gypsy/Travellers are likely to share site managers’ doubts about the wisdom of mixing groups on sites. Indeed, many Gypsy/Travellers say that friction is particularly likely to occur when different types of Travellers are mixed together. It is often suggested that English Gypsies do not get on with Irish Travellers and some say that mixing them is a recipe for ‘total warfare’. Examples of such conflicts were sometimes quoted.
Doubts about mixing different groups of Gypsy/Travellers

I: “Do Irish and Gypsies mix on the road and sometimes travel together, or not?”
F: “No, they’d be killing one another if they got together. Irish are very liberty-taking people. They wouldn’t think no more of moving right in this garden here, putting their caravans down here” (Gypsy housed)
M: “When there’s Irish come on looking at the plots, ready to pull back on, he’s been going to go – because he’s frit to death, he’s scared to death, he’s scared to death of ‘em” (Gypsy LA)
M: “They was going to make it 25 Irish and 25 English”
M: “Well that’d be a war zone if they’d done that, it would be a war zone. Don’t mix, different way of living, different kind of people” (Gypsy LA)
I: “How would you feel if the Council allowed Irish Travellers or Gypsies onto the site?”
F: “I think there’d be a lot of friction”
F: “I don’t know if Irish Gypsies would be prepared to live with us the same as we – we choose to live separately, don’t we, generally?”
M: “They wouldn’t wanna live with us”
F: “It’s like I don’t lock my door – if they’re there I’d keep everything bolted down” (New transit)

However, as noted above, there are also sites where these groups mix apparently peacefully (and others where trouble has been concentrated within one or other of these communities).

Mixing can work

F: “But not everybody on here is the same, there’s English, Irish – all different things on here”
F: “Irish, Scotch”
F: “It’s not like we’re all the one family”
F: “We are all different families. All single families”
I: “But everyone gets on here, there is no problem?”
F: “Yes”
F: “Everybody gets on, yes”
I: “Because again I’ve talked to Travellers who say it’s not a good idea to have different nationalities on the same site”
F: “No, that’s rubbish, I’ve never stopped on a camp where there’s just been English or Irish or Scotch. If you went to Scotland now there’re more English people up there than what there are here” (Gypsy LA)
M: “There’s good and bad in everybody – there’s good English people and there’s very bad English people. And there’s good Irish people and very bad Irish people, at the end of the day” (Gypsy LA)

Residents shared site managers’ ambivalent views about single-family sites. Some think them a good idea, others foresee problems.
Single family sites – for and against

F: “It’s OK as a site to live on because it’s just our family”
I: “Would you rather live on a one-family site”?
F: “Yeah, because there won’t be no problems like with the kids – like with fighting and things” (Irish LA)
M: “Well I reckon a trailer site should be made for families – all the same relations. We’re all more or less the same relation on the site” (Gypsy private)
F: “I think it’s better with all different families, ‘cause when one family’s all together there’s always disagreements” (Gypsy housed)
M: “If I could’ve gone onto a site, say like with me and my kids, and if it was peaceful I’d be on the site – but you try getting on a site with all one family, you can’t just do it” (Gypsy owner occ)

Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics

The management survey asked how many people were living on the sample site, distinguishing between adults and children of different ages. Different numbers of respondents were able to answer different parts of the question, so sample number vary. The main findings are summarised in Box 5.1.

Box 5.1: Number and Age of Site Residents

- Total site population (84 sites)
  - 3,847, range 0-183, mean 45.8, median 40
- Total number of adults (85 sites)
  - 2,550, range 0-100, mean 30, median 22
- Total number of children (83 sites)
  - 1,544, range 0-89, mean 18.6, median 15
- Proportion of children in different age groups (72 sites)
  - under 5 31%
  - 5 to 11 41%
  - 12 to 16 28%

Source: Management survey

An obvious point from Box 4.6 is that the largest sites house significant numbers of people (the largest survey site houses 183 people). The breakdown of children’s ages, where given, suggests greater demand for primary than for secondary schooling at present, but that the secondary school cohort will increase in future years.

Because sites vary widely in size, total population figures mean little in themselves, but can be used as a basis for analyses of persons per occupied pitch (the nearest proxy available to household size) and site child density.
Persons per Pitch
Persons per occupied pitch can be calculated on 79 sites:

- Under 2 persons: 6%
- 2, < 3 persons: 34%
- 3, < 4 persons: 43%
- 4, < 5 persons: 13%
- 5 persons and over: 4%

Thus almost eight out of ten sites have an average of between 2 and 4 persons per pitch. The lowest average is 1 person per pitch, and the highest 10.5 (an Inner London Borough). The overall mean number of persons per occupied pitch is 3.2 persons and median is 3.13. These figures are significantly higher than for household size among the English population as a whole – in 1999 average household size was 2.35 persons.

There is a relationship between persons per occupied pitch and ethnic group housed: sites with only English Gypsies have an average of 3.0 persons per pitch, sites with only Irish Travellers have an average of 5.0 persons per pitch, and mixed sites 3.4 persons. This supports the conventional wisdom that Irish Travellers have larger families than other Gypsy/Travellers, who in turn themselves have above average family sizes.

Site Child Density
The figures can also be used to calculate child density in terms of the proportion of the site population which is aged 16 and under for the 82 sites where this information is available. The average is 39% (mean and median). The site distribution is:

- Up to 25% children: 12%
- >25%, up to 33% children: 24%
- >33%, up to 50% children: 46%
- Over 50% children: 17%

Sites clearly vary widely in this respect, with almost half having a population where children make up between a third and a half. Children outnumber adults on just under a fifth of sites. These child densities are significantly higher than among the population as a whole (20% in the 1991 Census) and may be around those experienced on some recently built estates of social housing for families (40% to 60%) (Page 1994: 54). Again there is an ethnic distinction: 38% of the population on English Gypsy only sites are children, compared with 42% on both Irish Traveller only and mixed sites.

In social housing management there is a recognition that high child densities can create challenges for management, and this is likely to be equally true of Gypsy/Traveller sites. One case study respondent explicitly mentioned achieving a balanced population and avoiding excessive child densities as a criterion when allocating pitches.
Employment Levels
The management survey shows that on seven out of ten sites a minority of households work:

- Almost all (over 90%)  4%
- Most (60% to 90%)  8%
- About half (40% to 60%)  18%
- A minority (10% to 40%)  36%
- Almost none (less than 10%)  34%

The case studies suggest that this is a difficult calculation to make given the intermittent and casual nature of some Gypsy/Traveller employment. Self-employment is much more common than waged labour, and may be seasonal. Another factor is a tendency for pitches to be licensed to women and children, effectively as single parent families. A number of respondents noted that male partners may come and go over time; they may well be working and indeed travelling in order to work in traditional ways. As will be seen, this sort of family and employment structure can cause difficulties over housing benefit eligibility.

Special Health Needs
The management survey shows that, on about half of sites, three or more residents have some form of special health need (pregnancy, old age, physical or mental disability or mental health problems). On a third of sites there are one or two residents with special health needs, and on 18% there are none. The number is related to overall site size, but does suggest that some sites generate special health needs.

The New Traveller case study site stands out in particular for the number of residents with quite severe mental and physical health needs as well as relatively high levels of substance misuse. One respondent termed the site ‘social care corner’. This is a considerable challenge to the site manager who feels she has neither the time nor the expertise to help residents as she would like. Accessing help for site residents can be harder than it would be for members of the settled community or, paradoxically, for rough sleepers.

Relatively high child numbers, low employment rates, benefit dependency and incidence of health needs all suggest sites have a relatively deprived population, with implications for site management and other service needs.

Social Mix
The discussions with site residents showed just how important social factors are for quality of life on sites. A cohesive social mix makes all the difference. If residents get on well and form a good community they are often fairly content, even if the level of physical provision leaves something to be desired. Gypsy/Travellers tend to have a strong and developed sense of community and this is something that they usually value and seem concerned to protect and preserve. While perhaps developed particularly in response to a travelling life, this remains true for those who have settled on sites too.

In all types of Gypsy/Traveller communities there can be tensions between different members and there are sometimes powerfully disruptive elements. This causes disharmony, and sometimes real trouble. Sometimes there are simply disagreements or differences of view about the way people behave – for example, on residential sites some individuals put a premium on neatness and clearing up rubbish on the site, while others take a much more casual view about
these matters. Sometimes these differences of view are tolerated and cause little trouble. But sometimes they can build up to be a major source of friction and discontent particularly when living on residential sites, where people can feel more trapped than while travelling when they can escape disputes by moving away. Gypsy/Travellers tend to have a tradition of ‘settling their own differences’ which sometimes means resorting to fisticuffs. Quarrels can blow up over quite small disputes and these can sometimes develop into lengthy feuds.

Benefits of a site with good community feeling

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F: “Everybody here gets on well together. If anybody goes off they mind one another’s place . . . Because with us here, if a child gets sick here and if there’s nobody here — if I’m here we’ll take her to the hospital or if she’s here she’ll take her — it doesn’t matter which of the children it is, if the parents is not here that child is took. If you were in a housing estate your child could be out there in the street cut or something, there’s nobody going to take that child off to the hospital, whatever” (Irish LA)

F: “We likes a peaceful quiet life. How it is now, we’re happy with it . . . It’s got to be people that we know and we’re happy with, and quiet and peaceful” (Gypsy LA)
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But other sites are less cohesive

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F: “There was a lot of strange people started coming on ———— site a couple of year ago”
M: “There’s so many mixed people on there now that there’s arguments there all the time”
F: “About children or whatever, or blocking the road” (Gypsy LA)

F: “You get some sites, you get a rougher crowd on them. Not very sociable”
F: “There’s good and bad in everyone isn’t there?” (Gypsy private)

M: “Before you were knowing it I was fighting one bloke, she was hitting into another one — before you know it, there was a bloody war on the site over somebody doing a stupid thing like that!” (Gypsy owner occ)
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An obvious element in social mix and cohesiveness – or lack of it – are the ethnic differences discussed above. Another significant factor is the existence of serious disruptive elements among the Travelling community. Many Gypsy/Travellers maintain that there are ‘bad families’ who can cause serious trouble. They cite, for example, extreme cases of bad behaviour (adults and/or children) and people who are unusually quarrelsome, sometimes threatening or violent; careless of neighbours’ feelings or interests; dishonest, sometimes involved in stealing, racketeering, or other crime; destroying property; and damaging the site environment, tipping serious rubbish etc.

These ‘bad families’ are said to have adverse effects in various ways. They can spoil life for other Travellers. On residential sites they are sometimes said to cause major social friction and/or damage or spoil the site physically. Two of the sites included in the research seem to have been seriously damaged in the recent past, allegedly by families like these. The damage can long outlast the occupation of the people that caused it and can even drive other families off the site. The ‘problem families’ are often thought to be responsible for much of the prejudice and hostility shown by house-dwellers.

‘Bad families’ are widely acknowledged by Gypsy/Travellers (and site managers) as a small
minority who cause a lot of problems for other Gypsy/Travellers as well as for site managers and the settled community. (We have no independent evidence of the existence or number of ‘problem families’.)

‘Problem’ families

M: “It was good till the wrong crowd come in – everybody was happy like. Then we had the wrong crowd came in, and they were robbing cars, bringing cars in, bringing stolen caravans in. They were bringing stolen cars, stripping them – and they were making it bad for every body, making the police come in around you then” (Irish housed)

F: “When we lived in ——————— there was 19 families in it, and the 19 families sir was a nightmare, because in the weekend any night you never got no sleep, there was too many there”

F: “They was always fighting. They was always drunk”

F: “When they went out on a weekend and get drunk and come back, and they were this and that with one another. Nearly everybody had eight or nine kids in it, and the kids – you couldn’t go off in the daytime or anything and leave your place”

F: “The whole lot. It was just – you were living in a nightmare!”

F: “We were there for nearly, what, five year?”

I: “Was it like that all the time?”

F: “All the time”

F: “Well it used to get worse” (Irish LA)

Site Dynamics and Turnover

Most Gypsy/Traveller sites appear to have very low turnover, and are stable (see below). Respondents in the management survey were asked to estimate what proportion of site residents have lived on the site for three years or longer. The answers – for residential sites only – show considerable stability:

- Almost all (over 90%) 53%
- Most (60% to 90%) 33%
- About half (40% to 60%) 10%
- A minority (10% to 40%) 4%
- Almost none (less than 10%) 1%

At the other extreme, however, a few sites are very unstable. Sometimes this is due to special circumstances such as site refurbishment or a site re-opening after a period of closure. In other instances, it appears to be due to ‘real’ turnover with high numbers of pitch vacations and relets. Case study respondents saw high turnover as a clear sign of problems on the site, perhaps a dominant family forcing others off, the presence of a ‘problem family’, or high levels of general vandalism encouraging/forcing respectable families to leave.

The following quotes from the resident discussions illustrate how troublesome newcomers to a site can lead to wide turnover as other residents leave. Moving on is a common cultural response to trouble among Gypsies and other Travellers and this sometimes applies on residential sites as well as on the roadside. For the site manager it highlights how quickly turnover can escalate.
Factors behind turnover on sites

I: “So why did you move from one site to the other?”
F: “Different people moved on there, right, we didn’t get on with them. A lot of Gypsies don’t get on together” (Gypsy housed)
F: “There’s a lot of my family on sites, but they pull off to get away from it – when things get too like steamed up they pull off, then they go back on there when it’s all quietened down” (Gypsy owner occ)

Most of the case study sites were fairly or very stable. Indeed the low turnover defeated intended questions about origin of site newcomers and destination of leavers – many case study sites have not had a vacancy over the past few years. Where respondents could answer, we have the impression that most newcomers come from other sites or from the same site through new family formation, and that most leavers go into permanent housing or join other family members elsewhere. It is apparently rare for families to move onto residential sites from the roadside, although this can happen.

In contrast and as might be expected, the last three vacancies on the case study transit site were all taken by people from unauthorised encampments. Again, an important destination for leavers from this site is permanent housing. There is some debate in this area about the length of stay of some residents, and a feeling that the site is not really fulfilling its transit purpose. At the time of the interviews, officers were discussing how to deal with people who had been longer than the intended maximum stay (six months with the possibility of a further six months in special circumstances). This site accommodates New Travellers and is something of a special case.

The other relevant aspect of mobility and site dynamics is, of course, travelling. On the case study residential sites, most families do not travel or travel only for a short period for family or holiday purposes. Some family members may travel leaving other family members behind.

While there are exceptions, the general picture built up of residential Gypsy/Traveller sites is that they are stable, with long-term residents who travel little during the course of a year. It may be that, for many residents, the attractions of a site lie in the possibilities of living in a trailer (attractive for cultural reasons and for leaving the travel option open), and of living within a culturally distinct community among friends and family. This is not necessarily the same as meeting the needs of a nomadic or semi-nomadic population. For many residential site residents, nomadism appears to be a spiritual and cultural state of mind rather than a day-to-day reality.

Aspects of Site Management Policies and Procedures

From the start we were aware of the importance of site management to the viability and sustainability of Gypsy/Traveller sites. This message was given strongly by many people
interviewed in the scoping stage of the research. They argued that investment in physical site provision or improvements must be complemented by good site management if that investment is to be preserved.

This section looks at aspects of site management policies and practices, drawing on the postal and management surveys, the case studies and the resident discussions. The sub-sections are: licence agreements, rules and enforcement; pitch allocations; repairs; collecting licence fees and other charges; resident involvement; liaison with other services; site management problems; and some site management performance indicators. There is a final brief discussion of what ‘good’ site management is and some of the common dilemmas met with.

Licence Agreements, Rules and Enforcement

Gypsy/Traveller site pitches are let on a licence rather than a tenancy. This in itself is contentious with some Gypsies and other Travellers and their supporters. As licensees, site residents enjoy less security and fewer rights than council tenants. Security of tenure is granted by the Caravan Sites Act 1968 which gives basic protection from eviction without 28 days notice on ‘protected sites’. If appropriate notice is given, a court must grant possession which may – legally – be sought without any specific grounds. All Gypsy/Traveller sites owned and ‘occupied’ by local authorities other than county councils are ‘protected sites’ for the purposes of this legislation, and thus require a 28 day notice period. Through a quirk of legal drafting, county council owned and occupied sites are not ‘protected sites’ for this purpose, and do not legally require a minimum 28 days notice period (Stoke on Trent City Council v Frost, 1991). Licensees of local authority Gypsy sites are also explicitly excluded from the enhanced security given by the Mobile Homes Act 1983 to other caravan dwellers who live in their own caravan on a pitch leased from a site owner. Site licensees do not have the rights enjoyed by council tenants through secure tenancies, notably succession and the right to buy.

The lesser security is argued to be justified on the grounds that local authority sites need greater flexibility in order to accommodate the nomadic lifestyle of occupiers. This envisages shorter stays, and the possibility of retaining a pitch for seasonal travelling (see Somerset County Council v Isaacs, 2002).

There may be some protection to licensees under consumer protection legislation and the Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999 if terms in their licence agreement can be construed as unfair (see OFT 2002).

The postal and management surveys looked at some of the main terms included in licence agreements. The former found that the great majority of site owning/managing authorities have a standard site licence. A minority (11%) have separate site rules in addition. In most instances site rules are integrated with and form part of the licence agreement.

Box 5.2 summarises points from the management survey on licence conditions. As can be seen, licensees on most sites are permitted to have mobile homes, sheds or chalets or second caravan/trailers on their pitch; keep dogs and other domestic pets; be absent for a period while travelling (while paying full rent); and have visitors with trailers to stay. However, on a minority of sites – quite substantial in the case of visitors – these are not permitted, and on many sites permission must be explicitly sought and granted. Some of these would not be subject to control for council tenants.
Work is permitted on a minority of sites only. Table 5.1 shows what sort of work is permitted, and what actually takes place on site in practice.

Amongst other things, this table shows that bans on work are not consistently enforced, even so far as some polluting and probably illegal activities are concerned (cable/tyre burning). It also shows a considerable desire or need on the part of some licensees to work on site. Where some form of work was carried out, just over half of respondents (53%) said that space provided on site for work and storage related to work is not adequate. Chapter 7 will show that there is no agreement between Gypsy/Traveller residents about whether work should be allowed on site or if special workspace should be provided.

The Case Studies
The case studies illustrate thinking behind the imposition of licence conditions, and some issues around enforcement.

Licence conditions can be seen as an outcome of the attempt to achieve a balance between potentially conflicting factors. Managers want to ensure well-run, reasonably tidy sites which

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 5.2: Licence Conditions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notice:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- 28 days on 86% of sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>- remainder less than 28 days NB some probably not legally enforceable given CSA protection</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Succession to members of immediate family:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- normally allowed on 40% of sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>- not normally allowed on 19% of sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>- explicitly allowed for in licence on 8% of sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>- issue never arisen on 33% of sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobile homes, second caravans etc:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- mobile homes allowed on 86% of sites (71% yes, 15% yes with written approval)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sheds or chalets allowed on 87% of sites (44% yes, 43% yes with written approval)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- more than one caravan/trailer allowed on 90% of sites (50% yes and 40% yes with written permission)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Animals and pets:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- dogs are allowed on 95% of sites (64% yes, 31% yes subject to individual approval)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- other domestic pets are allowed on 80% of sites (36% yes and 44% yes subject to individual approval)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- poultry are allowed on 42% of sites (11% yes and 31% subject to individual approval)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- horses are allowed on 17% of sites (5% yes and 12% subject to individual approval)</td>
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<td><strong>Work on site:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- work is not permitted on 65% of sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>- work is allowed without restriction on 2% of sites and subject to negotiation on 33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- where work is formally allowed it is mostly allowed on pitches (77%) with only 19% having special work areas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Absence for travelling:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- a period of absence for travelling while retaining the pitch is allowed on 90% of sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the most common periods allowed are 4 weeks (22%); 12 weeks (16%); 8 weeks (12%) and 6 weeks (19%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 37% of sites allow licensees a travelling period of 8 or more weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>- full rent is required during absence on 90% of sites; 10% require a reduced rent</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Visitors with caravans/trailers:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- visitors are not allowed to stay on 32% of sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>- visitors are allowed to stay on 69% of sites (60% with some restriction)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- visitors will usually be allowed; with prior permission; for a short stay, commonly 2 – 6 weeks; for a special event (eg family sickness, a wedding, birth or funeral); where there is adequate space for the caravan/trailer without breaching spacing/health and safety regulations</td>
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</table>

Source: Management survey
offer good quality of life for residents and do not cause complaints from settled neighbours. On the other hand, they want to run sites in a way which caters for how residents want to live. This probably underlies the desire to be able to check things out in individual circumstances by requiring prior permission. Reasoning for imposing conditions emerged as follows:

- On most case study sites mobile homes and other evidence of residents’ care for their pitch are welcomed. Prior permission is needed to ensure safe siting for fire regulations and convenient servicing. On one site, the site manager disliked having mobile homes or other fixtures on the grounds that speedy eviction would be made difficult or impossible – while stressing that evictions were in practice rare or non-existent.

- Dogs are a particular issue on one case study site, where there had been instances of sheep worrying. Elsewhere there were accounts of postal deliveries being suspended because of loose dogs (usually on sites other than the actual case studies). However, there was widespread recognition of the impossibility of adopting a no dogs policy. One authority that was introducing a revised licence agreement at the time of the research has limited the keeping of poultry in the light of past experiences of residents breeding fighting cocks, and more general problems of poultry attracting rats and other vermin.

- Work on site is obviously a contentious issue. Restrictions are normally imposed on the grounds that the site is a residential area, and that other residents do not want to be bothered by the noise or dirt associated with some traditional trades. However, this was not a topic which generated much comment in site manager interviews, suggesting that most felt that they had achieved a workable balance.

- Allowing residents to leave their pitch for a period of travelling (at full rent) is apparently seen as standard practice. The main considerations seem to be actually knowing that people are away and how long they intend to be away, ensuring security for possessions left behind and avoiding unauthorised occupation of the pitch. One site manager advises a resident to

<table>
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<th>Table 5.1: Work Permitted and Occurring on Sites</th>
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<tr>
<td>Type of work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storing work related equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scrap sorting/storing/dealing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tree work: storing/disposing loppings etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storing furniture/carpets etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pallet building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work on vehicles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cable/tyre burning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sample number</td>
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</table>

Source: Management Survey

‘Other’ work includes making wreaths and floral arrangements; fencing and gate work; professional boxing practice; selling caravans; fitting plastic soffits and fascias; block paving; building traditional Gypsy bow-tops and carts; and breeding fighting cocks.
get an extended family member also resident on the site to put their smallest trailer on the otherwise empty pitch to signal ownership and discourage squatting.

- Issues around permitting visitors with trailers include purely practical considerations of safety and spacing as well as trying to avoid long-term unauthorised residence or conflict with other site residents and ensuring good behaviour on the part of the visitor. A number of authorities require the resident to take responsibility for his/her visitors’ behaviour. On one site where visitors are not allowed, the manager commented that some residents welcome it since it gives them a clear excuse not to accommodate troublesome family members. Having visitors for an extensive period can affect housing benefit entitlement.

Enforcement of licence conditions is an important element in overall site management. The ultimate sanction – very rarely if ever evoked in the case studies – is eviction, but most action occurs well before this stage. Some pointers to enforcement arose in the interviews:

- The manager has to be fully aware of what is going on on site to stand a chance of enforcing conditions and rules. This underlines the importance of frequent visits, including some at unexpected times.

- Several respondents stressed the importance of applying rules consistently and avoiding any hint of favouritism or unfairness. If a letter is to be sent to residents about dogs, it must go to everyone whether or not they actually own a dog. More seriously, it may be very difficult to allow one resident to do something without implicitly accepting that everyone else will do it too.

- Respondents are clear that enforcement must be firm and fair, and must show determination to follow through to the final sanction to be credible. Some argued that it is important to be clear which rules are critical and concentrate on these. Many managers referred to a relationship between residents and managers which sounds almost like a game in which residents push a little to see how far they will be allowed to go. Many articulated an ideal relationship between manager and resident in which the resident recognises immediately when ‘no’ means ‘no’. This requires a great deal of mutual understanding and trust which may take years to build up, but which can very easily and quickly be lost (see below).

- Some managers commented that aspects of Gypsy/Traveller culture make enforcement of rules more difficult. There is a reported reluctance to get involved and certainly to ‘inform’ on rule-breakers. Managers who have developed a good and trusting relationship with residents may be told privately about what has happened, but people are rarely willing to give evidence openly.

Opinion is mixed between case study respondents on whether site residents should continue as licensees or have some form of tenancy. Some feel that good site management requires the ability to – occasionally and in extreme situations – step in quickly and get a troublemaker off the site. This recognises that violence, crime or anti-social behaviour can have the effect of very quickly emptying a site of other residents (who are mobile and take their homes with them) as well as potentially causing severe physical damage to the site and its facilities. The opportunity for prompt action is essential to safeguard the interests of respectable residents and staff who have to visit the site. They therefore do not want anything which gives greater security of tenure.
Other local authority respondents argue that licensee status makes Gypsies and other Travellers into second class citizens, and that everything possible should be done to regularise their position alongside tenants in permanent housing. They recognise that most residential sites are now stable and provide long-term accommodation rather than specifically catering for nomadism. They see the advent of introductory tenancies for social housing as a protection against bad behaviour from new residents. In these circumstances some argue that tenancies would be appropriate. However, very few site managers advocate an introduction of the right to buy for sites, considering that this would cause significant management problems if exercised on an individual basis.

**Gypsy/Traveller Views**

The resident discussions covered issues around tenure and security, enforcement of rules and – as a sidelight on a particular aspect of licence conditions – fires.

**Tenure and Security**

As noted above, Gypsy/Traveller residents on local authority sites are legally licensees, normally with security of tenure limited to 28 days notice. Many resident participants living on sites were unclear about the basis of their tenure. They often were not sure what kind of agreement they have, what that implies for their legal rights and how much notice they would have to give, or be given. Many people did not seem to have given much if any thought to their security of tenure before the interview.

It is perhaps not surprising that people who come from a nomadic tradition prove not to be well versed in the concepts of tenancies and licences, given that many house-dwellers are also uncertain of their rights. Uncertainty seems more marked in the Gypsy/Traveller context where this kind of security was not traditionally an important consideration and Travellers were more oriented towards moving on and keeping their options open. Poor literacy and lack of easily accessible sources of advice are also likely to be relevant.

Some residents knew that their agreement to occupy their pitch is called a licence, but many did not. Few seem to know what it implies or how it compares with other forms of tenure. And quite often people have misconceptions about their security of tenure and about the notice period their site operator is required to give.

Sometimes people seem to under-estimate their security and some think they have no security at all and could be evicted summarily more-or-less on the spot. Some draw analogies with the eviction rules which would apply if they were camped by the roadside. Conversely in some other cases, participants thought they had more security than they actually have: that they would have longer notice periods than 28 days and that the operator would need to have grounds for eviction. Some thought that they would have a legal right to stay as long as they liked so long as the rent was paid and they gave no cause for eviction or that the evicting site operator would have to find them alternative accommodation. There sometimes seemed to be confusion between rights under the law, and how much notice they think their particular site operator would actually give them in practice.

Sometimes comparisons were drawn with house-dwellers. People assumed they had the same security as a council tenant would have or thought it unfair if they realised this is not the case.
Perceptions of security of tenure

I: “If they wanted you to go for any reason would they have to give you notice or what?”
F: “I don’t know”
F: “We don’t know”
F: “No-one has ever been put off so we don’t know”
F: “Well nobody has done anything wrong to be put off it” (Gypsy LA)
I: “The licence only legally entitles you to four weeks notice. Did you know that?”
F: “Well none of us is scholars, and they was never read out to us before we signed”
F: “I can’t read, I can’t write, I wouldn’t know” (Gypsy private)
F: “I don’t know if they can actually just chuck us off, or would they find us somewhere else to go? I don’t know that”
M: “No. No, I was talking to the caretaker, once you’re out that gate you find your own way. And what they could do if they want to be funny is have a police escort to escort you out of the borough. That’s what I’ve been told by the council” (Gypsy LA)
M: “Why’s this site different to a house then? Well that’s still wrong, isn’t it?” (Gypsy LA)

Residents occasionally expressed the argument often made by site managers (see above) against increasing security of tenure because of the need for a power to be able to get rid of bad or disruptive residents quickly in order to protect the interests of the other residents and the quality of the site as a whole.

On the other hand, lack of security means that even long-standing residents are dependent on the continued goodwill of the site operator, to an extent that few of them seem to recognise. The more settled people become, the more important tenure seems likely to be to them as long-term residents begin to improve and develop their plots, build sheds of their own, and so on. Some may acquire mobile homes rather than caravans which would be difficult and expensive to move and re-site. It is generally thought hard to find space on an official site – particularly on a good one as there aren’t many sites and a lot of them are thought to be full. It can seem unreasonable that people should still be on four weeks notice if they have lived 20 or 30 years in one place, behaved well over that time and have invested in developments of their plot or home.

Enforcing Rules

Travellers usually want lightly managed sites. They put a lot of emphasis on individual freedom and tolerance. There is often an ambivalence about rules and regulations on sites. Travellers of all kinds generally seem averse to having a lot of rules which is the antithesis of the kind of freedom they enjoy on the road and does not fit with their culture of tolerance and open options. Indeed for some people the notion that they will need to toe the line is one of the disincentives to settling on a residential site. Many say they ‘want to be left alone’ and do not want a warden watching them and breathing down their necks all the time.

On the other hand when they are settled on a site, the way residents behave potentially impinges on other residents and conflicts have to be managed in some way. The traditional mechanisms for dealing with these while on the road are not necessarily adequate to settled life on large sites. This sometimes argues for having some clear regulations and for having them enforced. Some people say that without this site standards can easily fall.
It is interesting that one of the most successful residential sites included in the research is said to have (and enforce) fairly firm rules. This is not felt to be oppressive in that case. People feel protected rather than threatened by the rules and they are happy about the high quality of their environment. In practice people say the management does not often have to invoke the rules but it is generally assumed that they would where necessary and serious troublemakers would simply get evicted. Conversely the two poorest and roughest sites do not seem effectively regulated. They have histories of periodic trouble, sometimes serious. Bad behaviour is thought to go unchecked. Both sites have serious rubbish problems.

This suggests that there is shared ground between site managers and Gypsy/Traveller residents on the need to balance firmness and sensitivity in enforcing site rules – a balance which is by no means easy to achieve.

Some views on site rules

F: “We’d moved onto the site and they’d started the rules and this and that. We tried to tell them that the rules and the different things they were saying wasn’t gonna work, and we said, ‘Instead of telling us we can’t do this why don’t we try and work out some way of maybe sorting it out between – so we meet each other halfway’. And they said, ‘No, these are the rules and you’re gonna stick by them’. And that’s why the rules never worked, that’s why everything sort of went downhill, because they turned round and said, ‘You’ve got to do this’. Everybody on the site said, ‘We’re not gonna do that’, and it just didn’t work no way. And that’s why it’s got the way it is on there – and nobody really cares now”

M: “It’s more like a dump” (Gypsy private)

F: “I’d like to have this site all completed and done the way we wanted it, and then have a strict manager that would come up say once or twice a week to keep it nice and clean . . . It’s just that he ain’t strict enough” (Gypsy private)

Fires

Fires are often banned, or strongly controlled, in licence conditions. This issue was not explored in the surveys, but arose in the course of interviews with Gypsy/Travellers.

Burning is a traditional method of disposing of waste. Travellers often like to light fires to get rid of combustible rubbish or to clean wire and other scrap for dealing purposes. But a ‘campfire’ also has social functions. People can sit round it, and cook on it. Their fondest memories of travelling life often relate to campfires. For traditional Gypsy/Travellers, fires also sometimes have important ritual functions, for example as an important part of funeral rituals where mourners gather round them. Traditionally trailers belonging to the dead person were burnt.

Many travellers know they are not supposed to light fires in smoke-control areas. Sometimes they feel inhibited and constrained about doing it; sometimes they go ahead and do it anyway. The feeling of not being able to light a proper campfire is one of the factors which puts many off the idea of living in a house.
Some comments on fires

F: “I tell you what a lot of people like doing on a Sunday, making a fire and cooking a dinner outside – whereas on here you can’t, you haven’t got the space. They should have had somewhere built to do a fire” (Gypsy private)

M: “Fires to get rid of rubbish and have an old campsite chat” (Irish camped)

M: “Well a lot of Travellers, we light fires up outside in the night. We know it’s illegal, you can’t do it in this country – smokeless zone isn’t it? But that’s how we live life” (Irish housed)

Lighting fires (whether functional, recreational or ritual) can have repercussions. It can provoke conflicts with local authorities and environmental health officers. It can annoy neighbours who sometimes make a fuss or complain to their councillors which stokes anti-Traveller feelings and can make life harder for the site operator and for the Travellers themselves (on the site and generally).

Pitch Allocations

Box 5.3 shows management survey findings on site vacancies, waiting list, interest from passers-by, exclusions and references. It shows relatively few vacant pitches available for letting, and waiting lists which, while short in absolute terms, far outnumber available pitches. People passing through the area regularly enquire about the possibility of a pitch on around two-fifths of sites, but this interest can very rarely be met. Outstanding rent arrears are the main reason for excluding people from sites. References are always or sometimes taken up on the majority of sites.

Box 5.3: Pitch Allocation Matters

- **Pitch vacancies:**
  - on 80% of sites no pitches are empty and available for letting
  - in total 77 pitches available on 90 sites
  - on residential sites 52 pitches available on 83 sites
- **Waiting lists on residential sites:**
  - 79% of sites have a waiting list
  - lists vary in length from zero to 50
  - in total, there are 522 applicants, an average of 9 per site with a list and 7 for all sites
- **Interest from passing Gypsy/Travellers:**
  - on 41% of sites people passing through the area enquire about the possibility of a pitch more than once or twice a year
  - in 79% of residential sites such enquires can never or very rarely be accommodated
- **Exclusions:**
  - on 15% of sites a pitch would not normally be offered to someone wanting to move from a pitch on a site elsewhere
  - on 25% of sites a pitch would not normally be offered to a single person without children
  - on 33% of sites a pitch would not normally be offered to someone wanting to move from a house/flat (and giving up the house/flat)
  - on 74% of sites a pitch would not normally be offered to someone with outstanding rent arrears
- **References:**
  - on 27% of sites references are always taken up
  - on 48% of sites references are sometimes taken up
  - on 25% of sites references are never taken up

Source: Management survey
Table 5.2 shows which factors managers take into account when allocating pitches. The list of factors was given and respondents were also asked to rank the top three factors in importance. The final column shows how frequently the factor appeared among the top three.

As can be seen, a wide range of factors is taken into account when allocating pitches – of the factors listed only ability to pay is considered on a minority of sites. When it comes to the most important factors, family or personal compatibility emerges as clearly the most significant factor. The next most significant factors are need for accommodation, health needs and previous known behaviour/references. Other factors are less likely to be ranked as most important.

The importance of ‘compatibility’ must be seen as a further possible area for exclusions as it seems likely that someone thought to be incompatible with other residents will not be offered a pitch. Where an authority only has one site, this may exclude the applicant from any authorised site in that area.

The Case Studies
Case study interviews explored in a little more detail how priorities are weighed, and particularly how ‘compatibility’ is assessed and used.

Allocation policies were written down for a minority of case study sites. One operated a points scheme and another a date order system, though procedures seem less regulated and more discretionary in other areas. There was some difference in who made allocation decisions – in one instance the site manager felt it essential that she made the decisions, in another the site officer specifically did not make the decision on the grounds that s/he would come under intolerable pressure from residents and be blamed for unpopular allocations.

The vital importance of getting allocations ‘right’ was widely acknowledged: ‘A site is only as good as its tenants – and you only get good tenants on a good site’. Getting an allocation ‘wrong’ runs the risk of upsetting the whole site: ‘I know all about allocating according to need, but what good is that to anyone if it causes holy hell for everyone and you get one family on and five off?’.
importance of social mix on sites to residents noted above suggests that site managers are correct to take the issue so seriously.

Thus checking out an applicant is very important. Many managers say they will take up references if the applicant has been in housing or on another site (although one commented that other local authorities were not always helpful in giving information). For Gypsy/Travellers coming from an unauthorised encampment there may be no natural source for a reference although previously behaviour might be known while on the road. In one area no families with a known history of violence, who have been evicted or are currently in arrears are accommodated. However, ‘compatibility’ goes beyond such verifiable factors, and can indeed be quite different.

One respondent who was prepared to talk about it said he would consider ethnic origin as a starting point. The case study site is occupied by Irish Travellers, so he would never offer a pitch to an English Gypsy/Traveller on the assumption that English Gypsies will never go onto an Irish site. He has his own ideas about who is compatible with whom, and will do some informal sounding out of residents about who they do not want on, who is feuding and so on. In this he is trying to discover who will get on with existing residents and will ‘behave’, that is adopt a lifestyle consistent with that of other residents. Other respondents also referred to trusted residents whose opinion they might ask if they were themselves unsure. These officers are experienced site managers who genuinely have the well-being of site residents at heart. One fully acknowledged his responsibility as a gate-keeper and the enormous discretion he exercises, but also admitted that he would rather run the risk of rejecting a potential troublemaker (who might prove incompatible) than risk upsetting the whole site. The following quote from a resident discussion shows that some Gypsy/Travellers support such an approach.

F: “If there’s an empty plot and someone wants to pull on I think he (the warden) does the decent thing and go and ask them, ‘Do you know such and such person?’. Gypsy people know everybody else, ‘Oh, he’s so-and-so’s boy’, or, ‘He’s me cousin’ – they’re all related in some way. And they’ll say ‘No, they’ve got a pair of children’, ‘No, he ain’t very nice’ – and then he makes up his mind come the end. Cos you’ve got to get on with your neighbours” (Gypsy LA)

Other managers appear to look at things from the other direction, and see incompatibility in terms of an allocation where the newcomer would have difficulties. One manager, in these circumstances, will negotiate with the family and has, to date, always been able to persuade them that living there would not be a good idea. As an officer in another area commented ‘No-one would want to go to a site where they are not wanted’. Managers may sometimes try to find places on another site for someone judged not suitable for a particular vacancy.

Pitch allocation is clearly an area where considerable discretion is exercised with very few checks, for example, in the form of standard documentation of decision making and reasons why applicants are rejected. This is one area where some people are particularly doubtful of the wisdom of employing Gypsy/Traveller site managers who are thought to be likely to favour particular groups or families over others. Our research has provided no evidence on this score.

There are some examples of allocation processes being circumvented. The scoping interviews referred to some site residents in London – where demand greatly exceeds supply – ‘selling’ pitches. A few residents on the case study New Traveller transit site had bought the vehicle in situ from the previous resident and moved in without permission. On another case study site some lettings are rationalisations of unauthorised occupation.
Repairs and Maintenance

Reporting repairs is most commonly through an officer when on site; this is in contrast to social tenants where the telephone is by far the most common means (Box 5.4). Sites managed by a local authority are almost evenly divided between those where any contractor can be employed and those where only a contractor approved for housing or other council repairs can be used. In a number of case study sites, the local DSO is used successfully.

Contractor reluctance to work on Gypsy/Traveller sites is clearly an issue. Case study respondents put this down largely to ignorance and prejudice, although some contractors have suffered theft, aggression and even violence (not confined to Gypsy sites). Managers commented that most contractors are happy to work on sites when they get to know the site and its residents: 'The DSO prefer to work on our sites rather than on some of the council estates round here’. One thought that charges are being inflated because the contractor knows that there would be problems in getting anyone else to do the work rapidly.

While two-thirds of management survey respondents say that target times are set for repairs to be completed, the case studies suggest that these may sometimes be less structured, and certainly less well publicised, than those set for council housing. One site manager commented that many of the things which go wrong on a Gypsy/Traveller site are to do with plumbing or electrical work and have to be done extremely rapidly. While case study managers generally seemed to think the repairs service they offered was good and prompt, residents’ perceptions were sometimes of delays and repeated repair requests, as evident in the quotations below. Where repairs are ‘ordered’ somewhat casually, the manager may think of an exchange as a conversation while the resident thinks that a repairs order has been made.

---

**Box 5.4: Responsive Repairs**

- **Reporting repairs:**
  - on 90% of sites repairs are reported to an officer while on site
  - on 77% of sites repairs are reported by telephone
  - on 37% of sites repairs are reported by personal visit to an off-site office
  - on 15% of sites other methods are used including reporting to a warden or caretaker or a contractor when on site

- **Contractors (where sites are managed by a local authority):**
  - on 48% of sites any authorised contractor can be used directly
  - on 25% of sites a contractor approved for housing repairs must be used
  - on 24% of sites a contractor approved for other council repairs must be used
  - county councils are more likely than other LAs to be able to employ contractors directly

- **Contractors have been reluctant to work on 73% of sites at some time**

- **Target response times are set for repairs to be completed on 65% of sites**

- **Residents carrying out repairs:**
  - on 34% of sites residents sometimes carry out repairs to their own pitch or amenity unit
  - on 8% of sites residents sometimes carry out repairs to site communal areas or services

Source: Management survey

---
Perceived problems with repairs

I: “Have you told the council about that (heaters not working)?”
F: “Yeah, 101 times”
F: “I told them”
F: “They said they'll get onto it”
F: “They say that about everything – and they do nothing!” (Irish LA)
F: “We went to the council for about four year to fix them fences, and they've just done it just last week” (Irish LA)

At present it is apparent that residents carry out repairs themselves on few sites, and then almost exclusively to their own plot or amenity ‘shed’. This was not explored further in the case studies; no-one appears to be actively encouraging resident self-help of this kind. In one case study, it was intended that residents should take a direct part in developing and managing the site. Initial consultation suggested that residents would be prepared to help build an amenity block, carry out tree planting etc. However, there proved to be no interest in practice and residents were not interested in cleaning the amenity block so contractors are employed. Respondents thought that residents expect services to be provided in exchange for rent payments.

Collecting Licence Fees and Housing Benefit

Residents make weekly licence fee payments (universally referred to as ‘rent’ by site residents) and may pay separately for water and sewage charges. On some sites, managers also collect payments for electricity. Table 5.3 shows that on the majority of residential sites (87%) most or all licensees receive housing benefit, and benefit direct is by far the most significant way in which licence fees are collected on most sites although any separate water charges, not eligible for housing benefit, must be collected where levied.

Table 5.3 also shows estimates of the proportion of residents in arrears of licence fee payments. This reveals a very mixed picture where almost no residents are in arrears on four out of ten sites (probably directly related to full housing benefit payments), while most or almost all licensees are in arrears on a quarter of sites. A major factor potentially leading to arrears on some sites is the effect of Rent Officer assessment of local reference rents (LRR) which sets a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion of licensees:</th>
<th>Percentage of sites:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Receiving HB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost all (over 90%)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most (60% to 90%)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About half (40% to 60%)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minority (10% to 40%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost none (less than 10%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Management survey
ceiling on housing benefit entitlement. On some sites the LRR is set significantly below the licence fee charged. This issue – and the actual fees being charged – is discussed at greater length in Chapter 6.

The single most important way of collecting licence fees and other charges not met by housing benefit is door to door collection. This is still much more common on sites than in social rented housing. Methods commonly used by council tenants – cash offices, at a post office or by direct debit/standing order – are much less widespread (Box 5.5).

**Box 5.5: Licence Fee Collection and Arrears Recovery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licence fee collection:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>door to door collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>site office/site manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>council cash office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direct debit/standing order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Housing benefit direct payments are made on all sites
- Arrears recovery procedures:
  - on 44% of residential sites there are no set arrears procedures
  - the most common set procedures are:
    - first warning visit or letter: 4 weeks, 1 week, 2 weeks, or £500
    - final warning visit or letter: 8 weeks, 4 weeks, or £1,000
    - start court proceedings: 12 weeks, 8 weeks, or £1,000
    - eviction: depends on the speed of court action

Source: Management survey

Arrears recovery procedures also seem rather less formally developed than for social housing (although some managers have no procedures because there are no arrears).

**The Case Studies**

Site managers in some case studies reported having greatly reduced arrears over time through making sure that all eligible residents claim housing benefit and through encouraging regular payments. Several collect charges door to door and feel that this, plus persistence, generally gets the payments due. While eviction is, and is known to be, the final resort, this stage is rarely reached. One respondent pointed out that door to door collection also provides the opportunity for contact between the manager and resident in a neutral and private setting. He finds that people sometimes tell him things about events on the site in that setting who would never go to the site office where they might be seen by other residents.

The managers’ role in relation to housing benefit varies. Commonly they will help and encourage residents to complete forms, especially where there are literacy problems. In some places, managers also carry out the various verification checks on behalf of their housing benefit colleagues. On the site housing New Travellers a few residents were reported to be unwilling to claim benefit because they do not want to reveal their identity; this does not seem to be an issue on sites housing traditional Travellers.

Verification of income often seems to be an issue with site residents because of the significance of self-employment, seasonal and casual work, cash-in-hand payment and an almost total lack of documentation. A further factor is the apparently fluid compositions of some resident households with male partners sometimes present on site and sometimes away working. This
sort of lifestyle fits very awkwardly into the bureaucratic housing benefit system and, at the extreme, opens up potential for accusations of housing benefit fraud. Understandably this is an area that few site managers want to get involved in. Some said that they would never knowingly pass on false information to housing benefit colleagues. However some also said that they did not see their role as being a spy for housing benefits or the Benefits Agency, and that they would never volunteer information about residents to such agencies. ‘Informing’ would immediately jeopardise their position and destroy the trust with residents which is essential to successful site management. One manager commented that if he told housing benefit about suspected ‘fiddling’ he would ‘soon have no residents’ and word would go round the country so he could never manage a Gypsy/Traveller site again. This is a dilemma in site management which we return to later.

Case study respondents held a wide variety of opinions about the possible extent of benefit ‘fiddling’, from those convinced that it is widespread to others who feel that local residents are genuinely needy. Box 5.6 comes from the sole interview with a housing benefits fraud investigator carried out in the course of the research. One interpretation is that this authority has tried, largely unsuccessfully, to take the lid off a can of worms that many others are carefully avoiding.

**Box 5.6: Housing Benefit Concerns in One Case Study Area**

This authority had carried out two major visits to a Gypsy/Traveller site to investigate housing benefit claims. Several officers were involved, accompanied by police. After the first visit 12 out of 19 claims were cancelled either because no-one was there on plot, or someone different from the claimant was there. There were no fraud prosecutions for lack of evidence. On the second visit there were indications of undeclared male partners being resident, but no action was taken.

Major perceived difficulties for HB administrators identified are:

- **Officer safety on site:**
  - HB officers feel they cannot just turn up to validate a claim
  - a visit becomes a major exercise with police escort

- **Difficulties in making checks:**
  - very unusual to be invited into caravan as a check on who is living there
  - residents can become very abusive if asked questions
  - no telephone numbers given so hard to contact

- **Knowing who is living on site:**
  - plots are big enough for two caravans and it is usual for residents to have two
  - are they used for children, or for sub-tenants or other family members who might need to be considered for non-dependent deductions?
  - how long are any family members or visitors staying?

- **Problems in identifying plots:**
  - plots are not numbered
  - who should be there?

- **Problems in understanding the culture:**
  - if a pitch is vacant, how can the HB officer tell whether the licensee is off touring or the pitch is unlet with HB being claimed?
  - if the claim is made by a single woman with children and there is a man there when they visit, how can they tell whether he is living there?
  - if someone else is on the pitch when they visit, how do they know whether it is a legitimate family member visiting?

- **Problems in validating claims:**
  - self-employment is inherently difficult
  - sorts of employment are totally cash transactions with no evidence of amounts earned
  - essentially no objective evidence of income at all
  - documentation of any sort – eg birth or marriage certificates – very sparse
  - same/similar names between members of the same family makes it hard to identify individuals. Who do children belong to?

- **Opportunities for fraud in the management of the site:**
  - all mail goes centrally to the site warden’s address
  - the warden completes all claim forms on the grounds that many residents are illiterate
  - HB cheques are paid directly to the warden
Resident Involvement

Site residents had been consulted on matters to do with site management, repairs or improvements on 80% of sites over the year prior to the management survey. Box 5.7 shows, from the postal survey, the main topics on which residents have been consulted, and from the management survey the main means of consultation.

Box 5.7: Resident Consultation

- **Topics for consultation with site residents:**
  - refurbishment/major repairs 73%
  - repairs and maintenance 62%
  - individual lettings 37%
  - site rules 33%
  - allocation priorities 25%
  - licence terms 25%
  - pitch fee levels 17%
  - other 6%

- **Methods of consultation with site residents:**
  - verbally with individual residents 88%
  - individual letters 54%
  - ad hoc site meeting with residents together 49%
  - questionnaire 26%
  - newsletter 12%
  - regular site forum or consultative group 12%
  - other (off-site meetings, forums) 12%

- Consultation with members of the settled community living near the site about matters to do with the site had occurred on 36% of sites over the past year

- **Methods of consultation with neighbours in the settled community:**
  - verbally with individuals 61%
  - individual letters 49%
  - through parish or town council 24%
  - public meeting 21%
  - through planning consultation process 18%
  - newsletter 3%
  - other 24%

Source: Postal and management surveys

Consultation with site residents is generally much more common on refurbishment and maintenance than on site management issues – where fewer than four in ten authorities routinely consult/involve residents. It is interesting that more authorities consult residents on individual lettings than on allocation priorities, which would not be the case in social housing. This probably reflects the practice of sounding out residents to ensure newcomers are compatible noted above.

It is interesting that the extent of resident consultation is higher where site management is the responsibility of the housing department – for example, looking at licence terms as a low level consultation issue reveals that 39% of authorities consult residents where management is the responsibility of housing departments, compared with only 15% where environmental health has responsibility. The difference probably reflects different professional ethos and expectations on resident involvement.

Individual verbal consultation is clearly the most favoured method of consultation with site residents. The case studies show that this is often conducted quite casually while collecting licence fees or just visiting the site. Written consultation is less popular in part because of literacy problems. Regular forums or resident groups are rare.
Consultation with members of the settled community on matters to do with the site had taken place in a minority of authorities in the year before the management survey, although more commented that they had consulted on other earlier occasions. Again, individual verbal consultation is the most common method.

The Case Studies
Case study interviews suggest that much 'consultation' takes the form of very informally sounding out residents' views during everyday contacts. Some commented on the perceived problems of holding meetings or consulting in a more structured way, including the likely absence of agreement ('you have to be a bit careful. I'd get 16 different answers and that would lead to arguments between residents') and the lack of any representative bodies or groups to consult. The latter seems recognised as a cultural trait, although some reported interest on the part of some women to form groups. Another issue can be differences in interests on site, for example on one site a group of women wanted speed bumps on site roads to increase safety for children, but this was opposed by the men who actually drove most vehicles.

Despite the difficulties there are some examples of more structured consultation among the case studies:

• The case study transit site has a Liaison Management Committee chaired by a local clergyman with representatives of the settled community and site residents as well as the site manager, a local councillor, a Traveller support group, the local school, a health worker and the local police beat officer. The Committee meets three-monthly and discusses management of the site and any issues around health and welfare. There is support for this locally as a means of bringing the settled and Traveller communities together, increasing mutual awareness and understanding and beginning to change attitudes as well as allowing site problems to be aired and discussed openly. It was thought to improve site management – the councillor's involvement is important here as signalling political interest and support. Just having to report back to the Committee ensures promised action takes place.

• A residential site has been extensively refurbished using Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant, including work on amenity blocks. There was extensive consultation in drawing up the proposals with meetings where residents could provide an input on what they were looking for. The local Council for Racial Equality was also involved in these meetings. The scheme allowed some flexibility for individual residents in works on their pitch and amenity 'shed' within an overall framework and within constraints of costs and practicality. Some residents have paid extra for upgraded fittings. This is welcomed on the grounds that residents will look after their pitch and amenities better if they have had a say in the plans and especially if they have paid towards them. This is locally seen (especially by local authority officers) as a successful exercise, with residents pleased with, and very proud of, the new units (although critical of some minor defects seen to be the result of penny pinching in the contract).

Gypsy/Traveller Views
Gypsy/Traveller views expressed in the discussions tended to give a less rosy picture of consultation. Consultation was seen to be very important, but not always carried through.
Participants often felt that residents should be asked what they want rather than just having things designed and run by outsiders according to their own criteria. Travellers say they 'have their own ways' and may have different priorities and needs, which are not understood by outsiders. A common perception is that many site operators just go ahead and do things without talking to the residents first about what they should do. Consultation does seem to have taken place on some sites with varying degrees of success. But some people feel they are not consulted, or are consulted and then ignored.

F: "They come out and tell us, ‘Right, well we’ve decided because of this and that we’re gonna do something else’. That’s what they’ve decided, without coming out and asking anybody”
I: “They never ask you what you want?”
F: “They never ask, and if they’d just sit down and ask and listen to us, some of the ideas and whatever, I think you could sort that out and it could be quite nice – you could live on there happily” (Gypsy private)

Liaison with Other Services

As noted above, on many sites a number of Gypsy/Traveller residents have special health problems. There are often large numbers of children. It is widely acknowledged that Gypsy/Travellers can have problems accessing health and welfare services. An element in site management must be ensuring that residents benefit from such services and liaising with service providers.

Table 5.4 shows the extent to which different service providers visit sites, distinguishing between regular and ad hoc visits (in response to specific requests or needs). Health and education workers stand out as those most likely to visit, and to do so on a regular basis. The police also visit the majority of sites, but normally on an ad hoc basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Visits:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health visitors</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller Education Service workers</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits advisors</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing advisors</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare advisors</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment advisors</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library service</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Management survey; sample number = 87

Service providers are reported to have been reluctant to visit the site on some occasion on 40% of management survey sites. The proportion reporting reluctance is much higher on sites with Irish Traveller than English Gypsies only (English Gypsy only 33%, Irish only 80% and mixed sites 47%).
In a quarter of cases where respondents described what had happened the issue had essentially not been resolved. Two respondents noted that doctors refuse to visit the site and two that residents have to collect their mail from the sorting office because postmen will not deliver due to problems with dogs.

In almost two-thirds of cases, the issue has been resolved by site management staff introducing the service provider to residents and/or accompanying them during site visits. Other resolutions include reassuring service providers about their safety and advising them to go in pairs. This is clearly an issue on a substantial minority of sites.

Site buildings which might be used as a base for other service providers are relatively rare. There is a site office on 36% of sites, but other communal premises on only 9%. Case studies suggest that site offices are often too small to accommodate many people at the same time.

The Case Studies
There is sometimes a distinction between formal liaison mechanisms between service providers and day-to-day arrangements. Not all the case studies have formal mechanisms. The Liaison Management Committee described above under resident consultation is one example. Another example is a Support Group for a residential site which comprises a councillor (who chairs the group), representatives from health (especially midwives), Traveller education, environmental protection (responsible for site management), adult education, fire service and the police (‘when they bother to turn up’). The group meets in a school near the site. Site residents can attend and do so ‘intermittently’. All the representatives of agencies interviewed feel that the Group is an asset in improving service delivery and inter-service liaison. For example, adult education and Travellers education are now working together, and there has been a positive response from a number of Gypsy/Traveller women. There has been strong Group support for a health initiative seeking to improve health visiting and nursery nurse provision. A GSRG application for this site was, in part, seeking money to refurbish the office building. This element of the application was not supported to the great disappointment of the Support Group since it would have provided useable space for, for example, health checks and small literacy tutorials.

Day-to-day liaison with service providers was usually reported as good by case study respondents. Several noted the prominent role played by Traveller education workers, and education in general ranging from pre-school play buses which visit several sites, through encouraging and facilitating school attendance, to adult education and literacy initiatives. Traveller education officers often seem to act as unofficial Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers, and are reported to do much more than their strict job description in their commitment to Travellers. Health workers are almost equally active in some places.

The following quotations illustrate some Gypsy/Traveller views of other service providers.
Often favourable comments for education and health

F: “This school’s pretty good though, they’ve got a lot of mates and whatever” (Gypsy private)
F: “We’ve got a doctor’s, and a nurse which comes out – we don’t get forget about here like”
F: “We’ve got health visitors, and teachers and things”
F: “Yeah, they will come out, they will come out if you ring them”
F: “They’ll arrange to come out, and they’ll meet you, they’ll meet you in the hospital” (Irish LA)

But sometimes negative for the police

F: “They (police) just come in here and they shine their lights all around the place at 3 or 4 o’clock in the morning, waking the kids and everything up. But I went and I told the council man about it. I told him they shouldn’t be coming in waking up the children and everything with these lights, shining them. They used to shine them in, through the windows they used to shine them, and they’d be passing this big light on top of the car and they’d shine them in” (Irish LA)

Some case study sites are benefiting from initiatives and funding from regeneration and social inclusion sources. One site is part of a three year SRB project aimed at family literacy, which has helped both children and adults (women). On this same site, the local Council for Racial Equality has involved site residents in another project as part of a local multi-race event. This also involved Sikhs, Somalis and the Vietnamese/Chinese community. The project resulted in an exhibition and a video, and meant that the four different communities had been brought together. Another site has benefited from Sure Start funding for a children’s play area which was opened shortly before the case study interviews.

A less positive example of service liaison comes from another site and the local fire service. Fire officers had stones thrown at them while attending a small fire on site and the site manager offered to evict the known culprits if the service would pursue the case. The fire service decided instead to visit the site and engage with the local children and residents by letting them take a look at the fire tender. They had to leave after 30 minutes after having their hoses turned on and once again having stones thrown at them. More generally, site managers reported that accompanying service providers is a fairly regular part of their job – even though they may regard the site as no more, and possibly less, problematic than some council estates.

Site Management Problems

A number of problematic areas have emerged from the preceding account of aspects of site management. It is important always to see these in perspective and to assess whether they differ in extent and/or kind from problems experienced in social housing management in the settled community. The postal survey gathered general information on perceived problems from local authority respondents owning/managing sites (Box 5.8).

Many of these have already been touched upon. Here we examine issues around fly-tipping and waste disposal; vandalism, disputes etc; issues arising from Gypsy/Traveller culture; and squatters.
Fly-Tipping and Waste Disposal
Fly-tipping and waste disposal emerges as the single most frequently mentioned site management problem. It is a problem because accumulated rubbish on a site is unsightly, can be dangerous to children and can harbour rats and other vermin. It is also seen as a problem because of the cost and bother of removing it, and because it can cause complaints from the settled community (who may not, however, be above contributing to fly-tipped rubbish themselves in the hopes that the Travellers will get the blame). Waste is associated with several traditional Gypsy/Traveller trades, including garden work, tarmac and other building works and scrap dealing. Problems on and around sites cannot be seen in isolation from national trends, for example in low scrap metal prices, clean air and pollution control (which prevent burning waste) and costs and bureaucracy associated with authorised commercial waste disposal.

Rubbish accumulation is recognised as one of the main problems by site residents on some sites. The level of accumulated rubbish varies enormously from site to site. Some of the cleanest sites have virtually none while others clearly have a major rubbish problem. This is sometimes one of the main causes of resident dissatisfaction. Different residents have different levels of tolerance for living with accumulated rubbish – some are seriously disturbed by it while others do not seem to notice much – which sometimes causes conflicts within affected sites. It is sometimes difficult to draw a clear line between wastes which have simply not been properly disposed of and stockpiles of materials or scrap which may be used or marketed later on.

The management survey shows that the accumulation of rubbish and/or fly tipping is identified as a problem by site managers on or adjacent to two-thirds of sites. While this is most commonly attributed to the activities of site residents, non-resident dumping is also identified on six out of ten sites with a problem. This is recognised by Gypsy/Traveller residents, who feel that they get blamed for other people’s tipping – while sometimes also acknowledging that some members of their own community may fly-tip.

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**Box 5.8: Perceived Site Management Problems**

- No problems were identified by 13% of LAs
- Problems mentioned by 5 respondents or more (in order of frequency of mention):
  - fly tipping, rubbish, abandoned vehicles etc
  - vandalism, damage to the site and amenities
  - site conditions, need to refurbish, age of site
  - disputes between incompatible families, tensions between residents
  - issues arising from the Gypsy/Traveller culture
  - challenging behaviour, anti-social behaviour of some residents
  - payment arrears, getting money in
  - rent levels and housing benefit limits
  - getting contractors to work on Gypsy sites, or to work at reasonable prices
  - squatters, unauthorised campers, ‘dossers’ and non-resident Travellers
  - lack of resources: funding, budgets, management time
  - recruiting good quality staff for site management
  - political context, low priority with councillors, lack of commitment
  - overcrowding, no room for family growth, doubling up on pitches

Source: Postal survey
Getting the blame for fly-tipping

I: “Who’s tipping on where, is that people from the site, or people from elsewhere?”
F: “It’s other people – come and tips it”
F: “There are some of the people that comes on that doesn’t live here and tips, and they blames like
the ones that’s on it. And along the side of the road, there’s ones that comes in and tips out”
(Irish LA)
M: “Every bit of rubbish up and down the road that’s fly-tipped, the first ones that’s done it is the
Gypsies – we get blamed of it. It’s not Gypsies” (Gypsy LA)

The management survey shows the provision made for refuse collection and disposal. Household refuse is collected from individual pitches on 70% of sites and from a central point on 30%. On 69% of sites ad hoc removal of bulky items of refuse is arranged as needed. On 32% a skip is provided and removed. On 7% of sites regular removal is arranged (not a skip). On 7% of sites some other arrangement is made – normally comments to the effect that residents make their own arrangements and no particular special service is provided by the site manager. One case study site provides four skips a week for bulky refuse, provided free to residents but costing some £17,000 a year to the local authority. However, some 200 tons of rubbish were removed from around the perimeter of the site in a recent operation. The management survey found no particular relationship between arrangements made for bulk refuse disposal and reported incidence of fly-tipping.

Resident discussions covered refuse collection services, and provides some insights into the perceptions of bin and skip provision.

Some sites have wheelie bin collections. In some cases this works fairly well, although refuse collectors are said to be unwilling to service certain sites which seem run-down or have bad reputations. Sometimes collections are said to be infrequent or erratic, which can aggravate rubbish problems. Residents on one site visited (not a local authority case study site) said they had no collection at all – the bin-men refuse to call on account of the build up of rubbish round the site entrance.

Some types of bulkier rubbish are not suitable for wheelie bins, and can accumulate in uncollected piles. Examples include large domestic items like mattresses, rubbish arising from work (tree trimmings, scrap, wastes from tarmac work, etc), old cars and rubbish said to be dumped by outsiders. Some site operators provide skips instead of (or as well as) wheelie bins. Reactions to these varies. On the one hand they can be seen as a problem in themselves: intrinsically untidy and unsightly (and perhaps smelly), unhealthy, and likely to encourage rats and vermin. Rubbish tends to spill over or build up round them unless residents are very careful how they use them and skip areas are regularly cleaned out. Skips are likely to be played on by children, with possible health and safety consequences. Generally they are not suitable for residential use, and can be a potential magnet for rubbish dumped by outsiders. They are particularly problematic if not regularly collected. On the other hand skips are sometimes welcomed by people who may have larger items to dispose of, including work-related or bulky domestic rubbish. From that point of view skips are a more useful resource than smaller bins.
Comments on refuse collection

F: “They (binmen) comes like every two weeks or every three weeks, ‘cos they don’t like coming on the site, so our rubbish is building up and building up” (Irish LA)

F: “We just have one skip a week, that’s for all our household rubbish. So, of course when it’s full up, then the household rubbish starts going over – at the sides and on –. So it’s only a few of us that have to keep it clean. I mean, we kept it clean cause our plots are near where the skip used to be here”

I: “I’ve been to some sites that have wheelie bins for each plot, and they collect it”

F: “Well that’s what they’re hoping to actually get here”

M: “Well, it will be cleaner I should imagine”

F: “Yeah – but sometimes no, because if you’ve got like a fridge or settee it’s gonna cause a problem. So what I suggested to our caretaker was that maybe once a month, bring a skip in just for everyone on the plot to put all their large rubbish”

M: “Cause they won’t let us in down the council dump, cause we’re Gypsies. We’re residents of the borough but they won’t give us a permit” (Gypsy LA)

I: “Why does the site get rubbish on?”

F: “Because I don’t think the skips do be emptied at the regular times. Some comes once a week, more times they skip it for two weeks and then all the rubbish piles up. And then there’s a lot of gas bottles gathers all around the whole place, and it collects up all the rubbish. And everybody does the best they can to keep their own place clean, but the roads and down at the bottom always gets tipped up” (Irish LA)

Part of the problem of accumulating rubbish arises from society’s general failure to tackle waste management effectively. Travellers have the same problems as house-dwellers when it comes to disposing of bulk refuse like old cars, fridges or mattresses although they do not always realise this, and sometimes assume they are being victimised as Gypsies. The costs of disposing of work-related rubbish at council site trade-waste rates is high in relation to the income Travellers are likely to have got from the work and it is argued that this encourages people to tip their wastes either on-site or elsewhere.

M: “There’s no rubbish bins at all for us to chuck a bit of rubbish in – if I loaded that wagon up there of all the rubbish around my place, when I’ve had a clean-up and I goes up to the council tip here, I cannot tip that”

F: “No, you’ve got to pay to do it”

M: “If you don’t fly-tip it – which I don’t do anyway because it’s not worth it, because you get in trouble – where do I tip it? But the council won’t give a voucher – off their council site, we’re paying council rates here, the same as any house-dweller. We’ve got nowhere to put it – so any bit of waste space, we’ll park it there until we can find somewhere to put it, and it’s just left and left – the day never comes to move it. But there’s that much waste of space on this site, which is overgrown and ends up as a tip where it could be a play area for a child, or a parking space for a motor” (Gypsy LA)

Travellers do not currently seem to be plugged into society’s growing interest in recycling. Initiatives to build such connections might possible make a contribution to minimising aspects of the rubbish problem and to providing new sources of income for Travellers. On one site the operator has a problem with disposal of tree trimmings from residents’ garden work. The
traditional solution, still advocated by the residents, is to burn such waste, but the operator was arguing that this is no longer acceptable. At the time of interview the operator was trying to persuade Travellers to join with him in buying a communal shredder. This he argued would kill two birds with one stone: it would not only clear the green rubbish without offensive and illegal burning but it would also provide an opportunity for residents to make money by selling the shreddings as garden mulch. This approach would also help recycle material which might otherwise only end up being crude-tipped either legally on council tips or illegally by the roadside. However the Travellers seemed doubtful both about the costs involved in buying a shredder, and the value of the shredded product. This particular issue seemed unresolved at the time, but the episode suggests that it may be worth looking at local enterprise schemes to kick-start activities of this kind.

Vandalism, Disputes and Anti-social Behaviour

Vandalism, disputes and anti-social behaviour are certainly not exclusive to Gypsy/Traveller sites. As seen above, most managers try to minimise the risk of friction and trouble through their allocation policies. The management survey attempted to identify the extent of disputes.

There had been a known instance of a dispute between site residents and the settled community on a quarter of sites in the last year (a ‘dispute’ defined as a difference of opinion leading to conflict, complaints and/or serious ill feeling). Just over half of these were, in the view of the respondent, mostly the responsibility of the site resident, while in 22% of cases responsibility was evenly divided and in 22% there was no evidence. None of the disputes was seen to be mainly the responsibility of a member of the settled community.

There had been instances of disputes between site residents on 47% of sites, vandalism on 37% of sites, other anti-social behaviour (ASB) on 35% of sites and intimidation on 28% of sites during the year prior to the management survey. There is some evidence that the incidence of some of these problems is higher on ‘mixed’ sites than on single group sites. For example, disputes between residents were reported on 68% of mixed sites and 40% of single group sites; intimidation on 37% of mixed sites and 25% of single group sites. However, vandalism was more likely to be reported on single group sites (39%) than on mixed sites (31%).

Procedures adopted to deal with disputes and other forms of ASB normally seek to distinguish between more and less serious instances, with police being involved for serious and criminal behaviour. A mix of investigations, verbal and written warnings with eviction as the last resort in serious cases is most common. Some respondents (a minority) explicitly said that they try to get involved as little as possible and leave it to families to resolve. Some quotations from the management survey illustrate these responses:

‘Verbal warning followed by written warning followed by court action to evict if issue does not improve.’

‘Resolved by negotiation and common sense of Traveller officers.’

‘Where possible stay neutral let them sort it out – they’ll be bosom pals next week. If not, arbitrate, negotiate and if absolutely necessary ‘enforce’ a peaceful settlement.’

The case studies illustrated some of the dilemmas which can arise for site managers. As already noted, it is often hard to get information from residents about who is responsible for vandalism or damage, and probably impossible to get anyone to give evidence for court action even when the ASB is a major nuisance to other residents. Where site managers become aware of crime
occurring on site (for example, there had been instances of stolen vehicles/caravans on two case study sites) or presence of a firearm they have to decide how to act. Some have devised means of informing the police without this being apparent to residents through private, confidential contacts – informing the police openly runs the risk of destroying residents’ trust and making their own job untenable. Some feel that site managers sometimes have to be pragmatic rather than ‘totally professional’ if they are to be able to do their job.

It is important to stress that most site residents behave well, and do not fly-tip or cause damage. The troublesome minority can cause them great problems:

‘One powerful family has dominated this site from the beginning. Intimidation of other Travellers has not been uncommon.’ (management survey comment)

Some site managers are frustrated by the reluctance of the majority to become involved and help them get rid of the minority. Indeed, this aspect of Gypsy/Traveller culture was identified in some postal survey responses as a problem for site management in itself. A few quotations illustrate the points being made and the sense of frustration arising:

‘Remembering Gypsies are a different culture with their own ethnic origin. Easy to forget this sometimes.’

‘General lack of moral responsibility by the residents of the sites. General apathy and lack of concern over their living conditions.’

‘Lack of co-operation from residents and their closed community attitude.’

‘Lack of involvement of those on site to identify perpetrators of vandalism/fly tipping etc.’

This awareness of cultural differences has encouraged some authorities to employ Gypsy/Traveller individuals or organisations as site managers.

**Squatters and Unauthorised Residents**

Squatters and unauthorised residents on sites were mentioned as problems in both the postal and management surveys. Comments above illustrate some of the ways in which pitch allocation policies and procedures can be circumvented.

Dealing with unauthorised occupiers through eviction procedures takes time, and there is no control in the meantime on behaviour since squatters have no stake in the site. It seems that site management practices are designed to prevent unauthorised occupation, for example through requiring licensees to get permission to have visitors in trailers. Prevention is also physical with site entrance barriers and avoiding ‘unowned’ open space on sites. They are not always successful.
Controlling access to sites

F: “The worst of this site is people can pull on temporary, on empty plots, they belong to other families that maybe moved off for a week or two – anybody can move on, they can be trouble causers, they can destroy the site with rubbish, can’t they? They can do as they please, because all they’ve got to do is get up and go, but we’ve got to stop here when they’re gone. That is a problem for us ‘cos there’s no law. He goes home at 3.30, 4.00, and whoever wants can pull on if there’s an empty space”

I: “And what do the council do the next day then?”
F: “They just leave them, don’t they? Make an excuse and they’re left there”
I: “What do you think they should do?”
F: “I think they should be told off, because they haven’t got a plot – that’s if they’re trouble-causing”
F: “A better barrier should be put up” (Irish LA)
M: “Some Irish Travellers has tried to move on here, but we’ve always chucked them off, or told them to leave”
F: “Mostly during the summer months like now, ‘cos the others have moved away”
M: “And they come in and they see the plots empty, and they just pull on”
I: “And then what happens?”
M: “We chuck them off”
F: “Well you can’t let them go on there”
M: “If one comes, he tells the others, and before you know it the site will be filling up with them” (Gypsy private)

Unauthorised entry to sites is a point of concern to some residents, as the quotations above illustrate.

Assessment of Sites
The management survey asked how respondents rated their sites on six factors (Table 5.5). In general the ratings are positive (perhaps not too surprising given that respondents are effectively assessing their own performance). On all factors more respondents rate their site as good than as poor. Respondents are most positive about relations between residents and site managers (+88% net good, ie % fairly or very good minus % fairly or very poor) and residents’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.5: Assessment of Sites on Management Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents’ care of their pitches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of vandalism and damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fly tipping on and around site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations between site residents and site managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations between site resident/ neighbour problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations between the site and settled neighbours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Management survey; sample number = 88

Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England

142
care of their pitches (+69% net good). Significantly the lowest assessment is for fly-tipping on and around the site (+3% net good), reinforcing the message that this is a serious problem facing many site managers.

**Some Management Performance Indicators**

There is virtually no information publicly available for Gypsy/Traveller sites on the sorts of performance information which is routinely collected and published for social housing. The management questionnaire sought to fill this gap by asking about empty pitches, turnover and arrears. Not all site managers were able to provide the information, which is itself interesting – managers of around one in seven sites provided no information except on current vacancies. The analysis which follows below deals exclusively with residential sites.

**Pitch Vacancies**

The survey tried to distinguish between vacant pitches which are not in use and not available for letting, and those available for letting. It is apparent that some respondents may have included pitches that are between lettings in the former.

**Unused pitches:** there were unused residential pitches on 23 sites (26% of all sites) at the time of the survey. About half of these sites had only one or two pitches unused. Four sites had more than 10 unused pitches. Unused pitches represented about 7% of all pitches on the sample sites. The main reasons for pitches being unused are refurbishment, poor conditions and vandalism. Lack of demand is sometimes a factor, as is families deterring other would-be occupiers. This overall level of vacancy due to unused pitches seems high relative to social housing.

**Pitches vacant and ready for letting:** information from 83 sites shows pitches available for letting as a percentage of total pitches:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% up to 20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing with social housing is difficult. Very few if any social landlords have a zero vacancy rate. However sites with vacancies tend to show as high in percentage terms because total pitch numbers are so low (one vacancy on a 16 pitch site represents a 6% vacancy rate which would appear high if found in social housing). Overall, however, void control on sites appears good.
**Pitch Turnover**

Information is available from 72 sites on the number of pitches becoming vacant during 2000/1. The distribution was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitches</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No pitches</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pitch</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pitches</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 pitches</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or 5 pitches</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 or over</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two sites had high numbers (12 and 17) following refurbishments. The average number of pitches becoming vacant during the year was 1.96 per site, or 1.56 omitting the two sites with unusually high vacancies (median 1 pitch). This picture of stability is supported by survey respondents’ estimates that most or all residents have lived on site for three years or longer on 86% of sites.

Performance indicators express turnover in terms of percentages of pitches. Again there is the problem of calculating percentages on small bases, which leads to apparently high turnover rates where any vacancies at all occur:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5%, up to 10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;10%, up to 20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20%, up to 40%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;40%, up to 50%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean turnover rate is 14.4% (median 6.7% showing that the mean is influenced by unusually high turnover rates). This appears broadly comparable with the 3% to 9% net voids achieved in local authority stock.

Turnover rates can be analysed by a number of site characteristics:

- **Region**: highest in the North (18%) and lowest in the South and East (13%)

- **Ethnic group housed**: higher for Irish Traveller sites (24%) than for English Gypsy sites (14%) or mixed sites (13%)

- **Child density**: generally higher where child density is higher, ranging from 19% where children represent between 34% and 50% of the population to 5% where they represent up to 25%

- **Assessed site management quality**: higher turnover is associated particularly with poorer assessments on vandalism and damage, and fly-tipping on and around the site

The association between turnover and child density and assessed site management quality is as might be expected from experience in social housing.
**Time to Relet Pitches**
Time taken to relet vacant pitches was provided for only 42 sites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1 week</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 weeks</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean relet period is 1.72 weeks (median 1 week), which compares very favourably with that achieved by social landlords (the Housing Corporation performance standard for RSLs is 4 weeks).

**Evictions**
Evictions occurred on four out of 76 sites during 2000/1 (5%). On three sites there was a single eviction and on one there were three evictions. Reasons seem to have combined both arrears and ASB.

**Licence Fee Arrears**
Information on arrears outstanding at 31/3/01 and for the whole licence fee debit for 2000/1 was provided for only 46 residential sites. For these sites, arrears as a percentage of annual debit are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrears Level</th>
<th>Percentage of Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;0, up to 5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5%, up to 10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;10%, up to 25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus almost two-thirds of sites reported arrears of zero or up to 5% of debit – good performance compared with many social landlords (Housing Corporation performance standard is 5%). However, at the other end of the spectrum, five sites have arrears exceeding the annual debit – in two instances, more than twice the annual debit. These very high levels of arrears inflate the mean across all sites to 25%, compared with the median rate of about 1.5%.

Arrears rates on sites subject to a Rent Officer assessment for HB purposes are about twice the rate on sites not having an assessment, suggesting that this contributes to arrears levels. Arrears are, however, also particularly evident on London sites which are not subject to Rent Officer assessments.

Overall, licence fee arrears appear well under control on most sites (due to housing benefit direct and/or good management). Arrears appear to be out of control on a small minority of sites.

**What is ‘Good’ Site Management**
At some case study interviews we asked how a well managed site could be recognised. Some of the criteria mentioned by different officers are: a full site, a waiting list, low turnover, in good
repair, reasonably clean and tidy (‘no huge dumps of tree loppings or rubbish’), quiet and peaceful, site residents like to be there and have the freedom to carry on their lifestyle, people are at ease and not frightened, children are in school, health and other projects up and running, site is not causing undue trouble to settled neighbours, and site is not causing the council major expense or trouble. These factors suggest that managers have a very broad image of site management as being concerned with residents’ welfare and social inclusion as well as property management.

The ideal style of management – frequently mentioned by site managers – is firm, fair and consistent. One respondent thought that a site manager needs to be a strong character who is enthusiastic and able to get on with a wide range of people. S/he has to be strong willed and determined and able to deal with ‘finding themselves alone in the council with superiors not wanting to know what they are doing in any detail’.

Some managers see site management as a form of housing management, and liken their task to managing a difficult-to-manage council estate. Others know little about housing management and implicitly seem to see site management as a distinct skill primarily learnt through experience. Certainly site management as practised in many areas seems much more intensive than housing management with higher staff/resident ratios, more frequent contact and a greater expectation that the manager knows everything that is going on on the site – or should try to. Some see this as potentially intrusive, and as setting site residents apart from other council tenants. Some would like more self-management for sites, and certainly more resident responsibility for their actions.

There are two elements in site management practice generally seen as ‘good’ which seem to lead site managers into potentially very difficult areas:

- Pitch allocation policies and practices generally place much more weight on family and individual compatibility than social housing allocation policies do, even in local lettings plans. At the simplest, managers allocating pitches probably know more about the applicant than is usual in social housing just because it is a smaller world they are dealing with. Residents are involved in the lettings process to a greater degree than is usual for social housing. Processes also seem to be more overtly discretionary. This puts managers in a position of great power.

- Many managers stress the need for mutual trust between residents and the site manager. Retaining this trust while acting in a firm manner is obviously a major skill of site management since the closeness of the relationship means that a manager who has lost the trust of his/her residents cannot do the job effectively. Some were prepared to admit that this could lead to a manager ignoring or apparently condoning suspected ‘fiddling’ or even fraud or crime since an ‘informer’ would not be trusted. Experienced managers seem to have learnt where to draw a line between what they consider ‘serious’ and ‘petty’, and to have devised channels for dealing with the ‘serious’. Again, this puts the site manager into a somewhat strange position for a council officer.

There is a general lack of opportunities for officers to discuss these and other matters with colleagues in other areas, and to draw on their experiences.

**Gypsy/Traveller Views**

When Gypsy/Travellers are on the road their stopping places are normally completely unmanaged (although local authorities might try to encourage good behaviour, tidiness and so
on). For active (or recently active) Travellers there are therefore usually few clearly-established
expectations or traditions in terms of site management. Indeed one of the main satisfactions of
a travelling life is that it is normally free from any requirement to manage or plan. However,
when people stop travelling and settle for any length of time in one place the need arises for
facilities to be managed. Social and physical problems can no longer be solved by moving on –
they have to be faced and sorted out. Sensitive and effective management can make the
difference between a site that is contented and successful, and one that is unhappy and
declining.

Gypsy/Travellers do not want draconian regimes. Good management will be firm and effective,
but at the same time light, friendly and respectful. People should be left to do what they want as
long as this does not seriously threaten the amenity of their neighbours or of the site as a whole.
Tough but alienating regimes may be counterproductive. In the best cases site managers and
wardens develop very good relations with their residents and there is some mutual respect.
Managers are seen to do their best and go out of their way to help. Travellers often appreciate
that their communities can be difficult to manage. They tend to respect people who come
across as firm but fair, but not those who allow themselves to be dictated to by vociferous
residents.

Residents accept that site management is no easy task, and that site managers must be ‘hardy’
and resilient.

> F: “Well the person that takes over the site, he’d have to be a hardy person, because I think he’d
> get a lot of abuse and he’d get hit now and again, you know what I mean. With the Travellers
> you have to know them to come and live with them – but he’d have to be a hardy person” (Irish
> LA)

There is clearly agreement between site managers and Gypsy/Travellers about some of the
desirable features of site management – although perceptions of what is ‘firm and fair’ may differ
in practice on occasion.

**Summary**

This chapter looked at how local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites are currently managed with
the emphasis on residential sites. First it described some features of site occupancy and site
dynamics:

- **Ethnic groups housed**: the majority of sites house a single broad group of Gypsy/Travellers.
  English Gypsies are the group most widely catered for. Site managers and Gypsy/Traveller
  residents widely believe that the different ethnic groups rarely mix on sites without trouble,
  although there are exceptions.

- **Demographic and socio-economic characteristics**: survey sites house up to 183 people. The
  median number of persons per occupied pitch is 3.13. Child density on sites is often higher
  than in the settled community. On seven out of ten sites a minority of households work.
  On about half of sites, three or more residents have some form of special health need.
Site dynamics and turnover: Most residential sites have very low turnover and are stable, although a minority have very high turnover. On case study residential sites, most families do not travel or travel only for a short period. For many residents the attractions of a site lie in the possibilities of living in a trailer and of living within a culturally distinct community among friends and family.

A sense of community: Social mix and cohesiveness is often one of the most important factors to residents on residential sites. A break down of social cohesion can lead to disharmony and fights, or to people leaving to avoid nuisance and conflict. Gypsy/Travellers and site managers identify a small number of ‘bad families’ who can cause serious trouble on sites and elsewhere.

Site management is commonly seen as central to the viability and sustainability of Gypsy/Traveller sites. There are no specific legal requirements for Gypsy/Traveller site management. The research found:

Licence agreements, rules and enforcement: Pitches are let on a licence rather than a tenancy; site residents enjoy less security and fewer rights than council tenants. Gypsy/Traveller interviewees were very unclear about their security of tenure and other rights. Licensees on most sites are permitted to have mobile homes or second caravan/trailers on their pitch; keep dogs; be absent for a period while travelling; and have visitors with trailers to stay – however on many sites permission must be explicitly sought and granted. Work is permitted on a minority of sites only, although it takes place on a much larger proportion. Enforcement of licence conditions is an important element in overall site management. Rules must be applied consistently, avoiding any hint of favouritism or unfairness. Site residents showed some ambivalence about rules and regulations on sites.

Pitch allocations: Pitch vacancies on residential sites arise infrequently. Most residential sites have a waiting list. There are few formal exclusion policies except for outstanding rent arrears. However, family or personal compatibility is the single most important factor taken into account when allocating pitches and could lead to ‘incompatible’ families being excluded. Other important factors taken into account in allocations are need for accommodation, medical needs and previous known behaviour.

Repairs and maintenance: Repairs are most commonly reported through an officer on site. Reporting arrangements, response targets etc are commonly less structured than in social housing. Contractors’ reluctance to work on sites is often an issue. Managers generally thought their repairs service was good and prompt; residents’ perceptions were sometimes of delays and repeated repair requests.

Collecting licence fees: Residents make weekly licence fee (‘rent’) payments and may pay separately for water, sewage charges and electricity. On the majority of residential sites most or all licensees receive housing benefit. Door-to-door collection of charges is still important. Arrears recovery procedures seem rather less formally developed than for social housing.

Housing benefit: The site manager’s role in relation to housing benefit varies and some carry out verification checks. Gypsy/Traveller employment patterns and some other lifestyle factors fit very awkwardly into the bureaucratic housing benefit system and, at the extreme, this opens up potential for accusations of housing benefit fraud. There are few examples of fraud investigations.
• **Resident involvement**: Site managers thought that they often consulted residents on matters to do with site management, repairs or improvements – usually verbally with individual residents. Residents, however, commonly think that many site operators just go ahead and do things without talking to the residents first.

• **Liaison with other services**: An element in site management is ensuring that residents benefit from social, health, education and other services. Health and education workers are most likely to visit sites regularly. The police also visit the majority of sites, but normally on an ad hoc basis. Some service providers are reluctant to visit sites alone.

• **Site management problems**: The most significant site management problems identified by site managers are fly-tipping, rubbish etc; vandalism and damage to the site and amenities; site condition and need for refurbishment; disputes between incompatible individuals or families. Fly-tipping and waste disposal was also picked up in discussions with Gypsy/Travellers, who are often concerned that they get blamed for rubbish tipped by members of the settled community.

• **Management performance indicators**: This research looked at management performance on empty pitches, turnover and arrears. Site management seems to achieve performance which is broadly comparable with social housing on most measures, and better on some including relet time and arrears.

• **‘Good’ site management**: Site managers commonly have a very broad image of site management as being concerned with residents’ welfare and social inclusion as well as property management. The frequently mentioned ideal style of management is firm, fair and consistent. Many managers stress the need for mutual trust between residents and the site manager. Gypsy/Traveller residents favour light management on the whole, but rapid and firm response to disruptive behaviour.
CHAPTER 6
Site finances

This chapter looks first at licence fees being charged on sites then at other charges, drawing on the management survey. It then considers the specific issue of licence fees and the local reference rent set for housing benefit purposes. Site income and expenditure are described to assesses how far sites 'pay their way'. Finally Gypsy/Traveller views on site 'rents' and other charges are reported.

Additional information on budgets was collected through both the postal and management surveys, but this proved so incomplete, obviously inconsistent and hard to interpret that it is not presented here. It is an indirect research finding that managers are unable to provide basic financial information for a substantial minority of sites. Sometimes this may even be a conscious policy – not having an identified budget as a strategy for avoiding budget cuts. More generally, it appears to be a variant of the inability to allocate income and expenditure to specific headings which bedevils much benchmarking of local government services. Where site management is contracted out, financial information may not have been given to us for commercial reasons.

Licence Fees

Site residents universally refer to the charge they pay for their pitch as 'rent' – as indeed do many local authority personnel. However, since pitches are rented under licence, the payments are strictly licence fees and are referred to as such except when reporting on residents’ views.

From the scoping interviews it was apparent that the level of licence fees is an issue in some areas, apart from the more specific problem of housing benefit entitlement which is discussed below. Licence fees were thought to vary widely and, in some places, to represent very poor value for money in view of the services provided.

Table 6.1 shows weekly licence fees for single and double pitches on residential sites. A wide range of rents is apparent. Doubles are more expensive than singles, but there is a lot of overlap in the distributions. Given that the average social housing rent is about £50 a week, it is clear that licence fees on most sites are below this level, although some are considerably higher. Gypsy/Traveller site residents get very different services from social housing tenants for slightly lower average rents, and provide their own accommodation. There are also differences between tenure status, rights and security granted by a licence compared with a secure tenancy.

Looking at single licence fees only (the larger sample number) suggests little obvious variation
with site size or location. Sites owned by county councils and London Boroughs have the lowest average fee levels.

### Other Charges

No regular charges in addition to the pitch rent/licence fee are made on just over a fifth (21%) of residential sites. A damage deposit is made at the start of the licence on 44% of sites, ranging from £50 to £250 and averaging about £150 (most commonly £100, £200 or £50).

On just over half of sites (51%) there is an additional charge for water, ranging from £1 to £8.15 a week, average £3.99. On 11% of sites there is an additional charge for sewage disposal (normally in addition to a water charge), ranging from £1.25 to £5.10 and averaging £4.07.

On 18% of sites there is small additional charge for electricity metering etc, ranging from 8p to 84p a week, averaging £0.47. The most common charge was £0.44. This charge is in addition to that for electricity consumed. (The most common means of paying for electricity consumed is pre-payment or card meter (58% of sites). On a further 25% of sites supply is metered with payment via the local authority. On 9% of sites electricity is metered with payment direct to the supply company. On 1% of sites a standard payment is made to the local authority and on 2% an estimated or apportioned payment is made to the authority.)

On two sites there is an additional charge of £20 for a deposit for the entrance barrier.

Thus most sites require some payment from residents in addition to the licence fee. Water charges are not eligible for housing benefit and must be met by residents directly where levied – indeed, given the importance of housing benefit, electricity and water charges can be more important than licence fees for most residents in determining affordability. Initial damage deposits can represent a significant up-front payment.
Housing Benefit and Local Reference Rents

As noted, most site residents receive housing benefit. Housing benefit is paid by the local authority according to standard regulations. Where the site is owned by a local housing authority, it appears that in most cases housing benefit is paid on the full licence fee without reference to the Rent Officer, just as it would normally be in social housing. County council owned sites are treated differently since counties do not count as local authorities for this particular exemption. Applications for housing benefit from licensees on county council sites should be referred to the Rent Officer for a local reference rent to be assessed in order to determine the level eligible for housing benefit purposes. This is also the case on sites leased to other bodies. It is clear from the management survey and the case studies that there is very little consistency in this area: some local housing authority site applications are referred to the Rent Officer; some county council site applications are referred and some are not; where referrals are made, some Rent Officers apparently set the reference rent at or near the licence fee charged while others set it at a much lower level. As a consequence, this is a major issue fundamentally affecting site viability in some places while it is not an issue at all in others.

Box 6.1 presents information from the sole Rent Officer interviewed in the research about setting reasonable rents for Gypsy/Traveller sites.

We tried to explore the issue in the management survey, but have only incomplete information. Respondents answering for 57% of the 77 residential sites where information was given said that the Rent Officer had not made an assessment of the reasonable licence fee for housing benefit purposes. An assessment had been made in 43% of cases, in 7% it is being challenged.

Details of the assessment made by the Rent Officer were given for 25 sites. Unfortunately the questionnaire did not establish whether the assessment was for a single or double pitch. In this analysis we have compared the assessment with both single and double fees for the same site.

Looking at single pitches shows that on eight sites there is a gap between the single pitch rent/fee and the Rent Officer's assessment, ranging between £2.70 and £17.85 (average £11.46). There is a gap of £10 or more on six sites, which represents 11% of all sites on which a single pitch fee was given.

Box 6.1: Setting the Local Reference Rent for a Gypsy/Traveller Site

- The Rent Officer’s local database includes 73 pieces of market evidence
  - ‘market evidence’ excludes HB cases, which automatically excludes almost all LA sites since most residents are on HB
  - therefore most evidence is on private sites including touring caravan sites, static holiday sites and mobile home parks
  - these are not directly comparable to a Gypsy/Traveller site in terms of tenancy status or amenities provided
- In calculating the LRR, 25 pieces of evidence are discarded as outliers (below £18 and higher than £33)
  - the LRR is the mid point between £18 and £33, ie £25.50.
- The actual site licence fee is £45
- Under this system the size, quality and service offered on the actual site is irrelevant since it is effectively excluded from the ‘market’ evidence on which the LRR is based

Source: Case study
Thirteen sites show a gap between double pitch rent/fee and Rent Officer assessment, ranging between £2.50 and £23.00 (average £12.82). On nine sites the gaps are of £10 and over, representing 20% of the sites providing information on double pitch fees. Looking at the actual fees which led to gaps of £10 or over shows that they are not unusually high – ranging from £35 to £53.50. Indeed the average double rent/fee leading to a £10+ gap is £41.78 which is lower than the average for double pitch rents/fees overall (see Table 4.8).

Given the extent of housing benefit dependency among site residents the potential for financial hardship among residents is obvious. This was not explored further in the research.

Local authorities faced with a gap between licence fee levels and the Rent Officer assessment seem to have adopted different strategies in response:

• Some have reduced licence fees to the benefit eligibility level. This obviously has the effect of reducing site income, and may lead to serious deficits which can look bad in an authority seeking economies. It reduces any possibility of funding site improvements out of revenue.

• Some continue to charge the higher licence fee, but do not seek to collect top-up payments from those affected by the benefit gap. This presumably has similar effects on revenue to the first approach, but may introduce unfairness between site residents. It inflates arrears levels.

• Some continue to charge the higher licence fee and try to collect the top-up payment.

The situation is likely to get worse if regulations are not changed as to-date unbroken claims (still eligible for the whole amount) are re-assessed and the restrictions bite further.

This factor can affect an authority’s decision-making about site ownership and management. Sale or leasing to a private or commercial body would bring the site into the restricted rent regime, making it much less attractive to would-be owners/lessees without a continuing subsidy from the local authority.

Overall this anomaly is resented almost as much for its arbitrary unfairness and irrationality as for the very real problems it can cause for those affected.

Site Income and Expenditure

The postal survey asked whether the full annual cost of managing and maintaining Gypsy/Traveller sites (excluding major repairs) is generally greater or less than the income from sites. This question was answered by 83 authorities. Just over half (52%) find that costs are generally greater than income, 30% find them equal to income, and 18% find that income is generally greater than costs. Not surprisingly, profit/loss is directly related to rent levels. The average single pitch rent for authorities where costs exceed income is £35.76, for those that break even is £40.49, and for those where income exceeds cost is £46.49. Whether this reflects conscious local policy geared to need and affordability, housing benefit restrictions or chance is not clear.

The management survey attempted to unpick this a little in a series of questions about site
income, expenditure and budgets. While a fair amount of detail was requested, respondents were rarely able to answer everything. This makes it hard to analyse except at a fairly general level.

Site Income

Total site income 2000/1 was provided for 67 sites. It ranges from zero (a transit site with no charges for residents) to £103,376 with a mean of £31,700 (median £24,600).

Expressing this as an amount per occupied pitch produces the following:

- Income up to £1,000 per pitch: 12% of sites
- £1,000, up to £2,000 per pitch: 31% of sites
- £2,000, up to £3,000 per pitch: 43% of sites
- £3,000, up to £4,000 per pitch: 11% of sites
- Over £4,000 per pitch: 3% of sites

The average income per pitch is £2,106, close to the median of £2,040.

The majority of site income (87%) comes from rents/licence fees.

Site Expenditure

Total site expenditure 2000/1 was provided for 59 sites. It ranged from £2,200 to £147,085 with a mean of £39,900 (median £33,100).

Expressing this as an amount per occupied pitch produces the following:

- Expenditure up to £1,000 per pitch: 5% of sites
- £1,000, up to £2,000 per pitch: 37% of sites
- £2,000, up to £3,000 per pitch: 26% of sites
- £3,000, up to £4,000 per pitch: 21% of sites
- Over £4,000 per pitch: 11% of sites

The average expenditure per pitch is £3,240, considerably above the median of £2,300.

Net Income

Not surprisingly given the figures above, expenditure exceeds income for many sites. In all, out of 58 sites where the information is available, 29 (50%) show expenditure in excess of income, two (3%) have income and expenditure broadly equal and 27 (47%) have income in excess of expenditure. The overall range is from £30,500 excess of income over expenditure to a deficit of £93,400. The mean balance is a deficit of £6,200, the median a deficit of £400.

Excluding expenditure on major repairs and improvements (which cannot be expected to be met from annual site income) changes the picture a little. Only 44 sites can now be analysed. Of these, 24 (55%) have expenditure in excess of income, two broadly break even and 18 (41%) have income in excess of expenditure. The overall range runs from £30,500 excess of
income over expenditure to a deficit of £45,548. The mean balance is a deficit of £3,150 which is lower than for income/expenditure including major repairs. However, the median balance excluding major repairs expenditure is a deficit of £1,320 which is greater than the median deficit including major repairs; this shows the sensitivity of these analyses to the precise sample on which they are calculated.

To take account of differences in site size, this net balance excluding major repairs expenditure is expressed as a sum per pitch on the site:

| Net surplus >£2,000 per pitch | — |
| Net surplus >£1,000, up to £2,000 | 9% of sites |
| Net surplus >£500, up to £1,000 | 9% |
| Net surplus >£250, up to £500 | 7% |
| Net surplus up to £250 | 16% |
| Break-even | 5% |
| Net deficit up to £250 | 11% |
| Net deficit >£250, up to £500 | 16% |
| Net deficit >£500, up to £1,000 | 9% |
| Net deficit >£1,000, up to £2,000 | 11% |
| Net deficit >£2,000 per pitch | 7% |

The remarkable thing about this distribution is the lack of any particular bunching, suggesting that each site is broadly unique in its financial balance. The average picture is a £272 deficit per pitch, rather above the median value of a deficit of £200 per pitch.

Comment

These figures must be taken as indicative only, given the small sample numbers on which they are based, and their apparent sensitivity to the precise sites included in each analysis. The general conclusions are:

- Each site is essentially unique in its financial situation.

- Relatively few sites make a surplus even disregarding expenditure on major repairs or improvements. There is little scope for funding investment out of revenue.

- Site financial viability seems quite finely poised, and is heavily dependent on housing benefit to fund licence fees at current levels.

Gypsy/Traveller Views of ‘Rent’ and Other Charges

Plot ‘rents’ reported in discussions varied considerably from site to site, from below £20 a week to over £70 a week. Some of the rents were thought to be high for what was offered. The impression is that many participants were getting housing benefit. To that extent the amount of
rent is sometimes not felt to be a major concern because the family is not paying it themselves. However the higher the rent the more difficult it becomes to get off benefits and support themselves on the money they could make from their traditional economic pursuits. Even if they are not paying themselves, residents are inclined to feel there should be some relationship between what is charged and what is provided. Some clearly feel that they do not receive value for money for rent, and make adverse comparisons with the costs of living in a house.

**Perceptions of ‘rent’ and other charges**

M: “There’s a lot of ’em can turn to a bit of garden work, they can keep theirself – they wouldn’t get rich out of it but they can do a bit of garden work. Some can do a bit of scrap work, some sells things at the door”

I: “Are most of the people living here claiming benefits now?”

M: “Yeah most of them”

F: “See they can’t afford to pay the rent”

M: “Yeah, it’s £64 a week – and then going up to £70 odd pound a week. I mean we only got a toilet and a tap, we pay the electric ourself, so surely we’re getting ripped off – and that’s why the council don’t want no private sites in the area” (Gypsy LA)

M: “The DHS has paid it, because I would not pay that on me own, I couldn’t afford to pay it. We’d have no need to sign on if the rents were next to nothing because we’ve only got a concrete plot and a toilet, that’s all we’ve got. I mean when this caravan drops to pieces the council ain’t going to come out and buy me another caravan” (Gypsy LA)

M: “This is £64 a week for this concrete!”

F: “And after Christmas it’s going up to £76! I’ve got a leaflet about the rent how it’s going up and that lot. I do think it is a bit beyond a joke just for a base! And the toilet’s right up the side of your living quarters what you’re supposed to cook in!” (Gypsy LA)

M: “It’s about £40 a week, we pay separate for the water, separate for the electric”

F: “Separate for the electric – water rates, sewerage, we pay all that”

M: “Ridiculous, a house would be cheaper!”

F: “And you’re secure, you’re safer in your house”

M: “And the councils have to maintain a house, but they don’t maintain hardly nothing on here” (Gypsy LA)

Charges for electricity are a bone of contention on some sites (but not all). Residents did not normally have a separate supply to their plot, with independent metering and billing. They were usually charged by the site owner on various kinds of basis, for example metering on some sites was done centrally and the cost split between residents as a charge on top of the rent. This approach often gave rise to suspicions. Many Gypsy/Travellers say they cannot read the meters, so they have no way of checking the amount. They are not clear how it is divided up, or whether the operator adds a margin. They are occasionally charged flat sums based on records for earlier periods, with subsequent adjustments for actual usage. These adjustments are often misunderstood, sometimes cause ill-feeling, and can lead to arrears. On some sites electricity cards are bought (usually from the warden) and used by individual households. Because this is individualised it gets away from some of the problems of central metering, but some still think they pay a lot and there were occasional complaints about cards that do not work or do not deliver what people consider a full measure of electricity.

Residents on some sites feel they are charged a lot for electricity. Sometimes it seems a large
amount in absolute terms, sometimes they compare it with what friends or relatives living in houses are believed to pay although the latter have a larger space to heat and sometimes more electrical facilities. There is often a suspicion that they are being overcharged in some way. Water charges were also thought to be high on some sites (conversely site managers often commented that Gypsy/Travellers are heavy water users, and that flat rate charges sometimes did not meet the full costs!). Charges for electricity and water often have more economic impact on families than rents, since they are not covered by Housing Benefit.

Some residents said that they had had to pay a deposit on their plot and the figure of £250 was mentioned by several people. Those charged were sometimes critical of the practice. Some long-standing residents complained that they would only get the same amount back when they eventually left although it would be worth considerably less by then. Some said that deposits are sometimes forfeited for no very good reason.

Summary

This chapter looked at aspects of site finances:

 Licence fees: Licence fees for pitches on residential sites vary widely – from £17.60 to £75.48 (median £37.00) for single pitches and from £19.60 to £86.10 (median £41.00) for double pitches. Site residents resent very high licence fees and feel they represent poor value for money.

 Other charges: Because so many residents receive housing benefit, other charges (levied on most sites) often have similar or greater impact on affordability. Common extra charges are: damage deposit; charge for water; charge for sewage disposal; and small charge for electricity metering. Site residents sometimes felt that they pay a lot for (metered) electricity.

 Housing benefit and local reference rents: Applications for housing benefit on county council sites (and sites leased to non-local authority bodies) should be referred to the Rent Officer for a local reference rent to be assessed in order to determine the level eligible for housing benefit. Big gaps (£10 a week and over) can exist in some counties between the licence fee charged and the LRR set by the Rent Officer. Site owners faced with such a gap have responded in different ways, but it can seriously affect site viability and can affect an authority’s decision-making about site ownership and management.

 Site income and expenditure: Just over half of local authorities find that costs of running Gypsy/Travellers sites are generally greater than income. Where survey information is available on both site income and expenditure the median site profit/loss comes out at a deficit of £200 per pitch (excluding expenditure on major repairs or site improvements). Site finances vary widely from site to site. Financial viability is quite finely poised, and is very dependent on housing benefit being available to fund licence fees at current levels. There is little scope for funding investment on site major repairs or improvements out of site income.
CHAPTER 7
Gypsy/traveller accommodation needs and aspirations

In the report so far we have looked at local authority policies towards Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues and at the current network of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites and how they are managed. This chapter looks to the future and considers what accommodation might be required to meet the needs and aspirations of Gypsies and other Travellers. The first section examines each accommodation option in turn and the roles they might play. The second section specifically explores how nomadism can be accommodated. The third and fourth sections look at how needs for sites might be assessed, and then apply a model to estimate possible needs over the next five years. The final section brings together some lessons from the research for site design.

The Range of Accommodation Options and their Roles

It is widely acknowledged that a range of accommodation is required for Gypsies and other Travellers, from permanent housing to temporary stopping places, to meet the needs and aspirations of individual families. There is nothing new in this – indeed as an officer in one of the case study areas commented: ‘The need for a range of accommodation has been well rehearsed since Cripps. We need now to get on and provide it.’ It is, however, worth rehearsing once more the accommodation options available, together with comments about their potential roles from both ‘providers’ and Gypsies and other Travellers. Accommodation specifically for nomadism is discussed in the next section.

We are not able to quantify demand for different types of accommodation, although an indication of relative popularity is provided. It is useful to bear in mind preferences found in a Scottish study, where the order was: a family site (32%); a private site (22%); the roadside (21%); housing (14%); and a local authority site (14%) (Bancroft et al 1996:32).

Permanent Housing

Chapter 2 looked at policies towards Gypsies and other Travellers in accessing social rented housing. It described the main reasons why Gypsy/Travellers move into housing (a desire to ‘settle’ and ill health) and the extent to which Gypsy/Travellers experience problems in
housing and the sort of support they might expect to get. For the future, interviewees in case studies and at the scoping stage were clear that housing should be an accommodation option for Gypsies and other Travellers, but should not be the only option.

Further points made include:

- Some local authority respondents argue that permanent housing has only a minimal role to play in meeting Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs, limited by cultural factors. Others seem to accord it a larger role on the grounds that they are aware of Gypsies and other Travellers happily settled in housing and integrated with settled neighbours.

- Where people move into permanent housing because of a lack of alternative accommodation on sites there can be a pent up demand for site places. A Traveller education officer commented that, in her area, Traveller children in houses often want to live on a ‘nice site’. London-based interviewees thought that many housed Travellers in London would prefer a place on a site, and in terms of demand flows, numbers wanting to move from a house or flat to a site probably far exceed numbers wanting to move from a site or the road to a house or flat.

- Many Gypsies and other Travellers have had direct experience of living in a house for a period of their lives. Movement between forms of accommodation, including housing, is likely to continue and might even grow rather than reduce if more sites were to be made available.

**Gypsy/Traveller Views**

A minority of the traditional Gypsy/Travellers involved in the research had experience of living in bricks-and-mortar houses, having spent periods of their childhood and/or adult life in a house; some were interviewed in a house. Even where Travellers had no personal experience of housing they generally knew of others who had lived in this way. There tended to be a developed (and often unfavourable) folklore about housed life.

General attitudes to the idea of living in houses were typically negative. Legal and other factors which make travelling more difficult were often seen as part of a plot to force Gypsy/Travellers into houses. But moving to a house was sometimes seen as a betrayal of traditions and culture. Living in trailers appears to be an important part of the cultural heritage, which many would like to preserve as far as possible. Even once it has lost much of its original travelling purpose, living in trailers is almost a badge of cultural identity and a bulwark against the supposed conspiracy to push Travellers into houses.

Participants often seemed reluctant or unwilling to consider living in a house. The kinds of objections raised demonstrate a basic aversion to living in a fixed bricks-and-mortar dwelling as opposed to a trailer, together with other more complex factors:

- A feeling of being ‘closed in’, not only by four walls but also by the press of other housing around.

- A sense of social isolation, being cut off from the generally familiar and supportive social context of the site or the roadside camp, and being surrounded by non-Travellers who are

1 The most usual term among Gypsy/Travellers for members of the settled community is ‘house-dwellers’, suggesting that they see themselves as distinct in this respect.
at best unknown, may seem alien and might even be hostile. There were some reported cases of abuse and aggravation from neighbours.

- A feeling of being cut off from the natural world outside. For example one Gypsy woman recalled a sense of distress at ‘not being able to hear the rain’ as a child when her parents moved into a house.

- A fear of being ‘tied down’ and ‘not free’. A central feature of the travelling tradition is the feeling of being ‘free’, and keeping options open. While living in a trailer there always seems a possibility of deciding at any moment to move off. This remains an attractive feeling even if not followed in practice.

**Some views against living in houses**

M: “It would be the very, very last resort if you had to go in a house” (Gypsy LA)

M: “I think a house to a Traveller is the end of the road”

F: “It finishes them off, it does”

F: “True really, isn’t it? I couldn’t cope with it”

F: “If you gave me a new house this minute I wouldn’t go into it – I still prefer a caravan and a proper site” (Irish LA)

F: “I’ve been in a trailer all my life, and I tried a house two years ago – and I took a lease out for six month and I was in it for three weeks. It was private, like rented. And I was in it three weeks and I had to come out”

F: “See I can’t cope in a house. I really can’t, I tried to be nice and friendly”

I: “Explain to me how you feel because I have always lived in a house”

F: “Closed in the walls, you couldn’t see out. On here, whether you talk to next door, you talk to anybody, you can look out and you can see people”

F: “Yes, see them passing, coming back from the shops, the children playing”

F: “Yes – it’s your own people at the end of the day” (Gypsy LA)

M: “I couldn’t move in a house, guv, to be honest with you”

F: “No, I couldn’t live in a house, no”

F: “You’re all closed in”

M: “It’s like catching a wild bird off a tree and putting him in a cage – it’s not your life”

F: “You’ve got somebody next-door to you, there. You’re not a free person”

M: “That will always be against you, because you’re a Gypsy” (Gypsy LA)

F: “If you lived in a house, you wouldn’t have so many friends around you for a start, you’d be isolated – cos we’ve different ways from the house dwellers, and we’re just used to that way” (Irish LA)

F: “But some places a Traveller – they won’t even talk to you, they won’t associate with you”

F: “No, they don’t even like you on their estate, do they?”

F: “They thinks all Travellers have germs or something” (Irish LA)

F: “If you’re used to having all your friends around all the time – and suddenly you’re sat in the middle of nowhere in a house, you’ve nothing in common with the people that live around you” (New transit)

These feelings may partly be to do with the fact of living in brick-and-mortar structures, but the pervasive sense of claustrophobia reported often seems more social than architectural in origin.
This becomes apparent from the way people responded to the idea of group housing (see below), or to the possibility of houses located on or adjacent to sites. It also seemed that some Travellers were more open to the idea of living in houses in one area where there is a large resident Gypsy population, and a longstanding tradition of living in council houses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F:</th>
<th>“They would be nice if they made the houses on here. That would be lovely. We’d have a house if they put a house on here”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>“So it’s not that you don’t like living in a house, you wouldn’t want to live in a house on an estate with other people you don’t know, really”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F:</td>
<td>“That’s right” (Gypsy LA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many participants were visibly uncomfortable with the idea of houses with more than one storey and flats situated on upper floors. Thus the notion of bungalows tended to be more appealing than houses or flat blocks. When people thought more favourably of brick-and-mortar accommodation it was normally a bungalow they had in mind.

| F:  | “It would be a bungalow if it had to be something – ground floor. Cos heights, some people don’t like going upstairs, looking out the windows – I’d rather be on ground level” (Gypsy private) |

The one important advantage of a house over a trailer/shed combination is that the bathroom or toilet and bedroom are under one roof. Living in a trailer means going into the open air after washing or bathing on the way to bed, or in order to use the toilet during the night. This can be particularly arduous for children, older or sick people, and especially in winter. It is the consequence of a particularly strong hygiene taboo against bathing or using a toilet in a trailer used for living or sleeping. While there is currently little evidence of the taboo weakening among Gypsy/Travellers on sites, it is possible that it may come to appear increasingly onerous as people become more ‘settled’. Houses could look more attractive.

Box 7.1 gives brief case-histories of three of the housed Travellers included in the research. They illustrate reasons for moving into housing, and some of the advantages and drawbacks of housing for Gypsies and other Travellers. They also show how, for some, housing is a very second-best option while for others it can become the preferred way of life.

During the interviews, eight accommodation options were explored with Gypsy/Traveller participants. Two of these involved permanent housing:

‘Your own house or bungalow which you own yourself’ Many Travellers do not even think seriously about this prospect as it did not seem affordable or attainable to most. However, it does sound a very attractive dream particularly if it is a bungalow in a rural area with space to keep a trailer as well. This suggests that the expressed aversion to bricks-and-mortar may be as much social as physical in nature.
### Box 7.1: Case-Histories of Three Housed Travellers

**Case-history A:** An Irish man in his 50s has travelled on and off for most of his life, and has now been living in a council flat for a couple of years. He took this when his health deteriorated to a point where he no longer felt he could travel. He would prefer to go on travelling – he feels ‘in captivity’ in a house. But apart from his health the travelling way of life became less practicable in recent years. He is now resigned to staying in a house, although some of his children say they intend to travel again.

He lives upstairs, which is rather a problem given his state of health, but the council will not move him until arrears of Housing Benefit are cleared off – which he says were due to a failure at the Benefits Agency. The flat was in poor condition when he moved in – ‘you wouldn’t put your dog in it’.

**Case-history B:** An English Gypsy woman moved into a council-owned house next to the site she used to live on over 10 year ago. She needed the house because her asthmatic daughter kept getting problems and chest infections living in a damp trailer. She found the house ‘took a lot of getting used to’. She is more-or-less used to it now, but would still prefer to go back to trailer life, which was ‘a lot freer’, with fewer ‘rules and regulations’. Living in a house she feels ‘stuck’, because she ‘can’t just take off and go’. Trailer life also seemed cheaper and easier.

**Case-history C:** A woman and her daughter (English Gypsies) both live in separate local authority houses in the same area. The daughter has a young child. Both travelled actively for most of their lives before settling down. They settled because they were ‘sick of being moved about’, and wanted the child to have better schooling than they could get while on the road. Over the last 10 years it got harder to find places to stop, until they were being moved on every 24 hours. School attendance became very difficult. The older woman was also feeling the cold more as she got older, and felt she had ‘had enough’ of the ‘Gypsy life’. She predicts the travelling life will come to an end inside 10 years.

They had enjoyed the freedom and open space of the travelling life and being able to ‘please yourself what you do’, and they slightly miss the fact that the people they travelled with would ‘all mix in and help you’. But they are both content now to settle in houses. They live in an area where large numbers of Travellers are in council housing, and there are plenty of family members around the estate where they live. They say they get on well enough with the neighbours – because they describe themselves as ‘sociable’, whereas some Gypsies ‘don’t like Gorgios’.

When they first stopped travelling they went to a local authority site in the same area, but did not like the fact that it was sandwiched between two big roads, with ‘fumes’ and ‘lead’, and a lot of noise. The sheds were also cold and badly built. She then applied for a house – she got it quickly, because she accepted something that no-one else would take, then got an exchange. The daughter had to wait a year for her flat – which was in a ‘disgusting’ condition – so dirty and smelling of urine that they had to ‘bleach’ and ‘fumigate’ it.

The older woman had lived in a house as a child – her parents moved to a house when she was young, although she started travelling again when she got married. Her daughter had never lived in a house before. It was ‘strange’ to her at first and it made her ‘nervous’ that she could not ‘see other people’ – but she preferred it when she got used to it because it was ‘warmer’ and ‘cosier’.

Source: Resident discussions
House of your own

F: “I’d never be in the position, but I would like to buy me own bungalow right in the country. Bungalow, the caravans, all the kids around me, big bit of ground – yeah, I’d love that. He’d never afford that – some people can, but we won’t be able to” (Gypsy housed)

I: “If you could live how you liked, what would be your ideal way to live – in terms of accommodation?”

F: “Our own bit of land with a little shed”

I: “Your own bit of land – with what on it? A trailer and a shed?”

F: “We wouldn’t even care about the trailers if we had a nice little house – but we’re dreaming! I’d like a nice piece of land with a house, and I could see greenery - and that would be me”

F: “And a back yard”

F: “Nice places to walk. Just my family” (Irish LA)

M: “If you come into money and you had your own house, that’s different, ain’t it?”

F: “Well you wouldn’t have anyone around you, would you? Only your own family”

M: “If you had the money to buy, you wouldn’t buy it in a street, you’d buy it on its own. Somewhere out on its own, wouldn’t you? Something you have built” (Gypsy LA)

‘A house or bungalow which you rent from a council or housing association, on an estate of settled people’ This is likely to be the most realistic permanent housing option for most Gypsies and other Travellers. In general it was the least favoured of any of the options discussed among both traditional and New Travellers. Some had tried it and decided it was not for them. Others were reluctant to entertain the idea for reasons described above. Only a small minority seem to find the idea at all appealing. Those who had applied for local authority housing were usually people who wanted to settle, but had bad experiences of residential sites or did not think they would be able to get on to a suitable site. They often had special needs in the family, on account of age or health problems.

Comment
Permanent housing must be seen as a continuing element in the range of accommodation for Gypsies and other Travellers. While some, and perhaps a growing number, may see the comfort of permanent housing and a fully settled lifestyle as best meeting their personal needs, people holding such views will probably continue to be a minority of Gypsies and other Travellers currently living in trailers. This conclusion is supported by research in Wales which showed continuing preferences for site living over houses (Thomas & Campbell 1992). It seems that the number of people seeking social housing in future will be most affected by provision elsewhere in the spectrum of accommodation alternatives – in effect the extent and quality of residential site provision and provision made to accommodate nomadism which might increase or reduce the difficulties of continuing a travelling lifestyle. More and better quality sites may well reduce ‘demand’ for permanent housing among those who effectively see bricks-and-mortar as second best. In the longer term it is possible that houses could become more attractive as a settled lifestyle is established on residential sites.
Group Housing

Group housing was developed in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and has recently been introduced on a pilot basis in Northern Ireland (four schemes, two in Belfast and two in rural areas). In RoI it is seen as a normal element in the range of Traveller accommodation to be provided (alongside permanent housing, permanent halting (residential) sites and transient sites). It is described as residential housing developments with additional facilities and amenities specifically designed to accommodate extended families of the Irish Traveller community on a permanent basis. The pattern established is of small groups of purpose-built bungalows or (less frequently) houses in small enclaves, which may or may not include a community house, play areas, stables and grazing and secure work areas – depending on size of scheme, location and Traveller needs. The bungalows (houses) are built to permanent housing standards and are detached or semi-detached so as to allow in-curtilage space for lorries and other vehicles, perhaps including caravans. Properties are rented. Costs of provision are 100% supported by government. Design guidelines have been issued recently (DELG 2002) which emphasise that provision is to be high quality, sustainable and in accordance with ‘normal’ standards.

Important points about group housing reported (personal communication with officers in RoI and Northern Ireland) as emerging from experience to date include:

- Relatively small schemes seem to work best and are more easily integrated into a locality. Successful sizes may range from about four to sixteen homes.

- Schemes work best when occupied by members of a single extended Traveller family or by families which are known to be compatible.

- Great emphasis is placed on intensive consultation with the Travellers who will live in the scheme in designing layout, facilities and the size and design of individual homes.

- Extensive consultation was also carried out with the neighbouring settled community in the Northern Ireland pilots in order to ensure the group housing scheme is accepted.

- Communal provision in a scheme can prove problematic, for example the provision of stables and grazing in one Northern Ireland pilot scheme has been very difficult. Some Irish local authorities will not include work areas because of problems in the past, although the two Belfast pilot schemes are each designed to include a number of secure work areas.

- Inevitably this is an expensive option, particularly where land costs are high because the accommodation density is much lower than is usual for social rented housing.

Gypsy/Traveller Views

Some participants were at least vaguely aware of group housing developments, and a few participants seemed to have slight experience of them through visits to schemes in Ireland, or knowing people who had lived on them.

In contrast to their general perceptions of living in houses, the concept of group housing for Travellers seemed more widely appealing and some thought it an ideal solution. Many others found it a generally appealing idea in principle although some remained averse to the idea of leaving their trailers.
The appeal of this concept is that it preserves the sense of family, community and interdependence that is an important feature of life for many Gypsy/Travellers. Conversely it avoids the sense of social isolation that is felt to be a key problem when Gypsy/Travellers move onto conventional council estates. It is interesting that for many (although not all) born Gypsy/Traveller participants this concept seems to remove their phobias about living in bricks-and-mortar. Many people who had rejected the idea of moving into a house were fairly enthusiastic about the notion of this kind of development.

Those not convinced argued that living in someone else's house would 'put more pressure on you' than living in your own trailer, and would inevitably offer less freedom – you can 'do what you want' with your own trailer.

Group housing – summed up as 'house or bungalow which you rent from a council or housing association, in a small group where all homes are occupied by Gypsies or other Travellers, with some space for parking lorries, trailers, etc' emerged as a generally popular option although not appealing to everyone.
Views on group housing

F: “I have seen a tape of them. That I would love, because there used to be a young woman come up round here, she’s gone now to be a welfare officer, and she lent me this tape. Now one particular site in Ireland, it was made in a great big ring. They had these bungalows built all the way round with their own front gardens – but they was proper bungalows. I thought that was very, very nice. It was lovely. You could either have a two-bedroom or a three-bedroom – and they had a big ring in the middle so the children was in the middle, you could see the children”
I: “If you could live on something like that here with your family that would be good?”
F: “Oh yeah, lovely!”
I: “Does that sound a nice idea?”
F: “Yeah it does” (Gypsy private)
F: “I’d still feel trapped. You see we all get on with our lives on here – we pass the time of day, what have you, and if someone’s got a fire out and have the pot out like, and the men’ll come and the women’ll come around, you have a chat – like you do, talking and what have you. But we all live our own separate kinds of lives” (Gypsy LA)
F: “I’d say that’d be brilliant – that would be lovely”
F: “Yeah, yeah – you wouldn’t mind that, because you’re still with your own”
F: “Like, you’re still surrounded by your own people. Yeah – because we feel safe in our own community, because everybody knows our own feeling, we don’t feel like the alien amongst our own”
F: “Wouldn’t that be lovely, yeah. I think that would be lovely, to be with your own, and have that comfort”
F: “Like they could put like 16 pre-fabs on here, we’d be happy as anything” (Gypsy LA)
F: “Oh I’d love it, love it”
F: “Oh we’d love that, we’d love that”
F: “I’d love it”
I: “So it’s not that you don’t like living in houses?”
F: “No, it’s living in a community” (Irish LA)
F: “I’ve been there (to group housing site). The little bungalows, the prefab bungalows, yes, beautiful, beautiful”
I: “That would suit you, would it?”
F: “Oh, suit us – I couldn’t believe it, my love, not in my time, I don’t think I’d be so lucky!”
I: “So that would be better than a council house?”
F: “Yes”
F: “If they’d had done it first, when we was all younger, I think it would’ve been nice”
F: “I don’t think it’s gonna be in our time. In Ireland I’ve seen them – and I thought to myself, God, if I only had that over the way we live” (Gypsy LA)
I: “What’s the difference between having that and having a house, ‘cos you were all saying you didn’t want to live in a house”
F: “It’s more of a Travellers’ community”
F: “There’s like 50 bungalows but they’re just all Travellers, where if we was to go into a house it’d be just us”
F: “And it would make you more isolated just being the one there” (Gypsy LA)
Comment
Support for the idea of group housing from Gypsy/Travellers suggests that it is worth developing and perhaps introducing on a pilot basis. It would be important to implement such a scheme in a Gypsy/Traveller-friendly way, and to consult potential residents in detail about how it should be done. On the basis of responses to the idea from Gypsy/Traveller participants, group housing schemes should probably:

- Provide space for trailers. Some would want to use their house as a base for summer travelling and in any case retaining the trailer might help offset the claustrophobia which houses tend to engender. It might assist the transition by helping potential residents feel that they could keep their options open and were not finally and irrevocably locked into living in a house.

- Be based on bungalows or mobile homes rather than two-storey houses.

- Provide most of the other facilities which would normally be expected on a residential trailer site in order to build on the sense of community and mutual support which is so valued.

Private Sites

Chapter 2 gave some indication of the extent of private Gypsy site provision, both commercial and owner-occupied, together with local authority officers’ assessments of its advantages and disadvantages. While replies were mixed, the general feeling was favourable, and private sites stood up well in comparison with local authority sites on various criteria.

For the future, local authority interviewees generally saw a continuing role for all kinds of private site provision:

- Most thought that owner-occupied sites should be encouraged for Gypsy/Travellers able to afford to develop sites for themselves. One respondent commented that such sites are resented by the settled community because they are perceived as granting privileges to Gypsies which are not available to others (presumably in the form of permission to live in rural areas where development is limited). Gypsies themselves have quite different perceptions and can always point to orthodox residential development being allowed where Gypsy sites are refused. Opinion amongst many local authority site personnel seems very supportive of owner-occupied site development. Many stress that this can only be a realistic option for an affluent minority of Gypsies and other Travellers. The planning system is the main key to unlocking supply – an issue which this research has only touched upon.

- There are a few sites which are owned by their occupiers on a collective basis – that is, families own individual pitches within a single ‘site’. Such ‘sites’ can suffer management problems since there is no-one effectively in charge. Individual plots can be traded, so ownership becomes obscure making it difficult for a local authority to enforce site licence conditions. One interviewee felt strongly that this is not a course to pursue in the future. Another raised the possibility of a variant in which a housing association might develop a ‘site’ on a shared ownership basis but retain control for management and enforcement purposes. More generally, there was support among site providers for enabling housing associations to develop Gypsy/Traveller sites with the help of public subsidy as they can
bricks-and-mortar housing. There were mixed views as to the likely interest from housing associations in getting involved in such activities. This was not pursued further.

- Few local authority or other provider interviewees expressed views about private commercial sites. Some pointed to the possible adverse implications of Rent Officer restrictions on licence fees/rents eligible for housing benefit which could either threaten the viability of private commercial site provision or severely restrict those who can be accommodated. One local authority officer more generally expressed the view that Gypsy/Travellers are a deprived population and should not have their needs left to the market. Some Gypsy/Travellers interviewed at the scoping stage of the research commented that they were confident that Gypsy/Traveller entrepreneurs would be willing to develop sites for other Gypsy/Travellers if they could get planning permission. They stressed that this would be at no cost to the public purse.

- One particular area emerging is the likely growth in ‘private’ commercial sites as a consequence of more local authorities selling or leasing their sites to registered social landlords or Gypsy/Traveller organisations or individuals. Private or voluntary bodies taking over local authority sites on a leasehold or freehold basis can face a number of issues which should be examined carefully before decisions are taken, for example:
  - under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 local authority sites do not need a site licence. A non-local authority body taking over a site requires a site licence; local authorities may differ in the conditions they wish to attach to such licences.
  - VAT inconsistencies arise where local authorities can reclaim VAT on non-zero-rated works, but the new owner cannot.
  - there may be issues about separating out service charges (eg water or sewage charges) not previously itemised in an inclusive licence fee under the local authority. Levying an apparently ‘new’ charge can cause resentment among residents.
  - housing benefit regulations change and rent levels previously fully covered by benefit can be subject to caps through lower assessments of reasonable charges.
  - on occasion, hidden costs in service provision may arise, for example private site access roads or long service runs.

Gypsy/Traveller Views
Two of the sites included in the interviews with Gypsy/Travellers were former local authority sites, now owned and managed by an RSL. Residents did not always realise this distinction, or accord much significance to it. No other ‘commercial’ sites were included in the research. Generally, respondents’ reactions to the idea of a site with rented plots differed little according to who owned that site. Reactions to the option ‘a caravan site for Gypsies or Travellers, owned by a Gypsy or Traveller who rents pitches to other Gypsies or Travellers’ were substantially similar to those for local authority sites (see below). Some people preferred council-owned sites, some preferred Traveller-owned sites, but for most people ownership was secondary to quality – if it is a good site, it does not matter much who owns it.
Views on small owner-occupied sites were more developed. One family was interviewed on such a site (see Box 7.2). This illustrates a typical pattern of buying and occupying land, then applying for planning permission retrospectively. This story has a happy ending in that planning permission was granted and the family are now very satisfied on their own site.

The option ‘a small family caravan site, owned and occupied by your family only’ emerged as the most favoured among traditional Gypsy/Travellers. The option retains the trailer-based traditional life, but avoids the conflicts and dependence of a big site. It keeps options open either for settling down completely or using it as a base and travelling for part of the year. It provides a secure base, but also freedom while in charge of one’s own affairs. A few would like to have their own mobile home, bungalow or ‘chalet’ on such a site, but most still seemed to be thinking in terms of trailers. Having fixed housing would not rule out having a trailer as well to keep travelling options open. Some would want single unit occupation, others might prefer sharing with a few related families which could improve economic viability.

However few see having an owner-occupied site as an achievable aim and there currently seems to be limited impetus towards setting up more of these sites. This is obviously partly for financial reasons, but also partly because of the perceived (and actual) difficulties of pursuing this course and getting the necessary permissions. There are many anecdotes about friends or relatives who have bought plots of land and then not been allowed to live on them, sometimes after spending a lot of money on buying and setting up the site. This makes many Travellers pessimistic about the value of trying to follow suit – why should they fare any better? Understanding of the planning process is often very limited. People do not know why permissions are not given and think it unfair that people are not allowed to live on their own land.

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**Box 7.2: Case-History of a Family on an Owner-Occupied Site**

This family is an English Gypsy couple with children, who had previously lived on a range of sites, and latterly spent eight years in council housing. They left their house because of a long-running series of problems with neighbours. One of their children died around this time, and these events left the man depressed and feeling hopeless. He found a piece of land which he bought with financial help from a relative.

They understood little of the necessary permissions, but took the view that the only way they would get approval would be by moving in and then applying retrospectively. They knew a number of earlier cases where families had been told they could not live on their site, and feel the system is loaded against Gypsies.

The family found great difficulty in making the necessary applications, in getting water and electricity laid on to the site (they needed a bore-hole), and in finding the money for all the work needed. There was some initial opposition from the parish council, but they say they now get on well with most of the local village people, and have not had much trouble. They now have permission, and are extremely happy on their site. They would like to get permission to invite a few more members of their family to join them, but realise that this may not be possible.

Source: Resident discussions
A family site of your own

F: “It’s every Travellers’ dream – every Travellers’ dream” (Gypsy owner occ)
F: “If you could buy your own plot I would like my own plot”
F: “Well you would like your own place, because it’s your own”
F: “Yes, anybody would wouldn’t they? Would you not like to own your own home?”
F: “But if you can’t afford it, it’s nice to be on a place with peace and quiet”
I: “But do you ever see that as being a possibility for you to get your own place?”
F: ”Yes, everybody does, surely” (Gypsy LA)

F: “Well a lot of people, if they were given a chance to go in a house, they would rather like own their own piece of ground and put their own trailer on it, and then you can have your family or whoever you want on it with you – rather than sitting in a house where you ain’t going to see nobody. But if it’s your own piece of ground, you can say who goes off, who comes on” (Gypsy LA)

M: “A place to come back to”
M: “Oh, I’d love it, it’d be lovely – lovely, it’d be a base, wouldn’t it? Nice base in the winter” (Irish camped)

M: “If they left Travellers alone, and then they could afford to buy themselves a little bit of place, and they kept it respectable, the council should leave ‘em alone” (Gypsy private)
But real practical problems

F: “We couldn’t do it, because we wouldn’t have the money, love, to buy it, I think you’d need permission from the council and that. I think it would be very difficult. I know a lot of Travellers have bought sites and they wouldn’t let them build on it, closed them down. I think it is wrong, love, I think if they wants to do something, they should let them do it – do something for themselves” (Irish LA)

I: “Some Gypsies I’ve talked to eventually buy their own small piece of land and build something on it”

M: “Obviously, guv, if you’ve got the money, yes”

F: “And then it’s like getting it passed and licensed”

F: “It’s all money. My husband bought six places, each one when my children was younger, we moved in them to have the winter there for my children to have school”

M: “Cos it wasn’t licensed, they would have us off – have us off our own ground”

F: “And every time we bought a place, just – we could not pass it at all, and it cost us every penny we had. We bought several places, but we couldn’t do nothing about it, because they wouldn’t let us stay there”

I: “Did you not know before you bought them that you would have that kind of problems?”

F: “No, we didn’t know – who sold it said that it was all right’

M: “But the thing is, there’s nowhere for us to go – like there was a documentary and if Gypsies bought their own land and put in for a licence to live on it they’d get planning to live on it now, and a lot of us done it and when it come through we couldn’t get planning – so you’d lose a fortune”

I: “Right – but if you could do that, if you could buy a little plot and maybe have two or three caravans with a family on it, have your own land?”

M: “We’d do it”

F: “Yeah, we’d do it”

F: “Yeah”

I: “That would be better than living here?”

M: “Yeah, of course it would”

I: “If you could get the permission, would you be able to afford to do that?”

F: “Well, you’d all pull together”

F: “We’d mix in, like, we’d all go together”

M: “Like three families on it”

F: “You could split it three ways”

M: “Like a piece of agriculture land, like what would be market value, today, say £3000 an acre, green belt land, and if we had to give five for it, like we’d all give like 1200 quid a piece”

(Gypsy LA)

Comments

Private sites, both commercial and owner-occupied, have a continuing role to play. Private provision could probably meet a greater proportion of demand than it does at present if the planning system allowed. Few interviewees aware of the planning context argue with the slant of guidance given in DoE Circular 1/94, but many doubt it is heeded by local planning authorities (see Chapters 2 and 8).
Local Authority Residential Sites

Local authority interviewees generally identified a continuing need for local authority residential sites. As evidence they point to the length of time people are willing to wait for a place on a better site. Natural family growth often cannot be accommodated on site. There will continue to be families who are unable to afford or who do not want private provision or permanent housing.

Given natural increase and growth in the number of households from larger-than-average families, the general tendency in demand for site places seems to be accepted as likely to grow. Yet many respondents saw the most likely trend in provision to be downwards. In the absence of a duty to provide and exchequer subsidy local authorities cannot realistically be expected to invest in new sites given likely hostility from the settled community and competition from more ‘popular’ causes for scarce resources. The land on which some sites are located has become valuable in regeneration schemes. Even if the site is not actually needed for development, it may be perceived as a poor neighbour when seeking to attract investors. Some more cynical observers think that some local authorities do not always strive to keep sites open and might see vandalism as an excuse to close a site – in a way which would simply not be contemplated for a problematic housing estate. If this is true, positive action is needed even to retain the existing site network (analyses of firm plans for sites reported in Chapter 3 actually suggested a modest increase in places rather than a decrease, although it could be that authorities are reluctant to admit to any connivance in site closure in a survey of this kind).

Two further points are relevant:

• It is clear that local authority residential sites are often used either as a ‘settled’ residence or as a base for travelling during a few weeks in a year (some sites are reported to be used mainly for short periods, but these appear to be the minority). Residential sites do not contribute directly to accommodating a nomadic lifestyle to any great extent, and are unlikely to do so in future. Rather they offer Gypsy/Travellers the opportunity to live in trailers rather than houses, and within a small community of fellow Gypsies or Travellers. Some may develop effectively into mobile home parks. Some local authority interviewees note that Gypsies and other Travellers are also moving onto mobile home parks not specifically designed for them. There may be a progressive blurring here, with implications for legal status and security of tenure (when is Mobile Home Act 1983 protection available?). Mobile home parks are, of course, also subject to planning constraints on extension or new development.

• One interviewee argued strongly that the possibility of extending existing local authority sites should be examined before considering the need for new sites. Five additional pitches on half of all existing sites would add some 750 pitches, otherwise requiring about 50 new sites. He argued that there would be less resistance from the settled community to expansion. If the additional pitches catered for family growth among residents the larger sites would be no more difficult to manage because there would be no potentially incompatible newcomers to accommodate (it might be assumed that ‘incompatible’ family members would not seek accommodation on the extended site). Obviously such an approach would need care to ensure that sites do not become too large.
Gypsy/Traveller Views
Most of the Gypsy/Travellers interviewed were living on local authority residential sites. They had mixed views and there are often complaints about standards of building, maintenance and care of sites. Residents could suggest improvements and lessons for site design (see below). However, most seemed likely to stay on the site in the immediate future at least, and seemed to accept that they and others would benefit from such sites in the future.

As noted above, Gypsy/Travellers generally hold few strong views on the relative merits of site ownership by local authorities or Gypsy/Travellers on a commercial basis. On the whole local authorities are sometimes seen as a fairly neutral party because they are independent of Gypsy/Traveller factions and families, and so may be seen to behave even-handedly. In this passive sense a local authority can seem more trustworthy than a private Traveller operator would be. The council is also in a general sense often seen as a solid and responsible body.

Some views on council ownership

M: “I’d rather live on a council site, because if anything happens to my plot the council will come out and fix it for me” (Irish housed)

F: “I’d rather rent something from the council ‘cos they always say, ‘Don’t mix business with pleasure’. It’s family again”

I: “So you wouldn’t want to be renting from another Gypsy, say?”

F: “No” (Gypsy housed)

F: “I’d rather be living on a Traveller-run site because you can go and tell the Traveller your complaint, and they know how you feel, don’t they? They’re used to travelling ways. I think even if the council owned it, and if they got a good sensible travelling person, like to be responsible for it – as a wardener” (Irish LA)

The option ‘a caravan site for Gypsies or Travellers, owned and managed by a local council’ ranked in the middle order of accommodation options discussed – perhaps behind owner-occupied sites (widely seen as desirable but hardly an achievable aim) and group housing (a dream in that it does not currently exist as a realistic option), but ahead of permanent housing not specifically tailored to Gypsy/Traveller needs. A site is seen as more comfortable and hassle-free than active travelling, and a better base for schooling and health.

Some active Travellers have no desire to settle at all (see below), and would not favour living on a large rented site. This was a particularly unpopular idea for most New Travellers who have no interest in sites except, sometimes, for over-wintering. For others the appeal depends on the quality and nature of the site – socially as well as physically. Good sites are widely seen as hard to find and hard to get onto.

I: “Is it easy to get on sites like this?”

F: “No, it’s hard – we was very lucky to get on, to get this plot like – very lucky, honestly. There’s a waiting list for so long down for sites – there isn’t enough sites” (Gypsy LA)

Residential sites have all the advantages of continued ‘trailer’ living lost in permanent housing. Some participants on residential sites would like to stay as they are, preferably with some improvements (see below), but without any substantial change in accommodation type. Some
people would like to buy their own plots on the site they already live on, pointing out that ‘settled people’ can buy their council houses.

### Residential sites – some in favour

**I:** “What did you think about moving to a site like that after you’d been living where you were?”

**F:** “Oh I was pleased really, in some ways, the hot water and that, and the electric, more comfortable for the kids and that. ‘Cause when we was moving along the streets, children used to have a bath and that but you used to have to hot the kettles up and put them in the plastic bath” (Gypsy housed)

**M:** “I’m contented here. I can roam here, it’s like free, mate – there’s no house around me. I don’t like the houses around me, I don’t like being boxed in” (Gypsy private)

**I:** “You’ve got experience of living in a house, living by the roadside, living on a site like this, what’s the best way?”

**F:** “I’d rather be in a site”

**F:** “There’s more company here”

**F:** “You see all your friends and your relations all around you, and you can go up to the next person if you’ve any problems and talk them out, but in a house you can’t do that because there’s a lot of people who can’t communicate with you, they don’t understand your ways, our life – where your neighbours here know all the ways of life, they sort your problems out with you” (Irish LA)

### Residential sites – some against

**I:** “I visited a Gypsy site where I was talking to teenagers who were born on the site and had lived there all their lives”

**F:** “Yeah, but that’s not travelling though, is it? You may as well build yourself a little bungalow there”

**M:** “You might as well be in a Council house” (New transit)

**M:** “Don’t like sites. Well everybody thinks they own the sites when we’re on them – telling you where to put your motor, what to do and what not to do” (Gypsy camped)

**F:** “Too much trouble on them. Yeah – children drive you wild for a start, there’s always fights and all sorts on there. And men when they’re drunk and fighting and all that” (Gypsy camped)

### Comment

There is a widespread assumption among all those involved in the research that local authority residential sites will remain important in the provision of accommodation for traditional Gypsies and other Travellers, catering especially for those who want a fairly settled lifestyle without entirely abandoning the culture of living in a trailer and keeping open the option of travelling for short periods at least but who do not have the financial and other resources needed to buy land for themselves.
Accommodation for New Travellers

The discussion above mainly relates to traditional Gypsies and Travellers. The needs of New Travellers are much less well understood. Some relevant points emerged from the research, although far from comprehensive:

- New Travellers are so varied in their background, personal characteristics and reasons for travelling that generalisations are impossible. Certainly no one form of accommodation would meet the wide variety of needs and aspirations involved.

- Most New Travellers appear to be active travellers – indeed if they were not they would scarcely be ‘Travellers’ at all. The lack of authorised stopping places open to them may, however, reduce their ideal length of stay in any location. Thus New Traveller accommodation needs to cater for nomadism. Some want short-stay (possibly over-wintering) places where they can fix their vehicles and access health and education services for a time.

- Many New Travellers have lived in houses and have ‘dropped out’ of a settled lifestyle. Some may ‘drop in’ again at some date in the future, and go back to housing perhaps with support for the more vulnerable. This may be the most likely form of ‘settlement’ for New Travellers who ‘settle’ – there is no indication at all that they will ‘settle’ on residential caravan sites like some born Gypsy/Travellers.

- Most New Travellers are not attracted to Gypsy/Traveller sites, even if they were to be made available to them. Their formality and ‘hardness’ (tarmac and concrete surfaces) are the negation of the chosen lifestyle. The case study transit site, designed in consultation with New Travellers, has an informal layout of parking bays, soft surfaced roadways, standpipe water supply and no electricity. These elements were not criticised by residents interviewed, although they did complain about the recently completed shower/toilet block which is seen as poorly designed and built, and expensive. This example has shown that some New Travellers will move to a local authority site, albeit a very unusual one. However, for most New Travellers the ideal is much less formalised.

- Some New Travellers seek to live in an environmentally-friendly manner, informally and in isolated locations. For them, the very idea of ‘accommodation provision’ is alien. They would prefer improved access to traditional stopping places near farm or woodland. The research did not specifically identify how such needs and aspirations could be met.

Accommodation for Nomadism

As noted in Chapter 1, an unknown proportion of Gypsies and other Travellers still actively travel whether throughout the year, seasonally or on special or family occasions. Those who travel throughout the year may have no fixed base at all. Seasonal and special occasion Travellers may have a base in a house or site, and some members of the household may remain at that base throughout the year. There is little formal provision to accommodate Travellers and their trailers while on the road. There are just over 300 transit pitches provided on local authority sites (see Chapter 3), although not all may actually be used in this way. Recent Gypsy
counts have shown roughly ten times as many caravans on unauthorised encampments. Even taking into account the unknown number of private transit pitches, it is clear that ‘nomadism’ is currently mostly accommodated informally and often – from the viewpoint of both settled community and Travellers – unsatisfactorily.

The need for a range of transit accommodation has been recognised for at least forty years, yet supply is still small and, as this research has shown, actually shrinking. This section looks at some of the issues around providing for travelling needs.

A Range of Provision

Participants at the workshop held as part of this research agreed that provision to accommodate mobility must be flexible and encompass a wide variety, for example in terms of:

**Length of stay:** there is a need to cater for differing lengths of stay – perhaps intermediate accommodation for 3 to 6 months (especially likely to meet over-wintering needs); short stays of 6 to 8 weeks; and shorter stays perhaps up to 28 days.

**Formality and provision of amenities:** the degree of formality and the standard of amenity provision should reflect the planned maximum length of stay. Thus ‘sites’ might range from areas with some hardstanding, a water supply and arrangements for waste disposal, to sites with individual plots and amenity provision perhaps on a temporary basis. Broadly a distinction might be made between transit sites (serviced) and stopping places (very basic services). A further distinction is possible between stopping places consciously identified and prepared by the local authority to which Travellers might be directed, and camp sites chosen by Gypsy/Travellers which conform to a local code and will be ‘tolerated’ for a short period.

**Size of site:** Ideally accommodation should be available for groups of varying size, from a single family to groups with 20+ trailers and other vehicles. While more challenging to accommodate, it is the larger groups which currently cause the greatest problems in unauthorised encampments. There should be clear physical constraints to sites in order to prevent numbers growing beyond the planned maximum. Workshop participants did not believe that formal provision for big groups/gatherings of 50+ trailers could/should be made on other than an emergency planning basis.

**Type of Traveller:** Workshop participants recognised that different Traveller groupings (English, Irish, New Traveller) rarely mix on the roadside and are unlikely to co-exist compatibly on more formal transit sites or stopping places. There are arguments that sites would be more likely to be used and not abused if tailored to the cultural needs of the group being catered for, especially around toilet provision. This implies, to an extent, parallel provision for groups with identifiable cultural differences. Different groups favour different locations too; it is widely agreed that formal transit provision has to be in the ‘right’ location to meet Gypsy/Traveller needs if it is to be used.

A Regional/National Network

The clearest message from the workshop was the need for a national, or at least regional, network of transit sites and/or stopping places. A single local authority is unlikely to make unilateral provision because of the expected ‘honeypot’ effect of attracting Gypsies and other
Travellers to their areas (although a few local authorities have provided transit sites in isolation and have not been swamped as a consequence – indeed they normally report savings on dealing with unauthorised camping rather than the increase which the honeypot effect would suggest). Equally a single transit site is something of a logical contradiction since the concept of being in ‘transit’ implies moving from one place to another after a period to other similar accommodation. One extension of this argument is that we cannot know whether transit sites/stopping places will ‘work’ until they are provided in sufficient numbers to allow the system to function.

A further implication of the need for a network of transit sites etc is the need for central, or at least regional, planning and a mechanism for ensuring that all local authorities play their part both to ensure equity and a sufficient density of provision. The French system is interesting in this context. Each département must produce a plan for Traveller (gens de voyage) accommodation, and within this, all communes of 5,000 population and larger must provide aires de passage which are permanent sites for accommodating gens de voyage for very short stays (between 48 hours and a fortnight). In addition, aires de séjour are envisaged for rather longer stays. They are normally for between 20 and 50 caravans and located on the edges of larger settlements which attract travellers (Merchat 2000).

Another implication of having a network is that Gypsies and other Travellers will move between sites within the network and expect similar standards and charges.

Workshop participants recognised that not all Gypsy/Travellers would use formal provision if a network of sites/emergency stopping places were to be built up in England. Estimates of possible usage ranged between 60% and 80% of those currently on the road. Much would obviously depend on the attractiveness of provision and the approach taken to continued unauthorised camping. A strong enforcement approach would ‘encourage’ more people to use authorised provision, but not everyone.

**Transit Sites**

Transit sites, as defined here, are formal sites provided on a permanent basis, with basic amenities and services including boundary fencing, hardstandings, water supply, toilet and washing facilities, waste disposal and (probably) electricity supply. Some argue that pitch boundaries and individual rather than shared toilet facilities will encourage a greater sense of ownership from residents and reduce damage.

Transit site management is identified as key to their success. The potential problems are obvious, for example:

- Controlling access. As noted in Chapter 5, ensuring that site residents are compatible is seen as important for residential site allocation policies. The same is equally true for transit sites, but could be more problematic to enforce. Some private transit sites are thought to be highly selective in who they take, which might be seen to reduce their general usefulness. It is not clear how far local authorities could relax access without leading to problems between residents. Unauthorised entry and squatting must also be guarded against. Just

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2 France has a varied population of Gypsies and other Travellers estimated at between 280,000 and 340,000 people. Some 70,000 adults are nomadic in lifestyle and 70,000 semi-nomadic. Unauthorised camping is a significant issue with, every day, more than 27,500 caravans on some form of unauthorised site. This is almost ten times the English level – around 3,000 Gypsy caravans on unauthorised sites at any time.
dovetailing stays by different groups is seen as a problem where there is no tradition of forward planning or 'booking' places in advance.

- Controlling behaviour. Some local authority officers consider it difficult or impossible to control on-site behaviour of transit site residents who have no stake in the site and will move on soon anyway. Problematic behaviour foreseen includes fly-tipping and dumping, refusal to pay charges and, at the extreme, serious damage to site amenities. Some doubt that a ban on future stays would be an adequate deterrent to some (probably a minority) known very troublesome families.

- Controlling length of stay. One of the acknowledged problems with transit sites at present is 'silting up' – that is, residents who stay too long and effectively turn the site into a sub-standard residential site. This can be blamed in part on the shortage of alternative transit provision, and it is not clear whether this would remain a problem were a network to be developed. It may also be due in part to shortage of good residential sites.

In response to these issues, transit site management must be firm and intensive (which might in itself deter usage by some families). There must be regular and frequent management presence on site. Workshop participants were divided on whether a residential warden/caretaker was desirable, but all acknowledged the vital importance of this role. One local authority has, for several years, run a successful transit site thanks in no small part to an excellent warden.

It follows that transit site management is likely to be expensive. Expenditure on staffing and management may be offset against the need to repair damage and clean up after unauthorised encampments. Until there is an adequate network across the country, it is unlikely that the provision of transit sites will completely eradicate unauthorised camping and therefore a local authority may find itself spending on both transit sites and unauthorised encampments.

Income from charges may not cover the costs of providing transit sites, and charges that are set too high may be difficult to collect and/or deter usage. It may be difficult to claim housing benefit to cover short stays.

Stopping Places

Stopping places are, as defined here, less formal and less well-serviced than transit sites and generally intended for shorter stays. They might, for example, be loops of by-passed roadway, old chipping depots, poor agricultural land or small urban sites where development is planned but not immediate. Water supply, toilets and rubbish disposal might be the only services provided. The argument goes that lack of amenities means that there is nothing much to suffer damage and therefore management can be less intensive. It might be hard to levy a charge for minimal accommodation.

Some authorities have sought to identify suitable sites for stopping places to which officers dealing with unauthorised encampments might direct Travellers. Some have considered doing this on an informal basis, without going through the planning system. The consensus at the research workshop was that this approach is not tenable, and that stopping places should be formally approved. Elected members are reported to be unwilling to run the risk of being challenged about informal use of land in this way. However, some feared that the need for formality actually makes the concept of stopping places with minimal provision infeasible. One participant quoted his own experience of trying to identify ten stopping places across the
counties. Local politicians insisted on planning permissions. One site only went forward and the planning conditions applied were so stringent that it would have cost £150,000 to develop, and therefore became infeasible.

One interviewee at the scoping stage argued that planning permission might be easier if stopping places were identified on a rolling programme basis, and thus time-limited for any particular location. This might make such a site more acceptable to local residents who would know that the site would cease at some defined time in the future (if indeed they could be persuaded to believe this). An alternative view would be that such an approach merely adds complexity and means the process has to be gone through many times.

The idea of stopping places merges into more formal policies to ‘tolerate’ unauthorised encampments so long as they meet criteria for location, size and behaviour and do not cause serious, justified complaints from settled neighbours. Where land protection is part of the general approach to unauthorised camping, leaving some areas open, or even re-opening some traditional stopping places, might be seen as akin to identifying stopping places on an informal and implicit basis.

**A Cautionary Note**

Transit sites and stopping places are ideas which appeal to logic. Providing authorised accommodation for Gypsies and other Travellers while they are travelling appears sensible, and indeed a vital element in any approach to reducing the level of unauthorised camping.

It is fair to note that the policy of providing transit sites does not meet with universal support. Some officers have suggested that transit sites would always be too expensive to run and be prone to damage.

It is also fair to note that some authorities which have developed transit sites are enthusiastic and see great advantages accruing in saving money on managing unauthorised camping. Other authorities which operate transit sites admit that the sites are not being used as originally planned.

Essentially the jury is out on this issue. A chicken and egg situation can be identified. Transit sites can only work as planned when there is significant investment in a network of provision and sound, intensive management.

**Other Approaches**

The guidelines produced by the Department of Environment and Local Government (RoI) for transient site provision also includes other suggestions for catering for mobility. These ideas were tested with workshop participants:

- **Providing space on permanent sites or in group housing schemes to accommodate visitors to residents for periods of up to a month.** Such space should contain a hardstanding, and access to water, electricity and waste disposal. Workshop participants did not favour providing separate visitor pitches on residential sites, and felt that such pitches would be hard to justify where there is pressure on pitches anyway. It would also be hard to prevent squatting and unauthorised use. Generally, the clear consensus (also shared by many site residents)
was that mixing residential and transit use does not work. However, wherever pitches are large enough to accommodate visiting trailers without breaching health and safety rules, participants were in favour of allowing individual visitors on a controlled basis (see Chapter 5).

- **Arrangements between families for transfers of short duration should be facilitated — subject to agreement by the local authority and other site residents.** Some participants said that they already facilitate some transfers on an informal personal basis with other known site managers. There was some discussion about the possibility of a HOMES-type scheme (a computerised system for facilitating long distance exchanges in social housing) for pitches. Presumably site managers would want to be sure that exchanges did not bring incompatible families onto the site.

- **Local authorities familiar with local circumstances may be in a position to liaise with Traveller families who are in a position to make space available for stays of short duration.** The authority, when required, should consider providing a level of basic services and facilities. Some participants again claimed to do this occasionally and informally, but saw its contribution as 'a drop in the ocean'. (See below, however, where it appears that private sites are already used in this way without any local authority involvement.)

- **Traveller families should be able to access private caravan sites and camping and caravan sites provided on a commercial basis.** Workshop participants thought this idea not practical because Gypsies and other Travellers are not normally allowed on commercial caravan sites, and certainly not in large groups. Save the Children (1998) found that over 60% of requests by Travellers for accommodation on caravan parks in Scotland were refused.

The consensus among workshop participants appeared to be that these ideas might make a contribution to mobility, but only on a very small scale.

### Gypsy/Traveller Views

The discussions with Gypsies and other Travellers explored two very relevant issues: travelling aspirations and intentions, and views on transit sites and other options for mobility.

### Travelling Aspirations and Intentions

On a general level, participants expressed views about the future of travelling as a way of life. Many traditional Gypsy/Travellers have concluded, in the light of all the difficulties involved, that the travelling way is becoming less viable. Some think it is more-or-less finished already; others think it is still alive, but only accessible to a dwindling and determined minority and probably on its way out. Others believe that Travellers will always go on travelling whatever the difficulties.
Views on the future of travelling

F: “I think it’s coming to an end, meself”
F: “It’s not as easy to do, ‘cos you can stay in a place for a night and then they move you next morning”
F: “You just can’t do it. Traditions goes on, but the travelling life has come to an end, in’t it?”
I: “What do you feel about that? Are you sad about that or not?”
F: “We are, very sad about that. We’re not happy about it, we’re Travellers and should be allowed to travel if we want – as long as we obey like laws about behaving ourselves” (Irish LA)
F: “Eventually travelling life will just go”
I: “And again, are you sad about that?”
F: “Very. Eventually it will go, because as the years go past anyway, it’s getting harder and harder and harder – so eventually it will go, because you won’t be able to pull in anywhere” (Gypsy housed)
I: “Do you regret that?”
F: “Not for the young people, I don’t, but for people that knew what it was, like meself – they never knewed the feel of making fire outside, and the smell of the wood and the pan frying, or before you get up in the morning, the bacon frying outside on the fire. But it’ll never be again – there’s no more of that life, it’s finished. Book is closed” (Gypsy LA)
F: “They’ll never get rid of the travelling people, they’ll never stop that”
F: “There’s always be people out there travelling”
M: “While there’s wheels there’ll be caravans on them” (Irish LA)

On a personal level, some of the Gypsies and other Travellers interviewed on unauthorised sites seem determined to continue travelling whatever the difficulty. They would not want settled accommodation either on a permanent site or in bricks-and-mortar housing, although some of them would not mind a settled base to travel from. Other active travellers would like to be more settled if they could find a suitable site (or in some cases a house), but they often saw this as difficult.

Conversely some of those currently settled on sites or in houses would like to travel a bit more if life on the road became less difficult and less hassled, and more like it used to be. However there is little sign of belief that travelling conditions are likely to improve so these remain latent possibilities.
The urge to travel

F: “I still get the urge when the summer comes for travelling – it never goes out of yer. But the older you get, you do want to settle down a bit cos you get fed up of travelling all round – but I think they’ll never stop travelling”
F: “I wouldn’t like it to be stopped, to be quite honest” (Gypsy LA)
I: “Do you think you’ll want to travel all your lives?”
M: “To the day they put me all down a six-foot grave” (Irish camped)
M: “The younger ones like us, we still want to travel – it’s born and bred in us, it’s our life” (Gypsy LA)
I: “So you’d rather have gone on travelling if it hadn’t been made so difficult?”
M: “Yes definitely, yeah, yeah. Course we would, because we could keep ourself, we could live our own way. They’ve took that right away from us, they’ve ruined our life” (Gypsy LA)

New Travellers generally do not want to settle at all. They mostly seem very committed to travelling even though (or perhaps because) they have chosen it as a way of life rather than being born to it. It is said that some New Travellers do drop out of active travelling, but they probably tend to go into conventional housing. There is no evidence in our research of New Travellers seeking permanent site accommodation.

It is hard to predict what the effects would be of extending the transit site network. The probability is that it would unlock some suppressed demand for travelling particularly in the warmer months, but perhaps in some cases through the year. This seems likely to happen to some extent because there is still evidence of a deeply-felt impulse to travel and because lack of stopping places is one of the current disincentives. Any such increase could be significant, but might in practice prove more marginal because there is also some evidence of a drift towards settlement which only partly arises from a dearth of stopping places. There is a lot of scepticism about the chance of getting a satisfactory transit network without which it would probably have limited impact.

I: “If there were more places like that, if you were allowed to stay more, if you had more transit sites, again do you think that would attract you to want to travel, or not?”
F: “Yeah, it would attract a lot of people like to travel around. There’s more places to pull in and pull out permanently you wouldn’t be getting hassle from the police and that” (Irish LA)

Views on Transit Provision

There are said to be few transit sites at present, and certainly not enough to facilitate active travelling. Active Travellers cannot rely on transit sites and mainly have to depend on roadside stops. Participants did not generally see transit sites as forming a viable national network and often had to ponder before they could remember where any transit sites are located. Transit sites do not appear to be salient in people’s minds as a national resource.

Known transit sites often have a bad reputation. People say they are often not actually used as transit sites since occupants remain in them rather than moving on so that they get clogged up with long-stay or semi-permanent residents and effectively become low-grade residential sites. Hence active Travellers cannot get on them. They are also often seen to be poor quality,
perhaps not very actively managed and often said to get very dirty and run-down. They are also sometimes seen as socially problematic and as a refuge for rough or anti-social types. People would not feel safe there because they never know who will pull on beside them.

Some said they would not use the transit sites they know about for reasons like the above. The upshot is that transit sites were rarely mentioned as a resource by active travellers.

Some comments about existing transit sites

M: “That’s a transit site, now people have pulled on there for the six weeks, and they’ve probably been on there two or three years – they’ve got no choice, cos they’ve got nowhere else to go once they get on there. But the other people what’s waiting to get on there for the six weeks can’t get on there, because that person won’t go – because she’s got nowhere to go” (Gypsy LA)

F: “There’s one (transit site) at ———— but I’ll be honest with you, it’s not fit for dogs to run”

M: “I wouldn’t live on it”

F: “That’s there for anybody to see. There’s no amenities – all there is there is a tap”

M: “It was the old bit of the road, they made like a big lay-by of it, and that’s what they call a transit site” (Gypsy camped)

F: “There was a site they put there, a transit site for all of us to go, when we go down there for about three weeks, six weeks, probably (to) give the children a bit of different country, we’d pull on there. Then it was smashed up then, the next time we went to go on it – there’d been some pulled on there and it’d been smashed to bits, we couldn’t pull on it at all – we had to go and pull off the side of the road” (Gypsy LA)

There was some interest in transit sites, but this was usually limited by lack of credibility that enough sites would ever be provided to make travelling easier or that they would be good usable sites, and not like the poor quality, run-down sites that tend to dominate the current image. Interest in transit site provision is also limited by diminishing interest in active travelling in many quarters. This is in part a chicken-and-egg problem; insofar as lack of stopping places inhibits travelling, a good transit site network might be an answer. However, participants were not often sufficiently inclined to believe in such a network to revise their views about the difficulties of travelling. And there are other factors which would discourage some people from travelling even if site provision was much better such as schooling and comfort. For these reasons there was not much spontaneous demand for more transit sites nor was there usually a great deal of enthusiasm when the idea was suggested. Some Travellers agree that a major network of good quality sites could be useful but that prospect requires a bigger leap of faith and imagination than most people are prepared to make.
In favour of more transit sites

I: “Do you think they need more of what they call transit sites, sites where you can pull on for three or four weeks?”
F: “They could do with some more of them”
M: “All over the country”
F: “All over – not just here” (Irish LA)
F: “There should be more transit sites”
M: “‘Cos people could come and they could live all over the country, we could have the family and that”
F: “And that’d save like having all on the side of the road” (Gypsy owner occ)

But, some fears

F: “Whoever would come on them (transit sites)? People hiding from the police could just use them as a stopover. I wouldn’t feel safe on them anyway, because you don’t know who’s gonna move in on the transit sites beside you really, or who’s there before you get there”
F: “‘Cos anyone could be on it, like perverts or –”
F: “Murderers or anything - like we don’t know all the Travellers, we can’t say they’re all OK” (Irish LA)
F: “I think them transit sites for comers and goers is all nonsense – because I’ll tell you for why, there’s good and bad in everybody, there’s all kinds of people come on there. It’s made for Travellers, but there’s some Travellers that don’t agree – so at the end of the day, it’s no good for ‘em” (Gypsy LA)
I: “If you could ask them either to make more transit sites, or to make more residential sites, what would you do?”
M: “Well I reckon a residential site would be better, it would be better ‘cos you’d appreciate it better”
M: “You’d look after things”
M: “If you’ve a transit site and you’re only allowed to stay six weeks, then you’re not gonna show a lot of respect to it” (Irish camped)

Better access to traditional roadside sites is what most people would prefer. Shared official transit sites involve conflicts and management issues that do not generally arise with unofficial encampments.

I: “When you were travelling did you prefer living by the side of the road or did you prefer living on an organised site?”
M: “I preferred living on the side of the road, because I was free”
F: “Yeah because an organised site, down come Hitler, telling you how to live your life” (Irish housed)

Several other kinds of site are sometimes used temporarily while travelling, apart from roadside encampments and formal transit sites:
Private family sites are sometimes used for transit purposes, usually within the kinship or friendship patterns of traditional Gypsy/Travellers. This is often a favoured option but limited to those who have friends or relatives with a private site. There are not many private sites, and some not have space or permission for visitors.

There were occasional mentions of using tourist sites particularly for holiday travel. Some of these are said to exclude Travellers and charges have to be paid.

Use of tourist sites

F: “We went to Devon and one caravan park rung up to another farm, ‘They’re on their way, they’re looking for somewhere to pull in’. Before we could ever get through the gate, ‘Sorry we’re full up’ – but they wasn’t” (Gypsy LA)

F: “If we wanna go on holiday it don’t matter how small a tourer we’ve got, even if we go in a tent, we’re not allowed on campsites. Anybody up this road can go on any campsite in the country, we’re not allowed to because they won’t have Gypsies on the campsites. They know us straightaway – don’t ask me how they know, ‘cos they do. We can’t hide what we are – we don’t wanna hide what we are”

M: “It’s like black men, it’s like a coloured person”

F: “That’s right, how can a black man wash his face and bring it white”

M: “That’s how we are, basically that’s how we are – Gypsies and coloured people is exactly the same” (Gypsy camped)

Some residential sites are supposed to have a few temporary plots which could be used in transit. However there do not seem to many of these transit plots and those that exist may not be functional. Some residents are wary about having ‘comers and goers’ on their site because of the risk that short-term occupants will cause trouble or short visits will turn into illicit but semi-permanent occupation.

Comment

The lack of evidence about the idea of developing a useful network of transit sites and stopping places is apparent from both potential providers and users. For both a considerable leap of imagination and practice is required, and in these circumstances neither can say categorically whether it might ‘work’ or not – in the sense of attracting usage. This lack of conviction appears to be a fact of life, itself a barrier to provision.

Measuring Requirements for Sites

There has not been an official assessment of need for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation since the mid 1960s when the first census was seen in this light (Adams 1967). Our postal survey showed that only about one in ten responding authorities had carried out an assessment of needs for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation in their area over the past five years. Needs assessments are,
therefore rare. This section looks at possible approaches to assessing needs before applying a particular method.

**Methods and Approaches**

Not surprisingly given the rarity of need assessment exercises, there is no accepted approach to assessing Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs. There is some agreement that any assessment should take account of:

- current shortfall of authorised sites and other accommodation.
- population growth and new household formation.
- Gypsy/Traveller preferences.

It is obviously possible to assess needs from the bottom up (at local level first) or the top down (looking at national needs first). All known English examples (since the census) adopt the former approach. The main sources of information used by the 20 local authorities who said in the postal survey that they had made an assessment are: Gypsy counts (76%); consultation with Gypsy/Travellers (57%); consultation with other bodies (33%); analysis of waiting lists/housing waiting lists (19%); analysis of planning applications (10%); and demographic analysis (3%).

Quite sophisticated assessments have been made in contrasting areas of the country, for example Wychavon in Worcestershire (Hopkinson et al undated), Derbyshire (DGLG undated) and London Borough of Southwark (Southwark Housing 2000). These use a mixture of Gypsy count information; local knowledge held by local authority personnel, others who work with Gypsy/Travellers and Gypsy/Travellers themselves; interview surveys with Gypsy/Travellers and professionals both for demographic information and to identify accommodation desires/aspirations; figures for current site over-crowding; and estimates of family formation. The importance of tapping local knowledge (which can be extensive though dispersed between services and individuals) and consulting local Gypsy/Travellers is clear, and similar methods seem to have been used in RoI by local authorities in producing the five-year Traveller Accommodation Programmes required there by law (see for example Fahy 2001). These sources of information are much less easy to tap for a top-down national assessment.

Locally-based approaches have considerable strengths and are invaluable particularly where there is a clear local target population whose needs and aspirations can be identified. There are difficulties in using such approaches to build up a national picture:

- Most obviously, there are at present too few studies to give any sort of comprehensive picture.
- Unless similar methods are used, local needs studies can be inconsistent and may give a misleading picture.
- It is probably easier in a local study to examine needs of those ‘residing in’ rather than ‘resorting to’ the area (to return to the wording of the Caravan Sites Act). Fahy’s evaluation of Irish local authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes (2001) shows little planned provision for the needs of transient Travellers. This might be because, as in England, making provision for transit sites is less popular with providers, but it may also say...
something about the difficulties of capturing these needs in local studies. It is notable that some English local authorities have developed their information systems on unauthorised camping flows and are undertaking research on transient Travellers as a starting point for assessing needs.

- A local study may uncover significant demand to be in the area, for example shown in unauthorised camping figures, but there may be questions as to need to be in that area rather than a neighbouring area. This is even more of an issue than in assessing need for housing generally because demand is essentially more fluid with a population which is by definition mobile. There must be some higher level control figure to inform more local allocations.

In order to fill the gap of an assessment at national level, we somewhat tentatively make an estimate of need for site accommodation over the next five years. Before doing so, it is worth spelling out further some of the special factors which make needs assessment so difficult in this area.

### Some Difficulties

Difficulties can be classed under three broad headings: those to do with the characteristics of the target population, those connected with the accommodation options, and those to do with information sources.

#### Target Population Characteristics

Perhaps the most fundamental issue to determine is just what the ‘target population’ is and particularly whether New Travellers who have chosen a travelling lifestyle should be considered along with Gypsies and Travellers with an ethnic identity and nomadic culture. As noted in Chapter 1, for the purposes of this research we have adopted a definition which includes New Travellers on the basis that their nomadic lifestyle is a reality which must be catered for.

The issue of different ethnic and other groupings within the Gypsy/Traveller population is relevant in other ways. To the extent – which is not entirely clear – that different groups (English Gypsy, Irish Traveller, New Traveller) do not readily mix on sites, there is an implication that needs assessments may need to be separate and parallel, since vacancies within ‘English’ provision may not be available to ‘Irish’ or ‘New’ Travellers. Such a position would be problematic on many grounds, raising inferences of racism and discrimination. It might best be tackled locally at the provision stage by ensuring that it is small-scale and flexible enough to cope with varied demands rather than at the national needs assessment scale. There is a suggestion (see Chapter 5) that current site provision favours English Gypsies rather than Irish or New Travellers.

The main characteristics of the target population which make their accommodation needs special are:

- A continuing desire by many traditional Gypsy/Travellers to live in trailers on sites rather than in permanent houses as part of mainstream bricks-and-mortar provision.

- A continuing desire on the part of many Gypsies and other Travellers to travel with trailers
and other vehicles for some period of the year, either with or without ‘base’ accommodation on a site, in housing or outside England.

Some might see the continuing desire for mobility as an indication of ‘demand’ rather than ‘need’. The issue raises questions about basic human rights and respect for culturally different lifestyles, and to what extent these must always be catered for. Here we take the view that needs assessments must take account of both features and consider both need for base accommodation and for mobility. Many families will require both at some times of the year. Thus the sum total of ‘need’ may exceed the total number of families.

**Accommodation Option Issues**

The first section of this chapter rehearsed the main accommodation options open to Gypsies and other Travellers. It is very difficult to make any realistic assessments of need or demand for the different forms of accommodation for two reasons:

- It is recognised (see above) that some Gypsy/Travellers are in housing because of a shortage of good sites, and that some would travel more actively if there were safe, good quality sites to make it easier. In this way, and possibly to a marked extent, supply can be expected to generate demand (if not need) for some forms of accommodation.

- Because the most basic accommodation ‘option’ is for trailer-dwelling Gypsy/Travellers to move onto the roadside, there is a great deal of fluidity in the situation and there can be rapid responses to events or to policies. For example, if a very violent or disruptive incompatible family moves onto a site, other residents may leave much more quickly than would be possible in housing. Again, if unauthorised camping numbers are taken as an indication of need for site provision at local level at least, the enforcement policy adopted can apparently affect ‘need’ as Travellers camp somewhere else. It is not clear what implications consistently firmer enforcement actions would have at national level.

**Information Sources**

The bi-annual Gypsy count is likely to remain a central source of information. Yet counts have been widely criticised as inconsistent and possibly dependent on the officer making the return, or even political expediency. Stronger, clearer guidance might improve the quality and consistency of the returns, but ideally more information – for example on how many people counted on unauthorised encampments have a permanent base elsewhere – is needed for planning purposes. Other problems include the failure to distinguish between Gypsy/Travellers living on their own land without planning permission from others on the roadside.

Participants at the research workshop and in case studies commented that some local authorities keep many fewer records and carry out fewer analyses of information now that there is no longer a site provision duty. As one education officer said ‘we have all this information, but no-one is interested any longer’.

Basic information must be improved before accurate assessments can be made.
An Estimate of Need for Site Provision

In this section we attempt to make a national estimate of need for Gypsy/Traveller site provision over the next five years. This is a best estimate given information available, but is obviously open to challenge. For this reason we set out clearly the methods used and the assumptions made, and provide a cross-check with estimated needs from the postal survey. At best, this should be seen as an estimate of orders of magnitude rather than an accurate assessment.

Methodology Used and Assumptions Made

Gypsy counts form the basis for the estimate. Realistically, whatever their inadequacy, there is no other source which can be used. Any estimate on this base is likely to under-state rather than to exaggerate need.

Because we are aiming at a number of pitches, we use the counts of Gypsy families rather than caravans for January 2002 as the base (8,455 in total: 4,041 on local authority sites; 2,671 on authorised private sites; and 1,743 on unauthorised sites). We make the implicit assumption that each family requires one pitch.

Table 7.1: An Estimate of Need for Residential Site Pitches: 2002-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element in estimate</th>
<th>Estimated number of pitches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current residential supply (1)</td>
<td>6,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current shortfall: over-crowding (2)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current shortfall: suppressed movement from housing (3)</td>
<td>130-640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current shortfall: unauthorised camping (4)</td>
<td>520-870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current shortfall: total</td>
<td>715-1,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family formation 2002-2007 (5)</td>
<td>600-900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total requirement to 2007</td>
<td>1,315-2,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution from current unused sites/pitches (6)</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements for additional pitches</td>
<td>895-2,055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
(1) Current residential supply is estimated at 94% of families on local authority sites to reflect the division between residential and transit pitches + an arbitrarily assumed 90% of families on private sites.
(2) On the basis of the management survey, we assume that 10% of local authority sites have an average pitch occupancy of more than 4.5 persons, and each of these require 2 additional pitches.
(3) Interviews have suggested that many Gypsy/Travellers in housing would prefer to live on a residential site. Families in housing are calculated by applying average household size from the management survey of 3.2 persons to the assumed population in houses of 41,000 people (see Chapter 1). The range represents 1% and 5% of these households assumed to want a residential pitch.
(4) The range assumes that 30% or 50% of families on unauthorised sites in January 2002 need a residential pitch.
(5) The range is the result of rounding an assumed 2% or 3% per annum increase in the number of Gypsy families from the counts, and assuming that 70% will be housed on residential sites.
(6) Very crudely this assumes that the 7 sites closed in the January counts are brought back into use at 10 pitches each plus the 7% of pitches on open sites currently unused at the time of our survey.
We have made separate calculations for residential site requirements and for provision for mobility, which might take the form of transit sites, stopping places or the roadside. We have not split provision required between public and private sectors.

The more detailed assumptions made are shown as footnotes to the tables which show the various elements in our estimates.

Depending on the assumptions – all of which can be challenged – the estimates range between around 1,000 and 2,000 additional pitches required on residential sites by 2005.

- In comparison with needs assessed for housing these are modest in absolute terms, yet very significant in terms of existing provision. The upper estimate assumes the need for additional pitches equal to around a third of existing provision.

- The table also illustrates the importance of bringing back into use sites and pitches which are currently unused.

There is no presumption in these estimates as to how these pitches are to be developed, for example as extensions to existing sites or as new sites, or which sector will/should provide. If all existing sites were expanded by two or three pitches the lower estimate might be met without new sites. At the other extreme, the upper estimate would require over 130 new sites at an average of 15 pitches each with no expansion of existing sites.

The estimates for transit or other mobility provision requirements are broadly similar to or higher than those for residential pitches, but represent a vastly different proportionate increase on current provision. These calculations make no allowance for any increase in seasonal or occasional travelling by reluctantly ‘settled’ Gypsy/Travellers who might be encouraged to travel if site provision were to make it easier. It is also fair to say that the counts figures for unauthorised camping on which these so heavily depend are probably the least accurate and may undercount New Travellers in some areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.2: An Estimate of Need for Transit/Mobility Pitches: 2002-2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Element in estimate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current authorised transit supply (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current shortfall: unauthorised camping (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current shortfall: summer travelling (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current shortfall: total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family formation 2002-2007 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacancy allowance (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total requirement to 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
(1) Current authorised transit supply is estimated at 6% of families on local authority sites to reflect the division between residential and transit pitches + an arbitrarily assumed 10% of families on private sites.
(2) The range assumes that 50% or 70% of families on unauthorised sites in January 2002 need a transit pitch or other provision for mobility.
(3) This is the average difference between families counted on unauthorised sites in January and June each year since 2000.
(4) The range is the result of rounding an assumed 2% or 3% per annum increase in the number of Gypsy families from the counts, and assuming that 30% will want transit provision.
(5) This assumes that some 25% of pitches will be empty at any time to allow for mobility.
One critical element in this calculation is the 25% vacancy rate. This is assumed on the basis that transit accommodation is unlikely ever to be fully occupied. It might also allow periodic site closure for major clean-ups or repairs.

Cross-check with the Postal Survey

Because so many of the assumptions used are arbitrary it is worth comparing our estimates with those from the postal survey. The survey asked local authorities whether there is a need locally for further provision of accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers. Respondents were invited to answer in terms of a range of provision needed under six different types of accommodation. Answers are summarised in Table 7.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of accommodation</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>County Council</th>
<th>District Council</th>
<th>Met/LB/ unitary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houses or flats</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specially designed housing</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential sites/pitches</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit sites for stays in excess 1 month</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit sites for stay between 1 week and 1 month</td>
<td>1,255</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency stopping places for stays up to 1 week</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Postal survey; base = 145 LAs
Note: LAs were asked only to give ranges of need (none; up to 10 places; 10-50 places; and over 50 places). Figures have been calculated applying a mid point to each range (5; 30; and 60).

These figures have limitations as estimates of national need for two reasons. First, there is likely to be some double counting between counties and districts. Second, fewer than half of all potential authorities in England responded. Since these factors work in opposite directions, the figures, however crude, may perhaps be taken as a rough guide to estimated needs.

Interestingly, the extent of need estimated by local authorities for residential sites is within our range (Table 7.1), and the estimate for transit provision for differing lengths of stay is very similar to our upper range (Table 7.2). This suggests that our estimates may be broadly ‘correct’ in magnitude.

The postal survey also asked for firm plans affecting numbers of sites/pitches. These were reported in Chapter 3 and showed a slight upward trend, but far short of the estimated requirements in Table 7.3. Estimated need appears to be far beyond any current plans to provide, which is reflected also in the fact that only a minority of authorities said that the needs they foresaw had been included in any local planning or strategy document (local plan was the most frequently mentioned, but by only 30% of authorities).

When asked which Traveller groups additional sites/pitches were needed for, some respondents objected to applying categories and felt that it would not be tenable in terms of pitch...
allocations given legal definitions of 'Gypsies'. Despite these reservations, many authorities replied:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local or regional English Gypsy/Travellers</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local or regional Irish Gypsy/Travellers</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All groups</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-distance Travellers</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gypsy/Travellers with horses needing grazing</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Travellers</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One interesting feature of this ranking is the relatively low proportion mentioning long-distance Travellers, despite the importance placed on transit site provision. Relatively few authorities identify New Travellers as needing further accommodation despite the almost total lack of authorised sites currently catering for them – whether this is because of the patchy geographical spread of New Travellers, because local authorities do not see their needs as legitimate, or because of a recognition that New Travellers do not want ‘sites’ is unclear.

The postal survey also asked authorities who should provide any further sites/pitches. For residential sites/pitches the most popular form of provision is privately by Gypsy/Travellers for themselves and their families (78%), then provided by local authorities (55%) and finally privately on a commercial basis (46%). The picture for transit site provision is slightly different: local authorities 61%; privately by Gypsy/Travellers for themselves and their families 54%; and privately on a commercial basis 45%. Respondents are clearly keen to see a range of provision, both public and private.

Comment

This section has outlined an estimate of need for residential and transit site provision over the next five years. It identifies significant shortfalls and requirements for further provision. Growth in site provision of the scale indicated would certainly put considerable pressure on the land use planning system and other elements in the implementation system. Chapter 8 examines these points further.

Some Lessons for Site Design

The research threw up several lessons for site design. First the ‘provider’ perspective is reported drawing largely on the scoping and case study interviews, then the ‘resident’ perspective.

Site Design Lessons: The Provider Perspective

Most case study and other provider interviewees were able to draw on their experience to provide lessons for site design. Some of the more important are:

Consultation: Several respondents noted the importance of involving Gypsies and Travellers much more closely in site planning than has normally been the case. Areas for consultation
include site location, layout, pitch size, and the size and design of amenity units. Only Gypsy/Travellers can comment with authority on designs which best meet their cultural and lifestyle needs. Sensitive and culturally aware design may well reduce vandalism and damage sometimes experienced against 'inappropriate' provision. One case study authority where the site had recently been refurbished with GSRG stressed the importance of involving residents (and settled neighbours) as early in the process as possible, and allowing them as much choice as possible; it also illustrated the importance of following through into the implementation stage to ensure that residents actually got what they had been consulted on. Another case study threw up a slightly different slant on consultation. In this instance there had been extensive consultation on site design and construction, but consultees did not move onto the site, and actual residents proved to have rather different needs and priorities. In consultation, it is important to include both men and women, although it is often found difficult to engage the former fully.

Site location: Location reasonably near to facilities and services, where Travellers actually want to live, was a lesson noted by some respondents with sites in isolated locations. Several of the case study sites were initially not connected to sewage systems because of distance. Problems around private treatment plants, involving continuing costs and trouble, had caused several respondents to see attempts to save on initial capital investment as a false economy. Similarly, building sites on poorly drained or water-sensitive land stores up continuing trouble. People recognised the basic conflict between developing sites in good locations, and finding sites acceptable to the settled community and with affordable land prices. Many provider interviewees shared the widespread perception held by Gypsies and Travellers that sites are often in unattractive areas where no-one else wants to live and no other profitable use is immediately apparent.

Site size: There was wide agreement among providers that sites work best when they are small – perhaps between ten and 15 pitches. Sites smaller than ten pitches might leave residents feeling vulnerable. Up to about 15 pitches it is easier to avoid mixing incompatible families, making sites easier to manage.

Communal space: While some disagree, most provider interviewees argue that communal space and provision of, for example, children’s play space, communal work areas, communal grazing areas or other open space is better avoided lest it lead to misuse, conflicts and/or rubbish dumping. Sites are easier to manage and maintain when all space is clearly allocated and the clear responsibility of individual families. However, others think communal provision, especially of play space, can work provided that initial design (e.g. control of access) and subsequent management ensure its proper use.

Pitch size: Provider interviewees agreed on the importance of generous pitch size to accommodate more than one trailer or mobile home, plus vehicles. A larger pitch can accommodate children’s play space, and can be used by visitors thus contributing to meeting needs for mobility. Larger pitches are more flexible to changing circumstances.

Amenity units: The consensus was that the provision of ‘day rooms’ in amenity units where residents can cook, eat and sit if they want to are a good idea. Some provider respondents argued strongly that space demands have gone up for the whole population, and that Gypsies and Travellers should not be excluded. A small minority feared the provision of day rooms could lead to sub-letting and management problems.
Resident consensus also in favour of day rooms

F: “A day room for each plot so we’ve got somewhere – look at the size of the caravans, now the kids is in here, they’re on top of you 24 hours a day. Just so we can sit down, a bit of a kitchen so we can cook and do as things in there. The toilet and a washroom separate from all this bit”
(Gypsy LA)

I: “What would you use the extra space for?”
F: “Well you can have a nice big tables and chairs for one start”
F: “Tables and chairs to sit and eat your food. And then you’ve got like a little area to put your TV”
F: “Just want to sit in the day room”
F: “Settee”
M: “Day room, utility rooms – that’s all they are”
F: “Use it the same – but (the) new ones are better cause they’ve got more of a space, and they’re like brick”
M: “Well they’re more like little bungalows, in’t they?” (Irish LA)

Quality: At least implicitly, respondents acknowledged that Gypsy/Traveller site construction had often been skimped because of cost limits. Some even alleged consciously poor workmanship from contractors who disapproved of providing accommodation for Gypsies. Such ‘skimming’ – while wholly understood – was seen as a false economy in the long run because of subsequent maintenance and repair costs. Unfortunately, some interviewees allege that the same thing is happening again with GSRG works where cost limits (and high quotations from contractors) are leading to work being done to a lower standard than they – and residents – would like.

Other points: Some detailed points on design have implications for site management and costs, for example fire safety equipment and electrical metering and switching arrangements. The general lesson seems to be to individualise provision as much as possible to avoid damage to communal equipment (owned by everyone and therefore by no-one) and disagreements over apportionments of, for example, water or electricity bills.

Site Design Lessons: The Resident Perspective

Lessons emerged for both residential and transit site design.

Residential Sites

Site location: Resident views about the preferred location of sites varied. Proximity to housing and services may increase hostility and discrimination on the part of house-dwellers and local businesses but on the other hand, sites which are distant from urban areas create more problems for access to school, shopping, recreation and so on. Families would normally have transport, but this may not always be available to young people or to mothers of small children. It is thought nice to have frequently-used facilities within walking distance.
Site size: As with providers, smaller residential sites were generally thought best and figures between 12 and 20 pitches were often mentioned as suitable. Some would argue for fewer pitches. There seems generally less scope for problems on smaller sites.

M: “I think if they kept the site smaller, 10 or 12 is plenty – the 10 or 12 people that’s living on there knows everybody, you don’t get no problem – but when the site’s too big you get too many mixed families, and then there’s problems. The smaller the site the better. And plus it don’t take so much to maintain” (Gypsy LA)

Site layout: While not something that many participants had thought much about, some principles for site layout emerged. Privacy can be an important consideration. People do not usually want to be completely screened from their neighbours which might inhibit the important sense of community, but they do not want neighbours to be able to directly overlook each other’s living quarters. Privacy can be affected by the way the site is laid out, and the way the sheds are disposed relative to the units.

In some of the later discussion sessions, participants were given three very simple diagrams of alternative approaches to site layouts. These were a linear layout, with plots lining a single central street; a ‘tree’ structure, with branches off a central stem; and a circular layout. The tree structure was generally best liked as it seems to allow for more privacy and generally appears more interesting than a straight line. The circular layout was also popular and was best liked by some and generally preferred to the linear layout. The appeal is the strong communal element where everybody seems in touch with everyone else, and children playing in the centre could be overseen by the whole community. On the other hand there appears to be less privacy than in the tree layout. The linear layout was generally least liked of the three – although many actual sites adopt a broadly linear pattern (linear layouts give simple infrastructure runs and regular pitch shapes).

Resident comments on alternative site layouts

F: “(Tree) That looks like little cul-de-sacs – so really you’ve got your own privacy” (Gypsy LA)
F: “(Linear) There’s not a lot of privacy – if you have an argument, well everybody else knows all about it”
F: “Everybody can see into your caravans” (Irish LA)
M: “(Linear) That one there, you’re staring out at each other all the time”
F: “Yeah, you’d be looking out at each other” (Gypsy LA)
F: “(Linear) I think here you’re looking into too many people’s places and seeing everything that’s going on. You’ve no privacy” (Irish LA)

Boundaries and barriers: Most residents want some privacy and protection but do not want to feel either ‘shut in’ or as if they have been ‘hidden away’ from the outside world. They were often ambivalent about perimeter fencing. Big fences, walls or bunds can feel claustrophobic and produce a ‘concentration camp’ atmosphere as well as limiting views out of the site. On the other hand perimeter barriers can also increase the sense of security from intrusion and minimise aggravation from neighbouring house-dwellers by screening the site. People’s preferences vary, and often reflect the site situation.
### Resident views on boundary treatments

| F | “Building that bank like they did – because there weren’t no need to build it up like that, they’ve blocked us completely” |
| I | “Why did they do that, do you think?” |
| M | “Well, to shut the Gypsies off from the road” |
| F | “We’re like rats, we was an eyesore” |
| F | “Yeah – it’s to hide the caravans” (Gypsy LA) |
| F | “But we can’t see who comes in through them hedges” |
| I | “Should the site be fenced then?” |
| M | “It should be, for better security, yeah” (Gypsy LA) |
| M | “What we could do with really and truly is the entrance of the site blocking off, and the barrier working with a swipe-card for the people that lives on here” (Gypsy LA) |

Residents were also often ambivalent about entrance barriers which some sites have, but which do not always work or get used. Some would like effective barriers particularly where there are worries about external security, incursions on to the site for fly-tipping by outsiders or unauthorised families pulling on. But barriers are also disliked. They are fiddly and inconvenient for residents. Access devices can get lost. Some people may just leave them open. They can also increase the feeling of being imprisoned and not free.

### Play space and children’s facilities

Views about providing play space were mixed. Some thought that there is not much point – either it does not seem necessary or it would get damaged like previous attempts at provision on their sites. On the whole, however, the view was that play facilities should be provided on the grounds that children do not have much provision on the site and some parents are nervous about letting their children leave the site (see Chapter 1 for an account of common attitudes to children in Gypsy/Traveller culture). Fairness of treatment with the settled community was also an issue – housing estates are seen to be provided with such facilities, so why not Traveller sites?

It was often stressed that provision should be centrally placed where it can be overseen by parents and the community. Some children will not be allowed to use it if it is hidden away and parents want to keep an eye on them. Quarrelling or bullying among children is more easily discouraged or controlled if they play in open view. Play space is less likely to be misused or vandalised if in full view of the community. Where previous facilities had gone wrong this was often blamed on obscured siting. No strong views were expressed about the play equipment needed. The occasional suggestions made were for the usual types of playground equipment.
Comments on provision for children’s play

I: “Is there anything for children there, any play space or anything?”
M: “Nothing at all. Well at the back of this board, that’s supposed to be – but now there’s all rubbish thrown on it, so children can’t even go in there” (Gypsy private)

I: “If you were designing a site like this for Travellers, what would you provide for children?”
M: “A play area for the children, swings and slides and things. I mean there’s plenty of space on this here site just wasted – it’s overgrown and nobody maintains it”
F: “And fenced off properly, so they can’t come out”
F: “So they can’t get hurt”
F: “And we know they’re safe” (Gypsy LA)
F: “I don’t think the park is a necessity really ’cos if they’re little you’ve got to keep them near their own place to watch them, you’re too frightened to let them go to parks anyway” (Irish LA)

Communal workspace: Different views were expressed about whether workspace should be provided on sites. Some people took the view that it would be helpful to have space to facilitate work activities but others felt it would spoil the site particularly by encouraging an accumulation of rubbish. Many did not seem to have strong views and it was rarely seen as a major issue.

Views on workplaces on site

M: “We can’t go out now and do our work because we’re not allowed to fetch nothing back onto the site. No scrap nor ‘nowt like that you see. So we have to go and sign on. Now sign on, we was never used to that, we always found some way of getting a living. Some would be hawking bedding, some would be hawking a bit of lace, flowers or charms something like that, knocking door to door” (Gypsy LA)

M: “I’m not going to bring scrap in here and try to clean it, but if I bring scrap into my bay and all the oil is round the place, well it’s all going into my caravan isn’t it – my kids are walking in it, other kids are walking in it, so it’s all going into my caravan. They should have a special area alongside your site, like you have in Ireland. There was a place for horses, grazing for horses, there was a place for your scrap and everybody agreed to that like, that scrap would not come into the bays.” (Irish housed)

I: “Is there any kind of work-space on the site anywhere?”
M: “No”
I: “Is that needed?”
M: “Yeah. Well, a bay like to put tree rubbish and stuff to burn, and stuff like that – because we’re all working class people on here, guv” (Gypsy LA)

I: “Is it just the fact you can’t bring stuff onto the site that stops you doing that now?”
M: “Well no you see, because you’re grounded in one area. I mean if you lived in a house across this road and I come say every week or every fortnight wanting to sell you summat or wanting to buy summat off you, you’d slam the door in me face, you’d be sick of seeing me. Years ago they used to move round the country from town to town” (Gypsy LA)

The main needs mentioned for workspace were storage of materials and tools, storage and
disposal of rubbish and wastes arising from their occupations and sometimes for work-related activities like cleaning scrap for resale. Some of those who argue for workspace mainly want an area for fires, usually to get rid of tree trimmings and the like. Fires are often banned on sites because of other problems they cause. Part of the need for workspace would thus probably diminish if more satisfactory disposal routes were provided for such wastes.

**Communal meeting space**: Some sites have communal meeting facilities, some do not. Some use the warden’s office where there is one. There were again mixed views about the need for such facilities but little spontaneous demand. Communal meeting space was not generally seen as a high priority. However, some thought it might be useful for children’s use, for play or educational purposes; for parties or social gatherings for children or adults; or for meetings of residents. Potential loss of communal space on one site was said to threaten continued provision of health and education services.

**Grazing for horses**: Few sites had facilities for keeping large animals like horses. There was some ambivalence about that. Some traditional Gypsy/Travellers have horses which are an important feature of traditional Gypsy culture. They are usually kept on separate land in the locality, not on the site. Some participants would like to be able to house them on the site, but sometimes other residents do not want horses on the site itself on the grounds that they make a mess, could damage plots or trailers, and might be harmful to children. Some would like to have a neighbouring paddock or field attached to sites and a few argued that stabling should be provided.

**Individual pitches**: Views on pitch size generally coincided with those expressed by providers in favour of generous provision. In addition to family trailers and vehicles some residents would like to be able to accommodate family growth and temporary visitors. Some would prefer larger pitches to accommodate visitor car parking rather than advocating communal provision which might be open to misuse.

M: “If you look at these plots here, they’ve built them for say a caravan and a car and one child or two children. They didn’t realise the longer these people is here the families going to grow, so they get more vehicles, more caravans – and then the plots ain’t big enough” (Gypsy LA)

Plot fencing provided on sites was sometimes thought inappropriate in type or poor in quality but there were too many different views about what it should be like to act as a useful guide. Some residents would welcome grass and trees on sites, although not all might be prepared to look after it.

**Grass and trees on site**

F: “They could do with a bit of grass and trees and bits and pieces to make it look more – it’d look a lot better if they never made the whole thing concrete. Everything’s concrete – it’s concrete walls, concrete road, concrete top” (Gypsy private)

F: “This is like a reservation – you have no pleasure thing have you? You’ve no trees, no grass, no anything”

I: “If somebody living here decided they wanted to plant a few trees or shrubs on their plot, what would happen?”

F: “They’d be ripped up, the dogs would eat them” (Irish LA)
‘Sheds’: Sheds are very important facilities on Traveller sites. There are various traditions and taboos about washing and toileting which it is important to understand and respect, but which are somewhat complex for non-Travellers to grasp. Design needs to accommodate the desire to separate washing of food utensils from washing of the body, clothes or other items. Toilets should be quite separate from space used for food preparation. Ideally these facilities should be separate within the shed in separate spaces with separate entrances.

Internal arrangement of ‘sheds’

F: “In the kitchen where we do our cooking we’ve got a bathroom, so you go through your kitchen to go in for a bath – it’s not really designed the way we’d want it. I’d prefer my bath and my toilet separate from my kitchen”

F: “Yeah, with a separate entrance – you’ve got washing and everything in the one little small space” (Irish LA)

M: “We don’t believe in having toilets in where we live, we don’t believe in that”

F: “If you look around the caravan there’s no toilets in caravans. The way we live now we’re living different to what we’ve ever been brought up to be. It’s downgraded us the way we’re living now – because the size of the shed we’ve got to cook, go to the toilet next door to it. Toilet is supposed to be outside separate from everything” (Gypsy LA)

Some sites provide showers and some provide baths. Resident preferences vary between the two, but if anything showers seem more popular. They use less water and electricity which are normally expensive metered commodities. Some participants felt it unhygienic to sit in dirty water. A shower over a bath would probably the most popular arrangement because it gives people options – and is now standard in bricks-and-mortar housing. Close consultation with Gypsy/Traveller users on designing shed facilities is clearly indicated.

Transit Sites

How can transit sites be provided to best satisfy Travellers' needs?

To facilitate travel and compensate for the difficulty of finding traditional stopping places they will need to be found sufficiently often to make a reasonably continuous network across the country. It is difficult to say how dense a network that would need to be. For enabling people to travel long distance across the country it might imply (say) having one site every 100 miles or so in any direction, but for people who want to travel round a smaller neighbourhood that would not be much help and for them a denser network would be called for.
Transit site spacing

M: “Well the thing is there’s not gonna be many of them about, is there? If you leave that one, you might have to drive a hundred mile to go to the next one”

I: “Yeah, but if there were more of them, do you think that would be a good thing?”

M: “Well it would be if – but there’d need to be at least five in the county” (Gypsy private)

I: “How close would they have to be to each other to be any use?”

M: “A hundred mile is nothing now”

F: “Yes, a hundred mile from here, you’d say, ‘Yes, we’ll go onto it’, and spend time up there for a few weeks and then go back to another one” (Irish LA)

There were two main kinds of view about the sort of site needed – and numerous variations within these:

• Some people (including many of the active Travellers and most of the New Travellers) started from a roadside encampment model, arguing that, since roadside sites normally have no facilities at all, transit sites would also not require many facilities if they are simply intended to replace the roadside. Some people would settle simply for a piece of land where they are allowed to pull on and stay for a short time without harassment. Many would like a water supply (perhaps just a standpipe) since it is reported as increasingly difficult to get water from public sources. Some would also like toilet facilities.

• Other participants started from the opposite standpoint of being used to residential sites. They tend to see a transit site as a slightly simplified version of a residential site. Many of them would like more developed facilities including water and toilets, ideally on a plot-by-plot basis, and hardstandings. Some would also like electricity and washing facilities. Some participants not sharing this viewpoint argued that if transit sites have too many facilities then ‘you’ll never get people off them’ and they might become expensive to use.

To some extent these alternative views correspond with the conventional distinction between transit sites and stopping places, and suggest a role for both.

Some active Travellers are attracted by the notion of low-cost, low-input sites, which provide little more than a permission to stop. However (as some participants pointed out) unmanaged sites are likely to deteriorate. A heavily-used transit site is not like a traditional roadside verge onto which small groups of travellers pull from time-to-time, where the land can ‘recover’ between encampments. Moreover its users are a short-term and shifting population who have little or no stake in the longer-term well-being of the site and so have no incentive to treat it with care. A site shared by many transient people has needs which have to be managed.

Toilet provision is especially likely to be problematic on transit sites. Traditional Travellers in particular tend to be very particular about matters of personal hygiene and many dislike sharing facilities with other families who may have different standards of cleanliness. There are inhibitions about women or children sharing communal facilities, particularly with men. This means that shared facilities may not be liked (and therefore either not used or abused) unless extremely well set-up and maintained.

Flush toilets are more expensive to install, but chemical toilets may not be liked or properly used and there is felt to be a risk that some people may just tip the contents near the site rather
than emptying them properly. (Portaloos were also disliked by New Traveller children in research carried out in South West England (Children's Society 1998).) If there is no toilet provision at all there is a risk that the land around the site will become contaminated. Traditional Gypsy/Travellers are often very concerned with personal cleanliness, but their nomadic tradition is much less careful about what happens away from the living area. Some defecate on nearby grassland without burying the faeces – unlike many New Travellers who expressed strong codes about using shovels.

Toilet provision therefore needs to be carefully designed with the user group firmly in mind, sufficiently segregated between different sets of users and kept clean and well-maintained.

Contrasting views on transit site facilities

M: “A field with a tap”
F: “As simple as possible” (Gypsy private)

M: “They’d still wanna a piece of land where people could pull on. If they had the one where you said no facilities, a field, as long as they kept it tidy, that one would work more than what the transit site would. Because what would happen, you’d get people pull on there in the winter time and they wouldn’t wanna move, and the council wouldn’t want you to move. So that would end up a permanent site” (Gypsy camped)

M: “If there was a block of toilets, like a block of women’s, a block of men’s. In our life, guv, we don’t like sharing toilets. The women like wouldn’t use the toilets where the men is, and the men won’t use one where the women is”
F: “I imagine if there was a block of toilets, with your own key, that wouldn’t be so bad, because then you’d be responsible for your own toilet”

M: “If they had like a block of toilets to a temporary site, like five women’s, five men’s, that would be all right” (Gypsy LA)

Some participants pointed out that rubbish management would be another potential problem on transit sites. Rubbish would need to be well managed with good disposal facilities and thorough clean-ups or else the site might turn gradually into a tip which would annoy local house-dwellers as well as occupants.

Summary

This chapter considered what accommodation might be required to meet the needs and aspirations of Gypsies and other Travellers in the future. First it reviewed the range of accommodation potentially available.

Permanent housing: Gypsy/Traveller attitudes to living in houses are often negative. Attitudes seem compounded of aversion to bricks-and-mortar per se and the potential social isolation of living in housing. Some are more open to the idea of living in houses, especially for greater comfort, in ill health or to increase security for children’s education.
**Group housing:** Group housing (developed in the Republic of Ireland) is described as small schemes of housing with additional facilities and amenities specifically designed to accommodate extended families of the Irish Traveller community on a permanent basis. Gypsy/Travellers are much more positive to the idea of group housing than to housing alone. Some thought it the ideal solution and many found the idea appealing in principle, although others remained averse to the thought of leaving their trailers. Support for the idea of group housing from Gypsy/Travellers suggests that it is worth developing and perhaps introducing on a pilot basis, following consultation.

**Private sites:** Most local authority personnel see a continuing role for all kinds of private site provision. Most think that owner-occupied sites should be encouraged for Gypsy/Travellers able to afford to develop sites for themselves. Gypsies and other Travellers expressed few views on commercial private sites. Owner-occupied sites developed by and for single families are often a dream, but one which few think they can realistically fulfil because of costs and problems in getting planning permission. Private sites, both commercial and owner-occupied, have a continuing role to play.

**Local authority residential sites:** There is a widespread assumption that local authority residential sites will remain important in the provision of accommodation for traditional Gypsies and other Travellers, catering especially for those who want a fairly settled lifestyle without entirely abandoning the culture of living in a trailer, but who do not have the financial and other resources needed to buy land for themselves.

For many of the Gypsy/Travellers interviewed, the local authority site option was ranked in the middle order of accommodation options discussed.

**Accommodation for nomadism:** Some active Travellers have no desire to settle at all. An unknown proportion of Gypsies and other Travellers still actively travel whether throughout the year, seasonally or on special or family occasions. Because of the shortage of transit pitches, ‘nomadism’ is currently mostly accommodated informally and often – from the viewpoint of both settled community and Travellers – unsatisfactorily.

- A range of transit provision should cater for differing lengths of stay with differing levels of formality and amenity provision; for different Gypsy/Traveller groups; and for different sizes of groups.

- If transit accommodation is to work as intended there must be a national network of sites so that people can travel from one to another, with less incentive to stay too long because there is nowhere else to go.

- Transit sites, as defined here, are formal sites provided on a permanent basis, with basic amenities and services including boundary fencing, hardstandings, water supply, toilet and washing facilities, waste disposal and (probably) electricity supply. Transit site management is key to success and must be firm and intensive. There must be regular and frequent management presence on site. It follows that transit site management is likely to be expensive, and certainly not a cheap option for local authorities.

- Stopping places are, as defined here, less formal and less well-serviced than transit sites and generally intended for shorter stays. They might be loops of by-passed roadway or small urban sites where development is planned but not immediate. Water supply and rubbish
disposal might be the only services provided. Getting planning permission for such sites is identified as a particular problem.

- Providing authorised accommodation for Gypsies and other Travellers while they are travelling appears sensible, and indeed a vital element in any approach to reducing the level of unauthorised camping. However, many very experienced officers have serious doubts as to whether such sites can ever 'work'. They argue that investment in transit sites would be a waste, that they would always be too expensive to run and too prone to damage. Some authorities which have developed transit sites are enthusiastic and see great advantages accruing in saving money on managing unauthorised camping, others find them not working as intended.

- Gypsy/Travellers are aware that there are very few active transit sites at present, and tend not to think in terms of using them. Known transit sites often have a bad reputation. There was some interest in transit sites, but this was usually limited by lack of credibility that enough sites would ever be provided to make travelling easier or that they would be good usable sites. Travelling itself may reduce in future, although some are determined not to 'settle'. The effects of extending the transit site network are extremely hard to predict.

**Assessing Need for Gypsy/Traveller Sites**

There has not been an official assessment of need for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation since the first Gypsy census in the mid 1960s. Few local authorities have assessed need, and there is no accepted approach to assessing Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs. Any assessment should take account of current shortfall of authorised sites and other accommodation; population growth and new household formation; and Gypsy/Traveller preferences. There are many difficulties, not least of which is a lack of basic information.

Based on Gypsy counts and making many assumptions, we estimate a need for between around 1,000 and 2,000 additional pitches required on residential sites by 2005. The estimates are very significant in terms of existing provision. It is particularly important to bring back into use currently unused pitches and sites.

Our estimates for transit and other mobility provision are broadly similar to or higher than those for residential pitches (between about 2,000 and 2,500 pitches), but represent a vastly different proportionate increase on current provision.

These estimates are similar in magnitude to the sum of estimates of local needs given by local authority respondents to the postal survey. Growth in site provision of the scale indicated would certainly put considerable pressure on the land use planning system and other elements in the implementation system.

**Some Lessons for Residential Site Design**

The research threw up several lessons for residential site design. The most important are:

- The need to involve Gypsies and other Travellers as potential users in site design.
- Site size should be kept small – perhaps between 12 and 20 pitches.
• Pitch sizes should be generous to allow families to have several trailers and to use the pitch flexibly. Larger pitches mean that family visitors can stay with trailers for short periods, thus easing transit accommodation needs.

• Many Gypsy/Travellers would like larger amenity units, with day rooms.

• Site layouts should seek to give residents privacy, but also generate a feeling of community. Any children's play space should be centrally located where it can be overlooked by parents and residents for security.

• Some residents would welcome better site environment, and boundary and surface treatments which feel less like a prison camp and more like a normal residential area.
CHAPTER 8
Overcoming obstacles to site provision

This is a short chapter dealing with an enormous subject! It summarises some of the main obstacles to site provision and reports on some of the suggestions made in the course of the research for overcoming them. The final section looks at ensuring that sites once provided are sustainable. Many of the points made here are carried forward into the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 9.

Obstacles to Site Provision

The obstacles to site provision are widely recognised. Sir John Cripps, reporting in 1977 on the workings of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 some seven years after the introduction of the duty to provide Gypsy/Traveller sites, considered that progress under the Act had been unsatisfactory both in the number of sites provided and in the quality of some provision (‘hole and corner sites . . . No non-gypsy family would be expected to live in such places . . .’ (Cripps 1977:11). He identified a number of reasons for failure; those still relevant are quoted:

• The pressure of public opinion – ‘it must be accepted that almost any proposal for a site will arouse strong local opposition during the period leading up to a decision’ (Cripps 1977:12). He points to the link to local politicians – ‘A councillor who fails to oppose a site in his ward immediately feels that his seat is in jeopardy’ (Cripps 1977:11).

• Gypsy habits – ‘the behaviour of most gypsies does nothing to commend them to house-dwellers as neighbours’ (Cripps 1977:12). Referring to aggressive behaviour, petty crime, litter and so on associated particularly with some roadside encampments, Cripps notes that this is the impression which most members of the public get of Gypsies, and lies at the root of the opposition noted above.

• Vandalism – some temporary sites had been extensively vandalised or wrecked, putting local authorities off further permanent provision.

• A national responsibility – ‘it has been suggested that provision for a mobile minority living largely apart from the rest of society is a national responsibility . . .’ (Cripps 1977:13). Local authorities may be ‘over-influenced’ by largely local considerations, and (by implication) may not accept responsibility for non-local needs.
An uncertain problem – ‘with rare exceptions local authorities have stressed to me the difficulty they have in identifying the size of the problem they are expected to meet’ (Cripps 1977:14). This refers to the fluidity of need/demand from a nomadic group whose movements are at least partly determined by ‘varying attitudes to site provision and harassment’.

Cripps has been quoted at some length simply because every one of these factors still seems to be relevant today, indicating the resistance of the issues to solution. The removal of the duty to provide and exchequer subsidy to assist site provision (subsidy which was introduced in response to Cripps’ recommendations) has not helped.

Our postal survey asked local authority respondents what they thought were the main obstacles to providing further local authority sites for Gypsy/Travellers. They were provided with a list of possible obstacles and asked to tick all relevant. In order of frequency of mention, obstacles were identified:

- Resistance from local residents 89%
- Funding for new sites 76%
- Problems getting planning permission 64%
- Lack of suitable land for sites 51%
- Inadequate commitment from Government 50%
- Inadequate commitment locally 50%
- Lack of a duty 48%
- Funding for maintaining existing sites 31%
- Other 8%

Resistance from local residents still tops the list. This is also likely to be related to problems in getting planning permission through public objections and, as Cripps pointed out, reluctance of councillors to commit political suicide by supporting site proposals. It probably also contributes to lack of suitable (that is ‘acceptable’) land for sites although high land values and sheer pressure of demand are also factors in some areas.

The feeling that providing for Gypsies and other Travellers is a national as much as a local responsibility is also still apparent, and may contribute to postal survey findings that, while three-quarters (76%) of respondents thought that local authority site provision should be a priority of national policy, only 48% thought it should be a priority for local policy. Similarly, 75% of respondents thought that further private Gypsy/Traveller site provision should be a national priority and 51% that it should be a local priority.

At the research workshop, participants identified public resistance to Gypsy/Traveller sites as the main obstacle to further site provision (NIMBY – not in my back yard and NOTEs – not over there either). Participants noted that local authorities seem to place more weight on the fears of, and complaints from, the settled community than on the needs of Gypsy/Travellers. Several referred to press treatment of Gypsy/Traveller stories as reinforcing settled community prejudices and fears in the absence of direct personal experience. Some identified racism within this.

1 Anecdotal evidence from some case studies suggest that local councillors will sometimes refuse planning applications from Gypsy/Travellers against officer recommendation, while accepting that a subsequent appeal will be upheld.
Some Suggestions for Overcoming Obstacles

Several suggestions were made during the course of the research for overcoming these obstacles to site provision – public or private – through the postal survey and the workshop. Some participants explicitly noted how difficult overcoming obstacles would be. Broadly suggestions can be grouped:

- **Restore – and enforce – a duty to provide sites.** There is a strong and pervasive feeling that local authorities are unlikely to respond without a duty being imposed as long as site provision is seen as unpopular, especially in comparison with other local priorities. The predominantly local government respondents by implication ‘blamed’ central government for failing to use its powers to direct local authorities to provide under the 1968 Act. An enforced duty could provide an answer to local objectors. Many respondents seem doubtful whether carrots alone can prove effective in encouraging further site provision without some sticks.

- **Provide central government funding for site provision.** Again there was consensus that 100% central funding is the only way to get local authorities to make provision given competing demands for local spending. This argument operates particularly in the absence of a specific duty to provide for Gypsies and other Travellers, since many competing spending demands come from services where authorities do have statutory responsibilities.

- **Give a central lead to local authorities.** Some respondents feel that government needs to give local authorities a much clearer steer on national policy towards Gypsy/Traveller site provision – exhortation to provide or enable provision while removing the duty and funding in 1994 sent out mixed messages. A number of opportunities to provide a central lead were mentioned:
  - re-visiting the definition of a ‘Gypsy’ and more clearly identifying which groups are to be provided for.
  - providing a national assessment of need for accommodation to which all can work.
  - setting quotas to authorities for accommodation to be provided.
  - generally ensuring that Gypsy and other Travellers are always considered in mainstream policies relating to housing, employment, social exclusion etc.
  - reminding local authorities of their duties under Race Relations (Amendment) Act, and pointing out that this includes Gypsies and Irish Travellers.
  - publishing examples of good practice on site provision and management to give support and ammunition to local officers who may work in isolation.

- **Amend/use the planning system to make site provision easier.** Planning constraints are widely recognised as a key obstacle to public and private site provision, and therefore some changes logically need to be made to make provision easier. Interestingly local authority Gypsy liaison officers and other officers involved with Gypsy/Traveller sites often refer to
the local planning authority (or ‘the planners’) as if it is a quite different body from their own employer. Ideas mentioned include:

– something stronger than Circular 1/94 is needed to ram home the messages about quantifying needs for Gypsy sites, identifying specific site locations wherever possible and ensuring that criteria-based policies are not totally exclusionary, thus ensuring that a plan-led system can produce sites through development control.

– treat Gypsy site provision in the same way as housing for planning purposes so that needs are assessed nationally and regionally, local planning authorities know what allocations they must make and know that their plans can be challenged if they fail to do so.

– at local level, more advice and help should be given to Gypsies and other Travellers about making planning applications.

– local planning authorities should be reminded of – and follow – the Royal Town Planning Institute’s code concerning objections to planning applications made on purely racist grounds (RTPI 1996).

– ensuring that public consultation on site finding in the planning process is inclusive so that parish councils and local people do not feel alienated by being presented with a fait accompli when down to the last couple of options.

– there should be more ‘joined up thinking’ between departments in local authorities, including planners. Joint training can help.

– generally local authorities, including planners, should be more proactive in relation to site provision.

• Seek to change public attitudes. Since public attitudes are seen as the main obstacle to site provision, and to underlie planning difficulties and low local priority, several suggestions were made to attempt to change attitudes and to build bridges of greater understanding between the travelling and settled communities:

– there needs to be more education of both the settled and Traveller communities about Gypsy/Traveller culture and needs including accommodation.

– officers directly involved with Gypsies and other Travellers have a role in educating and training elected members and colleagues in other departments to reduce ‘knee jerk’ anti-Traveller reactions based largely on ignorance or one-sided impressions.

– local authorities might do more to improve the media profile for Gypsies and other Travellers locally by providing positive stories and challenging unbalanced or inaccurate reporting.

– genuine consultation with all elements of the community on site finding to increase the chances of finding mutually acceptable locations through greater understanding.

– using all opportunities to change public attitudes – for example stressing the
importance of finding sites in leaflets or other communications provided to people who complain about unauthorised encampments.

- publicising and emphasising the positive stories, both locally and nationally, where site finding has been successful and the communities have been brought together.

• Challenge unacceptable Traveller behaviour. Gypsy/Travellers on unauthorised encampments who behave in an anti-social manner, fly-tip and so on are often the most visible part of the Gypsy/Traveller community and as such form or reinforce public attitudes. A number of respondents argued that local authorities should be more prepared to tackle unacceptable behaviour in its own right rather than resorting to eviction of the encampment as a possibly more straightforward option. Improved behaviour, whether achieved through encouragement or enforcement, should reduce obvious reasons for the settled community to fear Gypsies and other Travellers in their neighbourhood. Applying the same standards of expected behaviour to the travelling and settled communities should also reduce a point of resentment where house-dwellers see Gypsy/Travellers ‘getting away with’ things they would not be allowed to (while ignoring or failing to see the much lower standards of service provision and greater discrimination faced by Travellers).

• Treat caravans/caravan sites as an element of social housing so that Housing Corporation grants could be made available for site provision. This would require legislative change; it would not only provide access to a potential additional source of funding but would also bring Gypsy/Traveller accommodation more into the mainstream of housing provision. Treating issues as mainstream rather than as a special case reduces potential for political opposition or public resentment.

It is apparent that both central and local government have parts to play in overcoming obstacles to further site provision. Action is required across a broad spectrum if progress is to be made.

Ensuring Sustainability of Provision

As noted above, one of the disincentives to site provision identified by Cripps was vandalism or fear of vandalism where sites had been provided. Ensuring that sites – both new and existing – are sustainable is important. There is little point in investing in developing or improving sites which are unsustainable. As noted in Chapter 7, this concern still underlies doubts about the wisdom of developing transit sites and stopping places.

Most fundamentally ‘sustainability’ might be taken as meaning that there will be a continuing demand from Gypsies and other Travellers to live on a site which offers them the style and quality of life they want. Participants in the research argued that this is more likely if sites are located where Gypsy/Travellers want to live and are of a good quality. Ensuring quality means learning the lessons for site planning and design outlined in Chapter 7, including consultation with site residents, small size of site, not mixing residential and transit use, direct metered supply of services (electricity and water) to individual plots and generous sized pitches and amenity units. Some argue that a baseline ‘decent’ standard should be formulated for sites as for houses including such things as energy efficiency and disabled access, with some form of
regulatory control to ensure that standards are maintained. Minimum standards should be kept under review as lifestyles change. Above all sites must be well managed. Both provision and management must be based on resident dignity and responsibility.

The postal survey asked specifically how local authority site provision could be made economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Generally, respondents recognised that site sustainability will have to be worked for – and worked for by all parties.

**Economic Sustainability**

Most respondents considered economic sustainability from the point of view of the site provider. A number of themes emerged from answers:

- Some doubted that sites could ever be financially sustainable in the sense of covering costs of provision, maintenance and management from rents. This led to calls for subsidy for provision and renewal and, sometimes, for an ongoing subsidy in order to meet running costs (including adequate maintenance) while keeping rents affordable. Chapter 6 showed that many sites in fact appear to be run at a deficit without any allowance for development costs.

- Many started from the basic assumption that running sites should be at nil cost to the local authority – that is, that rents should cover day-to-day costs. In this context, it was seen as essential that housing benefit should cover ‘realistic’ (economic) rents. This view was put forward particularly forcibly by respondents experiencing Rent Officer restrictions on housing benefit payments (see Chapter 6). However, even without housing benefit problems, ‘economic’ rent levels raise issues about affordability and poverty/benefit traps – hence the calls for continuing assistance with running costs in the point above.

- Maximising income was a minor theme, including sound financial management, arrears control, engendering a ‘responsible’ attitude to paying rent, keeping sites fully let, well located etc. This links with bread and butter housing management concerns, equally relevant for site management.

- Minimising costs was also mentioned through, for example, selecting ‘harmonious’ residents (or at least excluding known troublemakers), minimising maintenance costs through quality in construction, employing wardens to provide strong management, involving Travellers in site management, and ‘working with Travellers from the outset, giving them a sense of ownership in providing the best sites possible, thus lessening costs of repairing damage due to that sense of ownership’. Many of these points are accepted as ‘good’ site management.

One respondent addressed the issue of financial sustainability from the residents’ perspective:

> ‘Staying in one place breaks the economic sustainability of families. The reason for nomadic lifestyle is economic as well as cultural. Benefit dependency follows adoption of static lifestyle. All sites should allow for extended absences to maintain traditional lifestyle.’

Some residents interviewed for the research appreciated this point. There are strong suggestions that greater affluence among Gypsy/Travellers is related to greater mobility (Okely 1983: 149-151). The whole question of ‘settlement’ for Gypsy/Travellers whether on sites or in housing and their continued financial and economic independence is worthy of much more attention.
Social Sustainability

Social sustainability may be seen in terms of the well-being of the community within a site, or in terms of peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and its residents and neighbours in the settled community.

For the former, Chapter 5 suggested a cohesive mix of residents is important, as well as good service and welfare provision for residents. Site design might help through providing meeting places on site and children’s play space to unite rather than divide the community. Some participants argue for greater security of tenure for residents in this context to give a greater feeling of self-respect and ownership. In a similar way, giving a site a name reduces any stigma attached to living on ‘the Gypsy site’.

Postal survey respondents were not very optimistic about the chances of increasing social sustainability in the sense of greater integration between site residents and the neighbouring settled community. As one respondent put it, you would need to ‘undo 400 years of social exclusion and prejudice both ways’ or another ‘it would require an unlikely change of heart by both Gypsies and Gaujos to bring about peaceful co-existence’.

Three main themes emerged from survey responses:

- Chances of social sustainability are higher with small, well-located and well-managed sites. On location some tension was apparent in answers between ‘site blending into community’ and ‘suitable sites away from existing communities’ answers. The former views slightly outnumbered the latter.

- Positive action and inputs towards re-education of both Traveller and settled communities are needed: ‘more cultural awareness and positive imaging in public places’. Good communications are stressed in this scenario and involvement of Gypsy/Traveller site residents in wider community activities: ‘effective communication between residents, community and the council’; ‘promote good relations between site residents and local settled community – encourage to sit on committees and join in community activities’. The case studies identified a few examples where positive initiatives of this kind had been successful.

- Several answers required that Gypsy/Traveller attitudes or behaviour needed to change, for example: ‘Gypsy children must go to school’; ‘rubbish dumping and car dumping must be stamped out’. And rather less directional: ‘must have long-term development work with Travelling communities to address anti-social behaviour, but coupled with effective law enforcement – both “carrot” and “stick” are needed if any progress is to be made.’ In addressing Gypsy/Traveller behaviour, it is necessary to be sensitive to cultural differences in what constitutes ‘good’ behaviour as opposed to anti-social and other behaviour which is unacceptable to both communities.

Environmental Sustainability

Small, well located and well managed sites also figured prominently among suggestions for ensuring environmental sustainability for sites. The additional themes included taking care in the appearance of sites, minimising resource consumption through water metering, low energy bulbs for site lighting etc and – most importantly – tackling problems around rubbish dumping and fly-tipping. In this context suggestions included Gypsy/Traveller education (‘urging the
Traveller community to be more environmentally aware in respect to issues surrounding fly-tipping and burning off; ‘Gypsies need to accept that they have responsibilities to maintain sites in accordance with site licences and planning conditions – non-compliance leads to enforcement which always ends up adversarial’) and stricter enforcement. Some answers implicitly accepted that rubbish is an issue to be built into any management routine: ‘regular clean-up service in site management plans’. The impact of empty gas bottles was often referred to.

Summary

This chapter looked at obstacles to site provision and at issues around site sustainability.

Obstacles to site provision are widely recognised, and have not really changed since Sir John Cripps reported in 1977 on the workings of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. The top three obstacles identified by local authority survey respondents are resistance from local residents, funding new sites and problems getting planning permission. The importance of resistance from members of the settled community is clear and underlies some other obstacles. Some argue that local authorities seem to place more weight on the fears of, and complaints from, the settled community than on the needs of Gypsy/Travellers.

Suggestions for overcoming obstacles include:

- Restore – and enforce – a duty to provide sites. Many seem doubtful whether carrots alone can prove effective in encouraging further site provision without some sticks.

- Provide central government funding for site provision.

- Give a central lead to local authorities. Government needs to give local authorities a much clearer steer on national policy towards Gypsy/Traveller site provision.

- Amend/use the planning system to make site provision easier. Something stronger than Circular 1/94 is felt to be needed to ram home the messages about Gypsy site provision.

- Seek to change public attitudes through education ensuring more balanced media coverage of Gypsy/Traveller issues.

- Challenge unacceptable Gypsy/Traveller behaviour – including fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviour – applying the same standards of expected behaviour to the travelling and settled communities.

- Treat caravans/caravan sites as an element of social housing so that Housing Corporation grants could be made available for site provision.

Site provision must be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Generally, respondents recognise that this will be difficult to achieve, and site sustainability will have to be worked for – and worked for by all stakeholder parties including Gypsies and other Travellers and members of the settled community.
CHAPTER 9

Conclusions and recommendations

This report has brought together a large amount of research information about Gypsy/Traveller sites, how they are managed and about future needs. Much of this information is new and – it is hoped – speaks for itself. Here we stand back and identify only the most significant broad conclusions from the material, looking at the needs of the existing site network; future site requirements; actions needed to overcome barriers to site provision; and the need for further guidance. First, however, we examine the case for central planning and a national strategy for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues.

A National Approach to Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Issues

One of the clearest conclusions from the research is the lack of any clear, widely understood national policy towards accommodation for Gypsies and other Travellers in England, and a general feeling that such a policy is needed. This is an area where local authorities particularly need a strong lead. As one case study respondent put it:

‘So, what is national policy? What is it we are supposed to be doing – integrating Gypsies, putting them in social housing, encouraging them to have their own sites or their own property? How can local authorities manage properly if we don’t know what the policy is? We don’t need one-off initiatives like GSRG, we need a clear policy.’

Providing for Gypsies and other Travellers is often contentious and unpopular with the settled community, and dealing with a nomadic or at least a mobile population group does not sit very easily within local government with its territorial responsibilities and loyalties; in this context a strong national steer essential.

There are examples of much clearer national policies close at hand in Northern Ireland (see DOENI 1999) and especially in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) where, following a report from a Task Force on the Travelling Community, the Department of the Environment published the National Strategy for Traveller Accommodation in 1996. This envisaged the provision of 3,100 units of Traveller accommodation nationally. To implement this strategy the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 has placed on the major local authorities a duty to prepare and implement five year Traveller accommodation programmes, based on an assessment of need and consultation with Travellers and other stakeholders. Programmes are to be
reviewed at least every three years. There are certain safeguards included in the legislation for if council members fail to adopt a Programme within the time allowed. Annual reports of progress are required. A Traveller Accommodation Unit was established in the Department of the Environment in 1996 to oversee the preparation, monitoring, implementation and co-ordination of strategies at local level.

Essential elements in a strategy for England would be:

- The provision of better information. The bi-annual Gypsy caravan counts are widely criticised as inconsistent. The recommendations of earlier DoE research (Green 1991) have never been implemented. Following publication of the summary of the current research in October 2002 which recommended re-examination of this issue, a review of the Gypsy caravan counts has been commissioned by ODPM. The review will present options to make the counts more consistent, accurate and useful. Further research is probably also needed, especially on Gypsy/Travellers and permanent housing and the attitudes of the settled community towards sites and other Gypsy/Traveller issues.

- A national assessment of need. A national strategy might take as a starting point the assessments made in this report. These crude estimates might be refined through consultation with interested parties to reach agreement both on target numbers and the relative roles of different accommodation options.

- Because of the size and diversity of England, it is also appropriate for national need targets to be distributed between the regions, again subject to consultation.

- The strategy would also, of course, describe how it is to be implemented – through which legal, guidance and financial mechanisms. It is likely that local authorities would remain the major players, encouraged with a range of carrots and sticks.

- A strategy for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation should also include reference to other policies towards Gypsies and other Travellers including education, health and welfare services as well as dealing with unauthorised encampments.

- It would be appropriate for the strategy and its implementation to be monitored centrally, and reviewed periodically.

Where a planned strategic approach has been adopted in other countries it has been associated with some form of consultative or advisory group. Thus Scotland had its Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People, Northern Ireland has a Working Party on Accommodation for Travellers, and RoI its National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. This last has representatives of local and central government and three Traveller organisations. In England there have been several calls from a variety of bodies for such a central group to be given more or less formal responsibilities. The Traveller Law Reform Bill (Clements & Morris 2000) gives such a body a central and very important role in planning and implementing policy. It is hard to see how a national strategy can be carried forward without some central committee/team/working party responsible for its development and implementation. A group which includes all relevant interests should increase the chances of agreement and ownership which are essential if a strategy is to succeed.

One important area for debate at national level, which would be fundamental to a strategy, is the definition of a 'Gypsy' for practical purposes. While we are aware of considerable resistance
from traditional Gypsy/Traveller groups to the inclusion of New Travellers within a revised definition, we believe that national policy must explicitly recognise their existence alongside the traditional groups. This does not mean that different cultural needs should be ignored or that all ‘Travellers’ should always be lumped together indiscriminately.

Another very clear conclusion from this research is that Gypsies and other Travellers are often socially excluded and still suffer discrimination in many areas of life. Many respondents called for a clear central lead to affirm the legitimacy of a nomadic way of life and to challenge racism and discrimination against Gypsies and other Travellers (see recommendations made in Morran et al 1999).

Again there are examples of action in these areas from Ireland and Scotland. For example, RoI has launched a ‘Citizen Traveller’ initiative to support Travellers as an ethnic group. The Scottish Parliament’s Equal Opportunities Committee has inquired into Gypsy Travellers and public sector policies (Scottish Parliament 2001). In Northern Ireland a Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group considered Travellers and its final report was subject to consultation under the Northern Ireland Executive’s New TSN (Targeting Social Need) initiative. Much more could be done in England along these lines to demonstrate high level commitment to Gypsies and other Travellers and their needs.

Finally, there is a need to make Gypsies and other Travellers less ‘invisible’ (Morris 2000) in policies aimed to help socially and economically disadvantaged groups. While eligible for assistance under Supporting People, Connexions, New Start, New Deals etc – and our case studies revealed a few examples of successful initiatives – guidance is normally not written with reference to the particular needs of Gypsies and other Travellers. The same is true of many publications dealing with Black and ethnic minorities. One function of a central committee or group dealing with Gypsy/Traveller issues might be to advise on drafting or to issue supplementary guidance on how mainstream schemes might best be accessed or adapted to meet Gypsy/Traveller needs.

**Action on the Existing Site Network**

There are around 320 local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in England, providing around 5,000 pitches. It is impossible to be entirely accurate because of site and/or pitch closures which may sometimes be temporary and sometimes permanent. Our best estimate is that the number of sites/pitches has probably increased slightly since 1994, but that this is mainly due to schemes carried over from before 1994 outnumbering permanent site closures. Taking into account site sales or leases for continued use almost negates the apparent gain in strictly local authority sites/pitches. If currently closed pitches and sites are not re-opened then there will have been a decline from 1994 levels. Firm plans suggest a slight increase in number of sites/pitches in the future, but with a rather greater number of proposed sales and leases for continued use but out of the strictly local authority sector. The importance of keeping existing sites available is clear. This will require significant investment to bring sites to standard and maintain them there.

Our estimate for maintenance/improvement expenditure needed to bring existing sites up to standard and maintain them at this level over the next thirty years is £123.5 million, equivalent to £13,363 per site per year. £16.78 million should be spent in years 1 to 5 (2002-2007), rising...
to over £24 million in years 11-15 and 16-20. These estimates do not include any allowance for the costs of bringing currently closed sites back into use, nor of upgrading sites which are inadequate because of the small size of pitches or amenity units for which there is no simple solution. Thus they are likely to under-state the full cost of bringing sites to a fully satisfactory condition, especially if this involves enhanced design standards.

The Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant is a welcome initiative towards maintaining the existing network of sites. For the future, the research suggests:

- Some form of financial assistance is needed on a continuing basis to maintain and retain sites. It is unlikely that income from rents alone can ever cover both day-to-day running costs and major repairs or up-gradings.

- Challenge funds, while widely used, introduce a lottery element into planning. A more assured and predictable means of providing funding might encourage authorities to plan better and really involve residents in the schemes without the fear that they may prove abortive. Raising and then dashing residents’ hopes would be particularly serious with Gypsies and Travellers who often mistrust officiadium.

- One of the clear messages from this research is that skimping on initial site design and construction is widely seen as a false economy. It is vital that unrealistic cost constraints do not repeat earlier mistakes. Some flexibility is essential in this area where contractors seem prone to inflate estimates because of the perceived dangers of working on a Gypsy site. Long- as well as short-term value for money must be considered.

- At present GSRG is only available for local authority sites. The trend towards ‘privatising’ sites through sales or leases to registered social landlords or Gypsy/Travellers raises the question of longer-term funding for site improvements and up-grading in the ‘private’ sector. Again, rents are unlikely to provide an adequate source of income for major investment in sites in the future. Some form of grant scheme for such sites might be considered.

- There should be debate on the extent to which central government should bear costs of upgrading and maintaining existing sites, and the appropriate extent of local authority responsibility for keeping their sites up to standard.

At present there are no recognised national minimum standards for Gypsy sites. Model standards applied to residential caravan sites (mobile home sites or ‘park home estates’) are recognised as not being suitable for Gypsy sites, but no substitute has ever been produced. Local authorities presumably devise their own conditions to apply to private Gypsy site licences (not explored here at all). Local authority Gypsy sites are not subject to the site licensing system (local authority caravan sites of any kind do not have a site licence although it is recommended that they maintain standards similar to those which would apply in the private sector). There is, therefore, no regulatory regime controlling minimum standards for local authority Gypsy sites. Consideration might be given to:

- devising suitable model standards which could be applied to all Gypsy/Traveller sites. With the privatisation of local authority sites, bringing them within the site licensing system, this assumes greater urgency.
New Site Provision

A number of Gypsies and other Travellers interviewed think – with considerable regret – that the travelling life which they knew in their youth is on its way out. This is obviously a very important question, fundamental to recommendations about further site provision. The following points are relevant:

- The death of the travelling life has been predicted before, but it is still with us. The New Traveller phenomenon is not new; through the centuries members of the settled community have moved out of housing and become nomadic for a wide variety of reasons. There is no reason to believe that this tendency will stop. Even if traditional travelling people – especially Gypsies – become more settled it seems likely that others will maintain a nomadic lifestyle.

- Some of our interviewees among traditional born Gypsy/Traveller groups want and expect to continue travelling. Some ‘marginally’ settled Gypsy/Travellers might resume a more mobile lifestyle were good quality, safe accommodation to be made available for them while in transit.

- While a tendency towards ‘settlement’ is apparent, there is less convincing evidence of a trend towards house dwelling being widely attractive. At present many Gypsies and other Travellers appear to want to live in a trailer or caravan, even if they rarely move it. Living with other Gypsies and Travellers in a community is also very attractive. The amenity ‘shed’ caters for cultural requirements that toilet and washing facilities be separate from general living quarters. This suggests a continuing demand for Gypsy/Traveller sites which are rather different in design from the usual residential caravan site for the settled community.

- The importance of ‘community’ and living with others with shared culture and lifestyle is probably as important as purely physical factors in reducing the attractiveness of housing for many Gypsy/Travellers. As seen in Chapter 7, the idea of group housing as developed in Ireland proved very attractive to many interviewees.

If this analysis is correct it suggests a continuing need for accommodation provision specifically designed to meet the needs of Gypsies and other Travellers. This might include residential sites, accommodation for nomadism and group housing.

Residential Sites

Our best estimates suggest that between 1,000 and 2,000 additional pitches might be required on fully serviced residential sites to meet current over-crowding, suppressed desire to move from housing, population growth and moves from the roadside over the next five years. There are some pointers as to how this might be met:
In line with the recommendations above, the national figure might be broadly distributed between regions as an indication of the scale of provision required. However, local authorities are well placed for assessing need for residential sites since the most mobile Gypsy/Travellers are not likely to consider such accommodation in the short term at least.

Local authorities are also best placed to assess which groups are to be catered for locally – Gypsies, Irish Travellers or New Travellers. In so far as groups have distinct needs which cannot be met through shared provision, small and flexible schemes seem most appropriate.

The figures above are for residential sites, both public and private. The research has underlined the popularity of owner-occupied sites for individual families or small groups of families. These should continue to be enabled through the planning system (see below).

Probably only a minority of Gypsy/Travellers will be able to afford to develop a site for themselves. Sites with rented pitches will be needed in future. The research suggests no great difference in preferences for sites owned by local authorities or Gypsy/Travellers – some prefer one and some the other. Private sites appear to be no worse than local authority sites in terms of standards achieved either for condition or management. Private commercial sites could cater for some of the need. However, this does not remove the continuing need for local authority sites to accommodate those who do not want a private site, or those whom a private site owner might be reluctant to accept.

Not all the additional pitches required need be provided on new sites. Wherever possible family growth and over-crowding might best be catered for through modest site expansion.

It is apparent that ‘demand’ from Gypsy/Travellers for a particular site depends on its location, quality, social mix and management. All these factors require attention if need is to be translated to demand. Some of the lessons from the research for site design are in Chapter 7, and include generous pitch sizes, spacious amenity units including day rooms, and toilet and washing facilities geared to cultural requirements. Close consultation on design matters is vital. Continuing good site management is also essential.

The location and environment of many existing sites are poor, in respect of isolation from services or proximity to noisy or polluting land uses or both. Such sites are cheap, available and likely to be less contentious with the settled community than other better located areas. For the future it is important to remember that Gypsy/Traveller sites are residential and should be located only in areas considered appropriate for general residential use.

Accommodation for Nomadism

It is more difficult both to predict the need for formal transit sites and stopping places to accommodate the desire for nomadism and periodic travelling and to suggest a level and style of provision. Local authorities will need to carry out detailed assessments of travelling patterns and need in their areas to ensure that an adequate number of sites are provided which are useful to Gypsies and Travellers.
Some Numbers
As set out in Chapter 7, our best estimate for numbers of pitches required to accommodate mobility is between 2,000 and 2,500. This also allows for some family growth over the next five years.

Transit Sites and Stopping Places
The two basic findings about transit site/stopping place provision are:

• A national or at least regional network is required – one-off isolated sites cannot work as intended and will not be seen as a resource by Gypsy/Travellers. This implies a considerable degree of joint planning and probably of direction to ensure that all local authorities play their part equitably.

• Provision must be varied and flexible in order to cater for groups of varying sizes and different lengths of stay. All must be located where Gypsy/Travellers want to stop.

The distinction drawn between transit sites and stopping places is related to the standard of provision and anticipated length of stay.

• There seems to be some consensus among local authority personnel that transit sites must be well equipped and closely managed. If they are not, the consensus is that they will quickly be destroyed and prove very troublesome to neighbours (and to site residents). Some of the features advocated are:

• Clearly constrained and controlled boundaries to avoid unplanned and unauthorised occupation and growth.

• Access to more than basic amenities including hardstandings, water, electricity and waste disposal services.

• Some pitch demarcation to generate a feeling of ownership (however temporary) to encourage residents to look after their ‘own’ plot.

• Ideally, toilets and washing facilities should be provided on an individual family basis. Again this encourages ownership and careful usage. Shared provision which ignores cultural hygiene requirements may at best be ignored and at worst destroyed.

• Transit sites must be managed closely to control access and, so far as possible, encourage residents to behave responsibly. Management must also ensure that residents do not stay longer than the maximum permitted. Site managers could also act as ‘travel agents’ in advising on other sites in the network and perhaps asking about vacancies.

There are several obvious consequences from these points. First, transit sites will not be cheap either to provide or to run. Local authorities are unlikely to provide without assured financial assistance towards both capital and revenue costs. Second, while it is perfectly legitimate to charge for good quality transit accommodation it is probably unrealistic to expect rents to meet a significant proportion of running costs. High charges will deter usage and might be very difficult to collect. Housing benefit administration will be difficult with a transient population. Third, it is probable that such sites will cater predominantly for the more ‘respectable’ Gypsy/Travellers judged unlikely to cause damage or nuisance, and those who are willing to accept a
degree of regulation. It is not clear what proportion of the more mobile travelling community fall into these categories. Many New Travellers and some active Travellers from other groups are unlikely to be attracted by formal and regulated provision. It is important to avoid creating expensive sites to match 'official' standards which would be rejected by most mobile Travellers.

There is much less consensus among local authority personnel about whether stopping places with basic amenities and lighter management can work effectively. The concept of a field with a tap, and freedom from the threat of eviction, appeared attractive to many New Travellers and some active traditional Travellers interviewed (perhaps those for whom an old-style freedom to stop unmolested in traditional spots or on the roadside was the ideal). For many active Travellers it appears that freedom to stop without the threat of eviction is more important than facilities provided. A number of other points emerged in the course of the research:

- However basic and informal the accommodation, there seems to be widespread agreement that stopping places must be regularised with planning permission. This may be particularly hard to obtain if problems are foreseen. It is important that planning conditions do not unduly formalise the provision in such a way as to change its nature.

- There is still considerable merit in choosing a site with clearly defined boundaries to stop encampments growing.

- One rationale for having virtually no facilities is that there is nothing to vandalise or otherwise damage. It would also be cheaper to provide and would have a lesser sense of regimentation. However, it is likely that such a stopping place would have to be thoroughly cleaned up periodically to ensure the health and safety of residents and acceptability to settled neighbours. Regular and frequent rubbish disposal services seem essential.

- It might be possible to collect charges in advance of allowing Gypsies/Travellers to use a stopping place, although some might be reluctant to pay rent for such basic provision. Stopping places are unlikely to generate much income to offset running costs. However, there should be some saving on costs of dealing with unauthorised encampments.

- It must probably be accepted that stopping places would sometimes be used by troublesome families who behave in an anti-social manner. Stopping places should be located where residents can cause few problems for neighbours. However, they must not be so isolated that no-one will ever use them. Finding sites and getting them accepted will be a particular challenge. Gypsy/Travellers might themselves be involved in the process and should certainly be consulted about whether possible locations are likely to be used.

It is possible to envisage other styles of provision somewhere between formal transit sites and basic stopping places as set out here. Very generally it seems likely that the more elaborate the facilities provided, the tighter management must be provided, and the greater the risk of deterring the most troublesome unauthorised campers. Unfortunately there seems to be no way of testing these hypotheses except by developing a variety of sites. One possible approach might be to run a pilot scheme within a particular geographical area to attempt to develop a mini-network of sites rather than scattering pilots over the country.

**Other Measures**
Other measures should complement provision of transit sites and stopping places in facilitating mobility. These include:
• Managing unauthorised camping in such a way as to allow unproblematic encampments to remain in appropriate locations for up to (say) 28 days. This is the policy of ‘toleration’ which has been operated with some success by a number of local authorities over the years. The figures presented above as estimates of need for transit etc accommodation (2,000-2,500 pitches) assumes no unauthorised encampments. To the extent that encampments can be allowed to remain in suitable locations, the need for more formal provision is reduced. Initiatives such as the ‘Frankham Bond’ developed in Norfolk to encourage good behaviour from unauthorised campers are worth further consideration. Determined enforcement against bad behaviour might also change attitudes and behaviour in the longer term.

• Land protection policies to prevent Gypsy/Traveller encampments should be planned with this possibility in mind. There should be a presumption against protecting land where encampments would not inconvenience neighbours. By the same token, some traditional stopping places might be opened up again where there is little danger of inconvenience.

• Site residents can provide ‘transit’ accommodation for visitors on their pitches. Local authority licence rules should not prevent this unnecessarily, nor should planning conditions prevent reasonable visiting on family private sites.

Group Housing

Group housing, as described in Chapter 7, proved very popular in principle with Gypsies and other Travellers in our interviews. As in Northern Ireland, it might be appropriate to run a small number of pilot schemes. In Northern Ireland, pilot schemes are being run by housing associations. The scope for the greater involvement of registered social landlords in Gypsy/Traveller accommodation – sites as well as group housing – should be considered.

Other Points

Mainstream housing in the social and private sectors is likely to remain an important accommodation option for Gypsies and other Travellers, especially for health reasons. The research suggests that some Gypsy/Travellers may move in and out of housing, or between dwellings over time – in a sense continuing a tradition of mobility in different circumstances. At present there is sometimes a gap in support for Gypsy/Travellers with the transition to living in a house and having a formal tenancy for the first time. Local housing authorities should be aware of these needs, and the need for sensitive and appropriate allocations for Gypsy/Travellers. The scope for using Supporting People funds to cover services for Gypsy/Travellers might be explored further. There might be grounds in some areas for introducing a specific category to identify Gypsies and other Travellers into ethnic record keeping and monitoring.

The only guidance currently available on site design was produced over twenty years since (DoE 1979). This should be updated to meet current expectations. Again, there are recent examples published in Ireland (see DELG undated, DELG 2002 and DOENI 1997).
Chapter 8 described some of the barriers to site provision, and noted how persistent they have proved. It also reported the suggestions made by research participants as to how those barriers might be overcome. It is clear that local authorities hold the key to site provision, either directly through public site provision or – perhaps even more importantly – indirectly through planning controls exercised by local planning authorities. A major conclusion of the research can be summed up in the words of one participant: ‘make site provision easier for elected members to support than to object to’.

The obvious way to do this, advocated by most participants, is to re-introduce some form of statutory duty on local authorities to provide or enable the provision of Gypsy/Traveller sites, and to provide funding from government towards that provision. Experience between 1970 and 1994 shows that a duty alone is not enough to encourage all local authorities to make provision, especially of transit accommodation and stopping places. To be effective, new legislation would have to include default powers or direction to deal with non-performance. There would also, of course, have to be central commitment to exercise these powers – a commitment often seen to be lacking prior to 1994.

The Government has signalled its intention to introduce ‘sticks and carrots’ for site provision as an alternative to a duty. Proposed enhanced police powers to deal with unauthorised camping will be available only in areas where local authorities have made ‘adequate’ provision of transit sites and/or stopping places. The Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant has been amended in its third round to include pilot site provision proposals. Continuing central funding for site provision seems an essential ‘carrot’ if this approach is to be successful. It is not clear from this research whether the promise of enhanced powers for dealing with unauthorised camping will be sufficiently attractive to encourage transit site/stopping place provision. Where applications for grant for site provision are made, this research suggests that value for money criteria should include proposals for future site management, linked to the proposed level of amenity provision as outlined above.

Another approach worth considering is to bring site provision more closely within mainstream housing. Given the stability discovered on many residential sites, it seems entirely appropriate to see them as a form of specially adapted housing for Gypsies and other Travellers. This could help in three ways:

- In land use planning, allocating land for Gypsy/Traveller sites could be dealt with in the same way as housing with a mechanism designed to ensure adequate allocations nationally, regionally and locally.

- Gypsy/Traveller site provision (and management) could be explicitly considered within housing investment programmes and strategies. In addition to ‘mainstreaming’ site provision, this would give the opportunity for government to draw attention annually to Gypsy/Traveller needs as part of the bidding guidance. This would obviously affect district councils as local housing authorities rather than county councils, but would not preclude – indeed could require – partnership working.

- Housing associations could become involved in site provision and management. This might
provide a valuable additional resource for site provision and remove an area of inequity. Issues around site licensing and model standards, and tenure would need to be clarified.

The main way of assisting Gypsy/Travellers to provide sites for themselves would undoubtedly be to make it easier to get planning permission for owner-occupied sites. Without this, suggestions for financial assistance towards site creation or caravan purchase (as available in RoI) are unlikely to be effective.

Chapter 8 stressed the importance of improving understanding and relations between the travelling and settled communities as a prelude to reducing ‘knee-jerk’ objections to proposals for site provision. Demonstrating commitment to reducing social exclusion and discrimination against Gypsies and other Travellers as set out above should help here. There are two further suggestions:

• The media are influential in forming public perceptions. Many members of the settled community never knowingly come across Gypsies and other Travellers in their daily lives and their perceptions are likely to be influenced or even formed by what they read, hear and see in the press, radio and television. Much media coverage of Gypsy/Traveller issues is related to unauthorised encampments and is often extremely negative. The Commission for Racial Equality has issued guidance for journalist in dealing with Travellers and Gypsies (CRE 2000), calling for balance in all reporting. Central government and local authorities could be more active in challenging national or local media coverage which breaches these guidelines.

• The profiles of provision of sites or other Gypsy/Traveller accommodation might be raised by introducing, for example, a prestigious award for design or management. There are now many awards for design or regeneration run by professional bodies and a number of commercial sponsors. In RoI, President Robinson introduced awards for design of Traveller accommodation in the early 1990s (Pavee Point 1993). A similar scheme might generate interest in England.

Lessons for Site Management

Chapters 4 to 6 looked at site management in some detail. Only the most significant conclusions are selected here.

Organisation, Resourcing and Staffing

The research found a wide variety of site management arrangements with some sites managed by the owner local authority, some by another local authority and a minority by a non-local authority body including both commercial companies and Gypsies and other Travellers. There is no real consensus as to whether management is better carried out in-house or externally, and no evidence that any one management arrangement works better than any other. Since in-house management is the most common form of management, it tends to have more advocates who refer to benefits of greater and more direct ‘control’, and to wider scope for integrating site management with managing unauthorised camping; some argue that costs are reduced. Opinion
is also split on whether sites are better managed by Gypsy/Travellers who understand the culture of residents or whether Gypsy/Traveller management is too firm or too likely to favour family and friends. Again, the research has uncovered no evidence one way or the other. Similarly there is no clear relationship between site management performance and the department/section within which the service is located.

In contrast to this general indeterminacy, there are some more definite conclusions:

- Some authorities seem to devote very few staff resources to site management. The consensus is that effective site management generally needs to be rather more intensive than is usual for social housing, with on-site presence several times a week if not every day. Larger sites with known previous management problems probably benefit from full-time on-site management (although the consensus seems to be against residential wardens or caretakers). The norm full-time equivalent staffing level seems to be about 1 person per 16 pitches. Lower staffing levels are probably risky except for very stable, easy to manage sites.

- The case studies suggest that site management is easier and less stressful for staff where there is a small team of officers specialising in site management and other Gypsy/Traveller matters. Officers can cover for each other and generally support each other. This is preferable to either a number of officers all spending a small part of their time managing sites and unable to build up expertise, or a sole specialist officer who lacks back-up and can be very isolated.

- Where an authority only has one site to manage, it can be difficult to ensure this supportive team-based approach. In these circumstances it might be appropriate to consider sharing management responsibilities with neighbouring authorities or contracting management out to specialists.

- Research participants reported difficulties in recruiting suitable site management staff. Many site managers interviewed said that they had had little training about the job. Some spoke of the National Association of Gypsy and Traveller Officers (NAGTO) training scheme although no one interviewed had first hand experience of it. Training, mutual support and sharing experience are areas worth developing in the future whether under NAGTO or other auspices. Government funding might be made available to support training as has happened in the past for mainstream housing management.

- Not all site services can or should be provided by the site manager. An important part of the service must be working with other service providers to ensure health, education and welfare for residents.

**Licence Agreements, Management Policies and Site Rules**

Each site manager appears to have drawn up their own licence agreement and operate their own rules and policies. There are similarities and differences to practice across the country. A number of general points are worth re-stating:

- While we did not examine licence agreements in any detail, it is apparent that they vary widely both in terms of the ground they cover and their style. Many are very much less
balanced (a list of requirements and prohibitions placed on the resident with little in terms
of what the site owner/manager will provide) and less resident-friendly (quasi-legalistic and
authoritarian) than most modern social housing tenancy agreements. Some participants in
the research suggested that licence agreements should be standardised. Certainly in line
with other suggestions for bringing site management more closely into line with
mainstream housing management, a ‘model’ agreement might be produced to give an idea
of the balance and style normally expected of such contract documents today.

• Discussions with Gypsy/Traveller site residents revealed that very few actually understand
what security of tenure they have, or the implications of their licence agreement. Residents
may need more protection through better information and sources of advice. Relying on
written material alone is insufficient for a group where reading difficulties are quite
common, and bureaucratic thinking alien.

• Licence agreements and site rules can contribute to meeting the needs of the more nomadic
Gypsy/Traveller community. They should not prohibit visitors with trailers/caravans unless
pitches are too small for them to be safely accommodated. It would be appropriate to retain
manager approval for visitors, to limit the length of stay and to make the resident
responsible for visitor behaviour.

• The consensus among managers appears to be that site management must be ‘firm but fair’.
This means treating all residents in the same way, enforcing rules equally, taking action
early and being prepared to follow through to eviction is necessary for serious breaches of
licence conditions. There appear to be very few evictions each year in practice, but the
existence of this sanction and residents’ belief that the manager might use it is probably
important in regulating behaviour. Gypsy/Traveller preferences are also for management
which is ‘light’ wherever possible, but swift to tackle disruptive behaviour.

• There are some areas where manager discretion appears to be more widespread than is
common in social housing and where procedures are commonly less formal. Pitch allocation
policies are the prime example of the former, where many managers seek to ensure
compatibility between residents and to avoid accommodating very troublesome families.
The consensus of opinion is that such discretion is important and should be retained.
However, there may be scope for more formal recording of discretionary decisions and their
consequences. For example, if families from one Gypsy/Traveller grouping are being turned
away on the grounds of incompatibility with existing residents, this is evidence of an unmet
need which should be fed into an accommodation planning process. Repair reporting
procedures sometimes seem less formal than those in social housing, and again the
possibility of formalising to provide repair request receipts and order numbers might be
considered.

• Resident consultation is another area where procedures seem less formal than in
mainstream housing management. In part this is probably due to the widely recognised
reluctance of Gypsies and other Travellers to form residents’ associations or other
representative groups for formal consultation. The research has identified a few examples of
sites where there has been consultation; it has also identified a feeling among Gypsies and
other Travellers that they are not consulted and that if they are, their views are not always
acted upon. This is an area with few easy answers, but in the mainstream housing context of
Tenant Compacts, Best Value consultations and so on, it should not be ignored. Further
research might seek to identify the best ways of involving site residents in management
matters and site planning in general.
Licence Fees and Housing Benefit

Licence fees charged to site residents vary very widely, and have no apparent relationship with site quality or services. There is no guidance to local authorities on how licence fees should be set, and different authorities clearly take different views in weighing affordability and the desire to cover as many running costs as possible. In the context of rent restructuring to bring local authority and registered social landlord rents more into line and to regularise rent differentials, this seems increasingly anomalous. Some thought might be given to the appropriate principles behind setting site rents – for example should they be lower than social housing rents because the services provided are less, or more because costs are generally higher? With greater clarity on matters of principle, central guidance might be issued on how licence fees should be set, perhaps with indicative levels appropriate in different locations and for different quality of provision and services.

Whether or not action is taken on determining ‘reasonable’ licence fees, action should be taken very quickly to remove the anomaly whereby licence fees on sites owned by county councils and private sector bodies/individuals are automatically subject to Rent Officer determination of reference rents for housing benefit purposes, while sites owned by local housing authorities are not. Not only does this introduce uncertainty and unfairness for both residents and site owners/managers, but it also restricts the feasibility of Gypsy/Travellers providing sites for themselves on a commercial basis.

Housing benefit administration will also need consideration if/when transit sites and stopping places are developed to ensure that eligible residents can receive housing benefit for short stays.

Measuring Performance

As noted in Chapter 5, few authorities routinely set site management targets or monitor their performance as is common for social landlords. There is a dearth of information to allow authorities to benchmark their performance against others. This research provides some basic information on licence fee levels, pitch vacancies, turnover, void periods, arrears performance and management expenditure at site level which authorities could use to begin to compare with others.

This might be taken further and formalised. Scottish Homes include Services for Travellers among the activities to be covered by unified performance standards, and have set out proposed Activity Standards for consultation (Scottish Homes 2001). These proposals are reproduced in Box 9.1 since they represent a very useful statement of good site management practice by an independent body. Something similar might be incorporated into English proposals for a single inspection system. This would have the effect of legitimising and raising the profile of site management within local authority services as a whole.

Licences or Tenancies?

The comments so far have implicitly assumed that residents of residential Gypsy/Traveller sites continue to be licensees with basic protection afforded only by the Caravan Sites Act 1968 provisions against harassment and illegal eviction (for non-county council sites only) and general consumer and contract law. Many Gypsy/Travellers and their supporters argue strongly
that this is not appropriate and puts Gypsies and other Travellers at a serious disadvantage relative to social housing tenants and especially secure council tenants.

In fact Gypsy/Traveller sites superficially appear closer to mobile home parks than to housing tenancies because, in the former, residents generally own their caravan/mobile home and ‘rent’ the plot from a site owner as is normal practice on Gypsy/Traveller sites. Mobile home owners are protected by the Mobile Homes Act 1983 (MHA) which gives them the right to a written statement of agreement and sets out the limited grounds on which an agreement under the Act can be terminated by the site owner with court approval (breach of the agreement; home no longer the main residence; and age and condition of the home). The MHA also gives home owners the right to sell their home on site, with the approval of the site owner which must not be unreasonably withheld, and to assign the agreement to the purchaser; the park owner can legally claim up to 10% of the sale price of the home as ‘commission’ on a sale/assignment. The home can also be gifted and willed on site. These provisions effectively recognise that most mobile homes once sited are never moved and are assets which are traded in situ in much the same way as people buy and sell leasehold bricks-and-mortar properties. At present this appears quite different from normal practice on Gypsy/Traveller sites where the living caravan or trailer is normally still mobile and may actually be removed from the site for part of the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 9.1: Proposals for Activity Standards for Services to Travellers from Scottish Homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We provide or arrange good quality, services stopping places for Travellers. We let pitches in a way that ensures fair and open access to all. We take Travellers’ views into account in delivering our services, and we are responsive to their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features to look for:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Future needs of Travellers are addressed as part of the process of community planning and preparing relevant statutory plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Policy reflects the particular needs of Travellers and sets out a sound approach to assessment of need, allocation and site management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective strategy and joint working with other agencies to deal with unauthorised encampments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Joint working with other agencies and individuals to provide or secure sites that meets on-going needs and cater for short-term needs (eg seasonal work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Customer standards for site quality and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sites provided or secured are of good quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Site management strategy reflects Travellers’ individual lifestyle and requirements; and includes approach to waiting list management, allocation of sites, lettings, repairs, estate management and dealing with anti-social behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allocations are made on the basis of need and taking account of the individual circumstances of each household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Site waiting list is open to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Co-operation between Travellers, local authorities and the police to provide secure sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Joint working with the Scottish Executive to allow the regular assessment of Traveller numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective monitoring, evaluation and joint working with other agencies and Travellers is used as the basis of assessing long-term needs for Travellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Travellers’ views are obtained and effective face-to-face contact is made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment of the cost of developing and maintaining sites is undertaken and sites are resourced accordingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pitch rents are set at an affordable level and benchmarked with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggested measures:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of sites and number of pitches/occupants by area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level of pitch rent, by area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of Travellers on waiting list, by area and household size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of occupants, by site and household size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of reported antisocial behaviour incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of unauthorised encampments each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Annual management and maintenance costs per site/average number of pitches occupied during year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of FTE staff per site/number of pitches occupied during the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• % of Travellers satisfied with the sites they have used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Scottish Homes (2001) Proposed Performance Standards
However, there are increasing numbers of mobile homes on Gypsy/Traveller sites which will blur the distinction.

Secure and assured tenancies as used in social rented housing provide security of tenure and limit the grounds on which possession can be granted through the courts. Tenancies also allow for succession of the tenancy. Social housing tenants have a number of additional rights (for example, to be consulted, to take in lodgers, to manage) and most importantly the right to buy (right to acquire for some housing association tenants).

Arguments for changing the current licensing approach on Gypsy/Traveller sites are normally based on parity and fairness, and on increasing the sense of ownership and commitment on the part of residents, thus affecting behaviour and care of the site. Either tenancies or bringing sites within the purview of the MHA would meet this requirement. On residential sites, the main arguments put forward by managers against increasing residents rights are their desire to retain control of who lives on the site (which would be threatened by MHA rights to sell the home and assign the agreement) and to be able to evict troublesome residents very quickly before they have the chance to damage the site and/or upset other residents. The MHA would probably fail against this criterion. With the advent of introductory tenancies and tenancies along the lines of the Type II tenancies proposed by the Law Commission (Law Commission 2002) it is less clear that some form of tenancy would be similarly more cumbersome than current licence arrangements if followed properly. It would be worth exploring this further, especially in light of changes being made in tenancies generally.

We believe that a right to buy would cause considerable problems for site managers if exercised on a piecemeal individual basis. It would fragment any regulatory control over site standards and would make enforcing site rules very difficult. On these grounds, we do not think that an individual right to buy is appropriate for Gypsy/Traveller sites. However, more consideration might be given to the possibility of residents jointly agreeing to manage or buy their sites from local authorities, perhaps on the basis of a voluntary agreement where circumstances are appropriate rather than as a right.

Further Guidance and Support

The postal survey revealed that the majority of local authority respondents were aware of guidance on assessing need for Gypsy/Traveller site provision; Gypsy/Traveller site standards and/or design; and Gypsy/Traveller site management, although a sizeable minority was unaware that such guidance exists. Guidance issued by ODPM (and its predecessors) was most frequently mentioned, with some referring also to NAGTO training materials on site management. The government guidance is mostly very dated and not easily accessible.

Some of the areas where further guidance would be welcomed include:

- How to assess needs for accommodation for Gypsies and other Travellers and translate assessments into appropriate strategies and plans.

- Planning policies towards Gypsies and other Travellers, bringing together the various relevant planning policy guides (PPGs) and stressing again the importance of making
provision for sites within development plans. Guidance should refer to dangers of allowing racist comments and objections to influence decisions, and should identify the implications of the Human Rights Act when considering planning policies and development control decisions.

- Site design and standards. Current guidelines need updating in the light of modern space standards and services, health and safety provisions and requirements for catering for disability. Guidance should cover both residential sites and transit sites and stopping places.

On site management issues there is a feeling that formal guidance may be less useful than mechanisms for assembling and sharing good practice materials – ‘We don’t need any more Guidance – what we need is more information and more information sharing.’ In particular officers would welcome good practice examples of transit site or stopping place provision and management. Benchmarking information on site provision and management might also be made widely available.

In addition to providing additional guidance for local authorities and site providers, there is scope for providing better information for Gypsies and other Travellers and their supporters and advisers on accommodation options. A model might be the RoI publication Accommodation Options for Travellers (DELG undated) which sets out what forms of assistance are available under mainstream and specialist Traveller programmes. In England it would be appropriate to pay more attention to the planning system and the possibility of owner-occupied site provision. Because of literacy problems among some Gypsy/Travellers, it would be worth supplementing written material with information in tape or video format.

Summary

This chapter set out the main findings and recommendations from the research under the following headings:

- **A national approach to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues** (including recommendations for a national strategy and arrangements for its implementation).

- **Action on the existing site network** (including the need to spend some £123.5 million to bring sites to standard and maintain them there over the next 30 years, requiring central government financial assistance).

- **New site provision** (including need for 1,000-2,000 residential pitches and 2,000-2,500 pitches on transit sites or stopping places to accommodate nomadism over the next five years; recommendations for a group housing pilot scheme and for greater support for Gypsy/Travellers in housing).

- **Overcoming barriers to site provision** (including consideration of appropriate ‘sticks and carrots’ to encourage provision; treating site provision more like mainstream housing; and seeking to reduce social exclusion and discrimination against Gypsies and other Travellers).

- **Lessons for site management** (including recommendations on organisation, resourcing and
staffing; licence agreements, management policies and site rules; licence fees and housing benefit; and measuring management performance).

- **Further guidance and support** (including guidance on needs assessment, planning policies and site design; mechanisms for better sharing of good practice; and better information for Gypsy/Travellers and their advisers on accommodation options).
APPENDIX 1

Research with gypsies and other travellers

This appendix describes how we carried out qualitative research with Gypsies and other Travellers. The work was conducted by Alan Hedges, an independent researcher. He provided a independent report which has been drawn upon extensively in this report.

Basic Method

Qualitative research methods were used, based on informal discussions with Gypsies and other Travellers. There was no fixed format – sometimes the discussions were on an individual basis, sometimes with pairs or small groups of people.

We were conscious before starting the work of potential difficulties in carrying out research with Gypsy/Travellers. This population is typically not used to being researched and is often wary about the possible purposes and implications of getting involved.

The normal basis of qualitative work is that sessions are tape-recorded for transcription and analysis. We anticipated, on the basis of other studies, that Gypsies might be unhappy about being recorded (see for example Lomax et al 2000). The intention was therefore to aim to tape, but also to involve a second researcher to take notes. This was done at the pilot stage, although only one tape refusal was encountered there. We decided to continue with this approach in case of further refusals, but for practical reasons this was not possible. Fortunately, it proved not to be a problem as only one further tape refusal was encountered.

Qualitative research usually involves a separate recruitment exercise in which participants are identified in advance. We thought that normal pre-recruitment might not work so well with a mobile Gypsy/Traveller population. The procedure followed was as follows:

- Recruiting interviewers usually made a prior visit to introduce themselves, explain the study and line up possible participants
- A second visit was then made on the morning of fieldwork in order to assemble the sessions.

This generally seemed to work fairly well although there were often last-minute changes in the composition of the sessions. Because we anticipated that Gypsy/Travellers might often be wary, we did not use a formal recruitment questionnaire or ask for details of age or circumstances at the point of recruitment. We also did not go extensively into participants’ economic circumstances during the discussions.

Generally the research approach worked well within the above constraints. Co-operation was usually good. Three main problems were experienced in practice:

- Sometimes fewer households were represented at a particular session than we would have liked. This was partly because household membership is not easy to demarcate on sites where people in different households are often related to each other. There are sometimes several trailers on a single plot. Last-minute substitutions sometimes tended to come from within the same family and with hindsight it might have been wise to limit attendance to one per plot although it was sometimes interesting to hear about the perspectives of different family members.
- The society of traditional Gypsy/Travellers tends be hierarchical, and there is sometimes a problem of deference when interviewing different sex or age groups together. This was not a serious problem, but it argues for using a larger number of smaller sessions.
It sometimes proved difficult to involve men among the traditional Traveller communities. Men were less likely to be on the site at the time of recruitment or interview. They were harder to recruit and less likely to turn up if they did agree to join in. However this did not prove to be a major problem and a reasonable gender mix was achieved overall.

The Participants
The discussions with Gypsies and other Travellers were carried out in six of the case study areas in:

- London (the case study authority and a neighbouring Borough)
- South of England (two areas one north and one south of London)
- South West of England
- North of England (two separate areas)

The research aimed to cover a spread of:

- Gypsy/Traveller characteristics:
  - men/women – 23 men and 62 women involved
  - Traveller category – 47 English, Welsh or Scottish Gypsies (mainly English); 26 Irish Travellers; and 12 New Travellers were included.

- Accommodation:
  - 46 people were involved on 7 local authority residential sites
  - 7 people were involved on 1 local authority transit site
  - 10 people were involved on 2 residential sites owned by a Registered Social Landlord. These sites had previously been owned by a local authority
  - 2 people were involved living on a small owner-occupied private site
  - 11 people were involved living on 5 unauthorised encampments
  - 9 housed Gypsy/Travellers were involved

Alan Hedges also talked to a number of professional and voluntary workers (local authority officers; private site operators; site managers and wardens; and Traveller support staff). In all he spoke to 11 staff members in 6 sessions. These sessions were sometimes, but not always, recorded. They mainly provided briefing and context for the resident interviews, and the insight gained from them often helped in understanding and interpreting residents’ views – particularly in understanding how views relate to actual provision and the policy context.

Limitations of the Study
Various limitations of this research with Gypsy/Travellers should be borne in mind:

- It was a small scale, geographically limited, qualitative study. It was not designed to provide statistical evidence, but rather to give a flavour of Gypsy/Traveller views.

- Researching Gypsy/Traveller communities is not easy, as noted above. While good cooperation was usually achieved, those who agreed to take part may not be typical of those
who did not agree. The gender balance was skewed towards women. The study probably did not reach the least conformable (and perhaps most problematic) segments of Gypsy/Traveller society.

- The research brief was entirely focused on Gypsy/Travellers themselves. It would have been useful to also know how things look from the perspective of the settled community, especially since their views are so important in setting constraints on Gypsy/Traveller accommodation and other options.
# APPENDIX 2

## Physical survey inspection schedule

### Gypsy/Travellers Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Life</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>C/up</th>
<th>Replacement etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater London</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSL</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary/Emergency Stopping Place</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Site</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>yrs</td>
<td>yrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warden/Caretaker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warden/Caretaker Resident?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warden/Caretakers Office Provided?</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Number of Pitches</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Nr</td>
<td>Nr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenity Blocks Per Pitch (Average)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 per pitch</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Access</td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Unit</td>
<td>C/up</td>
<td>Replacement etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Access/Egress Provision?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Security</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Life</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>C/up</th>
<th>Replacement etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Entrance Control Building</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
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## Gypsy/Travellers Sites

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<th>C/up</th>
<th>Replacement etc.</th>
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### Site Footpath width greater than 0.75m wide? n/a - n/a Yes No

### Formal Parking

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| Concrete | 50 | 25 | Yr/Nr | m2 |
| Crushed Concrete | 50 | 25 | Yr/Nr | m2 |
| Gravel | 20 | 20 | Yr/Nr | m2 |
| Grass/Earth | 50 | 25 | Yr/Nr | m2 |
| Other | 50 | 25 | Yr/Nr | m2 |

### Garages

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### Work Area Paving

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| Concrete | 50 | 25 | Yr/Nr | m2 |
| Gravel | 20 | 20 | Yr/Nr | m2 |
| Grass/Earth | 50 | 25 | Yr/Nr | m2 |
| Other | 50 | 25 | Yr/Nr | m2 |

### Play Areas

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24 April 2002

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Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Site in England

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### Gypsy/Travellers Sites

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</table>

### Site Services

#### Mains Water Supply
- Water Supply Provided to Site? n/a - n/a Yes No
- Water Supply - Communal Standpipes Provided? n/a - n/a Yes No
- Water Supply - Number of Standpipes
- Water Supply - Is Supply Adequate for Site? n/a - n/a Yes No

#### Electricity Supply
- Electricity Supply - Provided to Site? n/a - n/a Yes No
- Electricity Supply - All Cabling underground? n/a - n/a Yes No
- Electricity Supply - Is supply Adequately Earthed? n/a - n/a Yes No

#### Gas Supply
- Mains Supply Provided? n/a - n/a Yes No
- LPG used on site? n/a - n/a Yes No
- LPG Storage facilities provided? n/a - n/a N/A Yes No
- LPG stored in accordance with H&S requirements? n/a - n/a N/A Yes No

### Drainage - Surface Water
#### Surface Water Drainage
- Effectiveness across Site n/a - n/a Good Fair Poor
- Storm Water Drains installed? n/a - n/a Yes No

### Drainage - Foul Water
#### Foul Water Drainage
- Sewerage Disposal - Underground Drainage System Adequate? n/a - n/a Yes No

### Disposal System
- Mains Drainage n/a - √
- Cesspool n/a - √
- Septic Tank n/a - √
- Sewage Treatment Plant n/a - √
- Sewerage Disposal - Heavy Duty/Lockable Manhole Covers? n/a - n/a N/A Yes No

### Chemical System
- Chemical Closet Emptying Point Provided? n/a - n/a N/A Yes No
- Chemical Closet - Tap Provided? n/a - n/a N/A Yes No

### Refuse
- Refuse Disposal - Facilities Provided
  - None n/a - √
  - From Pitch n/a - √
  - Refuse Skips n/a - √
  - Container n/a - √
  - Scrap Yard n/a - √
  - Other n/a - √
  - Facilities Adequate? n/a - n/a Yes No
- Skips/Yards/Containers Adequately Screened? n/a - n/a N/A Yes No
### Pitch

#### General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Life</th>
<th>Unit</th>
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<td>Oblong</td>
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<td>Random</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pitch Width (average)</td>
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<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pitch Depth (average)</td>
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<td>Pitch Approx. Area</td>
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<td>m²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is Pitch Size/Shape Generally Adequate?</td>
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#### Contribution to Pitch Problems

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<th>Rate</th>
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<th>Unit</th>
<th>C/up</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal Wear and Tear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate Maintenance</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor Design/Specification</td>
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#### Surfaces

**Vehicle/Pedestrian Pitch Surface**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Tarmac</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Yr/m²</td>
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<td>Concrete</td>
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<td>Gravel</td>
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<td>Yr/m²</td>
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<td>Grass/Earth</td>
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<td>Yr/m²</td>
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**Other Areas within Pitch Boundary?**

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<thead>
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<th>Area</th>
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<th>Yr/m²</th>
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**Surfaces Miscellaneous**

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#### Pitch Boundary

**Pitch Boundary Fencing**

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<td>Chestnut Paling</td>
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<td>Galvanised Steel Paling</td>
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<td>Yr/m</td>
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**Pitch Boundary Height**

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**Pitch Boundary Walling**

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<tr>
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### Amenity Block
### Gypsy/Travellers Sites

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#### Amenity Block Type

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#### Amenity Block Construction

| Brick/Block with Pitched Roof | n/a | - | √ | |
| Brick/Block with Flat Roof | n/a | - | √ | |
| Other with Pitched Roof | n/a | - | √ | |
| Other with Flat Roof | n/a | - | √ | |

#### Amenity Block General Information

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<th>Total Gross Internal Floor Area (approx.)</th>
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<td>Nr</td>
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<td>For exclusive use of resident?</td>
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<td>Building fit for purpose?</td>
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<td>General Condition Assessment</td>
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<td>Good</td>
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#### Vicinity of Amenity Block

| Vermin Problems evident? | n/a | - | n/a | Yes | No |

#### Contribution to Building Problems

| Normal Wear and Tear | n/a | - | √ | |
| Inadequate Maintenance | n/a | - | √ | |
| Inappropriate Use | n/a | - | √ | |
| Poor Design/Specification | n/a | - | √ | |

#### Amenity Building - General

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Amenity Building General Replacement</th>
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<td>Completely Re-build Entire Amenity Block</td>
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<td>Refurbish Internal of Average Sized Amenity Block</td>
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#### Amenity Building - External

##### Roof

| Pitched | 30 | 40 | Yr/m² | m² |
| Flat | 30 | 20 | Yr/m² | m² |
| Mansard | 30 | 40 | Yr/m² | m² |
| Other | 30 | 40 | Yr/m² | m² |
| Fascia/soffit/barge | 17 | 30 | Yr/m | m |
| Rainwater goods | 10 | 20 | Yr/m | m |
| Soil and Vent Pipe | 26 | 30 | Yr/m | m |
| External doors | 300 | 25 | Yr/Nr | Nr |
| External Walls | 26 | 25 | Yr/m² | m² |
| Windows | 450 | 25 | Yr/No | Nr |

##### Electrical - External

| Light provided at entrance? | n/a | - | n/a | Yes | No |
| Replace light at entrance | 200 | 25 | Yr/Nr | Nr |
| External electrical outlet provided? | n/a | - | n/a | Yes | No |

#### Amenity Building - Internal

##### Kitchen Fittings

| None/Not applicable | - | - | √ | |
| Fully fitted | 1,800 | 15 | Yr/Nr | Nr |
| Stainless Steel Sink Unit Only | 400 | 15 | Yr/Nr | Nr |

#### Cooker Provision

| | | | |

---

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gypsy/Travellers Sites</th>
<th>Header</th>
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<td>Cooker Provided?</td>
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<td>Layout of Kitchen safe/satisfactory?</td>
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<td>Plumbing for washing machine available?</td>
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<td>Vitreous China W.C.</td>
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<td>Stainless Steel W.C.</td>
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<td>Vitreous China Wash Hand Basin</td>
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<td>Stainless Steel Wash Hand Basin</td>
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<td>Direct W.C. Access from kitchen?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Direct W.C. Access from outside?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Central heating extent</td>
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<td>Number of unheated rooms (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6+)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Water heating facilities adequate?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Central Heating System (excluding boiler)</td>
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<td>Warm air system</td>
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<td>Replace electrical wiring (excluding consumer unit)</td>
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<td>Underground drainage to pitch?</td>
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<td>Mains water supply to pitch?</td>
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<td>Water Supply metered to pitch?</td>
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<td>Individually metered electricity supply to pitch?</td>
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<td>Electricity cabling all securely underground?</td>
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<td>Any signs of unauthorised connections?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Light provided at entrance?</td>
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<td>Replace light at entrance</td>
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<td>External electrical outlet provided?</td>
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<td><strong>External Decorations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>General External Decorative Quality?</td>
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<td><strong>Building - Internal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Kitchen Fittings</strong></td>
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<td>Layout of Kitchen safe/satisfactory?</td>
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<td>Plumbing for washing machine available?</td>
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<td><strong>Bathroom/Wash Area</strong></td>
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<td>Stainless Steel W.C.</td>
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<td>Bath</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Heating/Water Heating - General Information</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Central heating extent</td>
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<td>Number of unheated rooms (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6+)</td>
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<td>Water heating facilities adequate?</td>
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<td><strong>Central Heating System</strong></td>
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<td>None/Not Applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radiator system (wet system)</td>
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<td>Storage heaters</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central heating boiler</td>
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<td><strong>Room Heating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Room heaters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water Heating</strong></td>
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<td>None/Not Applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Heating</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Electrical Installation</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replace electrical wiring (excluding consumer unit)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer unit</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical installation generally adequate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide more socket outlets</td>
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<td>Internal lighting satisfactory?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Doors</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Floor Finish</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Internal Decorations</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Rate</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Redesign Site Layout</td>
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<tr>
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### Environment

**Location**

Site Location

- City Centre/Urban: n/a - √
- Suburban Residential: n/a - √
- Urban Fringes: n/a - √
- Rural Fringes: n/a - √
- Rural: n/a - √

Adjacent Land Use

- Residential: n/a - √
- Mixed Residential: n/a - √
- Industrial: n/a - √
- Commercial: n/a - √
- Other: n/a - √
- Rural/Working Farm: n/a - √

Location to Main Amenities - Public Transport

- Less than 500 metres: n/a - √
- 500 metres to 1 km: n/a - √
- More than 1km: n/a - √

Location to Main Amenities - Post Office

- Less than 500 metres: n/a - √
- 500 metres to 1 km: n/a - √
- More than 1km: n/a - √

Location to Main Amenities - Primary School

- Less than 500 metres: n/a - √
- 500 metres to 1 km: n/a - √
- More than 1km: n/a - √

Problems in Area (Enter value 1 to 5)

- Litter/Rubbish/Dumping: n/a - 1 to 5
- Vandalism: n/a - 1 to 5
- Dog Excrement: n/a - 1 to 5
- Vacant/Derelict buildings: n/a - 1 to 5
- Intrusive Industry: n/a - 1 to 5
- Non-conforming Land Use: n/a - 1 to 5
- Ambient Air Quality: n/a - 1 to 5
- Heavy Traffic: n/a - 1 to 5
- Intrusion from Motorways: n/a - 1 to 5
- Railway/Aircraft Noise: n/a - 1 to 5
- Nuisance from Parking: n/a - 1 to 5
- Scruffy gardens/landscape: n/a - 1 to 5

Direct Cause of Nuisance/%age of Site Affected by Nuisance

- None: n/a - √/%
- Motorway/Major Road: n/a - √/%
- Railway Line: n/a - √/%
- Industrial/Commercial Activity: n/a - √/%
- Sewage Works: n/a - √/%
- Rubbish Tip: n/a - √/%
- Quarry: n/a - √/%

Visual Quality of Local Area

- Excellent: n/a - √
- Good: n/a - √
- Average: n/a - √
- Poor: n/a - √
- Very Poor: n/a - √
- Unacceptable: n/a - √

How does quality of site compare with local area?

- Better: n/a - √
- Same: n/a - √
- Worse: n/a - √

Perimeter Screening

- Does site have perimeter screening?: n/a - n/a Yes No

### Site Access
## Gypsy/Travellers Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Life</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>C/up</th>
<th>Replacement etc.</th>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>√</td>
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</table>

### Site Access

- **Private Access Road**
  - n/a
  - n/a
  - √
  - √
  - n/a
  - n/a
  - Yes
  - No

- **Site Access - Safe Access?**
  - n/a
  - n/a
  - Yes
  - No

- **Site Access sufficiently wide (5m)?**
  - n/a
  - n/a
  - Yes
  - No

### Private Access Road Surface

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<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Yr/m²</td>
<td>25 Yr/m²</td>
<td>25 Yr/m²</td>
<td>20 Yr/m²</td>
<td>25 Yr/m²</td>
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<tr>
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<td>m²</td>
<td>m²</td>
<td>m²</td>
<td>m²</td>
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</table>

### Signage

- **Adequate Signage?**
  - n/a
  - n/a
  - Yes
  - No

---

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