The Provision and Condition of Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England
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A Report to
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
on a Programme of Research

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Following the reorganisation of the government in May 2002, the responsibilities of the former Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) in this area were transferred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).
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CHAPTER 1

Executive Summary

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 been written up and are due to be published around the end of this year, and are summarised here. This first section briefly states the main conclusions of the research.

• 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 of £16.78 million is needed over the next five years to bring sites 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.

• 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.

• In some areas there is a problem arising from the way that some Rent Officers set local reference rents for housing benefit applications for County Council sites. In some cases this causes large differences between the pitch fee charged and the amount payable by housing benefit. The anomaly in the treatment of sites for housing benefit purposes according to site owner status should be removed as quickly as possible.
CHAPTER 2

Background

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 current local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites network and the need for new site provision. It also looked in some detail at how sites are managed. Other themes were how local authorities deal with Gypsy/Traveller accommodation issues overall; obstacles to new site provision and ways of overcoming them; ensuring the sites provided are sustainable; and the role of the private sector in site provision. The complexity and scope of the research objectives demanded a variety of methods.

**Initial Scoping Work:** a literature review and eleven semi-structured interviews with key players including site owners and organisations representing Gypsies and other Travellers or with a particular interest in Gypsy/Traveller matters.

**Postal Questionnaire Survey to Local Authorities:** collected information on the type, number and management of sites, and local authority policies and practice on the provision of Gypsy/Traveller sites and accommodation issues more generally. The questionnaire was sent to all 385 English local authorities (both county and district councils) and 194 responses were analysed. While the overall response rate was only 50%, an excellent response by county councils (82%) and 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.

**Physical Survey:** a sample of 107 local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites was surveyed by surveyors from FPDSavills between April and July 2002. The physical survey identified site characteristics, quality, condition and repair/improvement needs. Information was collected through a schedule with sections on environment, site, pitch, amenity buildings and other site buildings. With an associated schedule of rates and assumed ‘life’ of elements this information enabled calculations of required expenditure on maintenance and improvements over a thirty year period.

**Site Management Survey:** a further postal questionnaire sent to the owner of each of the sites sampled for the physical survey sought more detailed information on site management, occupancy and finances. A total of 97 returned questionnaires were analysed. The response rate was 76%. 84 sites were included in both the physical and management surveys.

**Case Studies:** ten site-based case studies were carried out during the spring of 2002. Case studies were in different regions, and included sites with a variety of management arrangements. They 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. In six of the case studies, Gypsies and other Travellers were interviewed individually or in small groups by Alan Hedges, an
independent researcher. In all, 85 Gypsy/Travellers were interviewed in 28 separate sessions on local authority sites, privately owned sites and unauthorised encampments and in housing. English, Welsh or Scottish Gypsies (mainly English); Irish Travellers; and New Travellers were all interviewed. Quotations from these interviews appear throughout this report.

**Other Elements:** there were two further elements in the overall research: a desk-based study of group housing and other accommodation options from Ireland and France; and a workshop for local authority officers which discussed 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.

### Gypsies and Other Travellers

The legal definition\(^1\) of a ‘Gypsy’ is ‘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, and may include both ‘born’ Gypsies or Travellers and ‘elective’ Travellers such as the so-called New (Age) Travellers, once a sufficient nomadic habit of life has been established.

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. Romany Gypsies were accepted as an ethnic group for race relations legislation in 1989. Irish Travellers have a distinct indigenous origin and have travelled in England since the nineteenth century. Irish Travellers were accepted as an ethnic group for race relations legislation in August 2000.

For this research a definition has been adopted which includes all ethnic Gypsies and Travellers plus 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.

### SOME CHARACTERISTICS

Gypsies and Travellers differentiate themselves from the settled community. Many 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. The extended family is very important in the social structure, with little apparent structured organisation at a higher level. 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.

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\(^1\) Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 s24, as amended by Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 s80.
Gypsies and other Travellers have traditionally been very flexible in occupation, with a heavy emphasis on self-employment. 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).

Gypsies and Travellers have had to survive hostility and periods of persecution from the dominant 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. 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.

TRAVELLING

Not all ethnic Gypsies and other Travellers travel regularly. A range of travelling patterns exist. Frequency of travel ranges from full-time Travellers with no fixed base, to families who live in one place most of the year, but still travel with living vehicles for holidays or family events. Some travel long distances across regions and even countries, while some regular travellers never leave a single town. 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.

F4: “Well, you’re free, my love”

M2: “And you’re not tied, guv, you’re not tied”

F4: “And different air, you’re free like a bird, when we’re on these places we’re just like wild birds in a cage” (Gypsy on LA site)

There are some indications that fewer Gypsy/Travellers now travel full-time, and some have ‘settled’ for a combination of reasons related to personal circumstances, greater difficulties in travelling and finding safe places to stop, and a desire for a more comfortable lifestyle and education for children. 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.

F1: “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 on LA site)

M2: “I said to meself one day, I says, I’ve had enough of travelling because of all the aggravation” (New Traveller housed)
NUMBERS AND DEMOGRAPHY

Estimates for the Gypsy/Traveller population in the United Kingdom range between 90,000 and 120,000. The majority are 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 live in houses or flats.

Gypsies and Irish Travellers tend to marry young, and to have more children than the settled community. Extended family support is important for young families. 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.

GYPSY/TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

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. This group experiences a lack of basic taken-for-granted services (mains water, sewage, electricity) which is unique in England today.

‘Gypsy sites’ – with which this research is primarily concerned – are caravan sites provided explicitly for Gypsies and other Travellers, although not a part of Gypsy/Traveller culture. 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.

Information on numbers of ‘Gypsy caravans’ comes from twice yearly counts made by local authorities which are published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on their website at www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/information/index14.htm. In January 2002, there was a total of 13,612 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. Some local count figures may exclude New Traveller caravans, which will be mostly on unauthorised sites. Numbers of caravans have increased significantly since January 1979 when the total was 8,358.

Relative to the total population, Gypsy caravans are disproportionately numerous in the Eastern region, and are under-represented in the three regions comprising the north of England. 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).

The Policy Context

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. Only the site-specific background is described in this summary.
Local authorities were empowered to develop caravan sites, including Gypsy sites, by the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 which also aimed to regularise static caravan sites within the land use planning system and to raise standards for caravan dwellers through site licensing. The control aspects of the 1960 Act made it more difficult for Gypsy/Travellers to find land for themselves. Between 1970 and 1994, the Caravan Sites Act 1968 placed a duty on local authorities (counties and London Boroughs) 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 to provide (and subsidy towards provision) was removed by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which also introduced enhanced powers for local authorities and the police to tackle unauthorised camping by Gypsies and other Travellers. The accompanying circular (DoE 18/94) made clear that local authorities were expected to retain and maintain existing sites, and could still use 1960 Act powers to provide new sites where needed.

In July 2000, the Housing Minister announced, in advance of the next spending review, the Gypsy Site Refurbishment Grant (GSRG). This is 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.

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 GSRG is to be used to channel subsidy to the provision of transit sites and emergency stopping places. Essentially this re-introduces the spirit of 1968 Act reasoning, but without an explicit duty to provide sites.

**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, starting with a Gypsy census in 1965. There were two important reviews of the operation of the Caravan Sites Act (Cripps in 1977 and Wibberley in 1986) as well as research on long-distance Travellers, site management, Gypsies and housing, and Gypsy site provision and management.

Perhaps 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’. There are passages from the report on the 1965 census, from the Cripps or Wibberley 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 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.
CHAPTER 3
Local Authorities and Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Issues

This section examines how local authorities handle Gypsy and Traveller accommodation matters other than local authority site provision and management.

Overall Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Policies

In most local authorities Gypsy/Traveller accommodation policies are not well developed, if they exist at all. The postal survey found that a minority of local authorities (30%) 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. 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. Policies sent with the returned postal survey fell into four broad categories: extracts from Local Plans; statements of policy towards unauthorised encampments; statements incorporating reference to local site provision and management as well as policies on unauthorised camping; and comprehensive, integrated statements of policies and procedures towards Gypsy and Traveller services as a whole. History and individual personalities seem to have an influence on the approach taken locally. Most policies have been developed without input from Gypsies and other Travellers. Generally, county councils are more active than other types of authority.

Corporate Organisation

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 (41%); this is a much more common location than with housing management. Only 14% (especially county councils) have specialist Gypsy/Traveller units which are located in a range of departments. It is usual for more than one section/department to have a role in Gypsy/Traveller accommodation policies. A minority of authorities (22%) participate in a forum on which Gypsies and other Travellers are represented.
Land Use Planning

This research generally supports the findings of other studies that getting planning permission for sites is often very difficult. Gypsy/Travellers themselves often know of people who have tried to get planning permission, and perceive great difficulties in the process. 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.

F: “With Travellers, if we put planning permission on a place, 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.” Gypsy owner occupier

Objections from the settled public are important constraints on development. Applications for Gypsy sites are almost always highly contentious and will generate objections from the local settled community.

Private Site Provision

Private site provision is an important part of government policy for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation. Further provision depends to a great extent 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. The postal survey returns (not complete) provided details of around 650 owner-occupied sites with around 1,800 pitches (average 2.76 pitches) and 90 commercial sites (that is sites with pitches available to rent by Gypsies and Travellers other than the site owner and immediate family) with around 1,750 pitches (average 19.4 pitches). The great majority of commercial sites (and by definition all owner-occupied sites) are owned and/or managed by Gypsy/Travellers. Most are used as a permanent base for Gypsy/Traveller families, while a minority (number unknown) are used for transit purposes. 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 were favourable on most aspects – especially on standard of management, standard of maintenance and ability of residents to come and go – although it seems that quality can vary. The generally positive assessment extends to private commercial sites as well as owner-occupied sites, and these latter were scored by local authority officers more highly on average than local authority sites.
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. The postal survey explored local authority officers' perceptions of the reasons why Gypsies and other Travellers move into housing. The most important are a desire to settle and health reasons. Gypsy/Travellers interviewed gave similar reasons, and also stressed the importance of education for the children in the decision to move to housing.

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

F5: “Well I’ve got a husband and he’s had a heart attack and he needs peace and quiet now”  
(Gypsy on LA site)

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

F1: “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 had enough”  
(Gypsy housed)

There can be real problems for some Gypsy/Travellers in settling into permanent housing, not helped if neighbours are suspicious and hostile. 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.

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?”  
(Gypsy owner occ)

There are few specialist resources available to help Gypsies and other Travellers to settle. Some Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers keep in touch with housed families.

Managing Unauthorised Camping

In the case study authorities, experience of unauthorised camping very rarely led to plans for further site provision. Indeed, it almost seems that the more problematic unauthorised camping has proved, the less the authority wants to become involved in providing and managing sites for this client group. Gypsies and Travellers are concerned that public perceptions are formed by highly visible encampments, and that anti-Traveller feeling is generated where campers behave badly which tars all Gypsies and other Travellers with the same brush.

There are few examples of existing residential sites directly helping in the management of unauthorised camping. The only case study transit site is seen as a great benefit, although it caters for one group of Travellers. 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. Residential sites rarely have vacancies which could be used to accommodate unauthorised campers, even if they would be compatible with existing residents.
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. Some interviewees felt that their authority’s response was inadequate, and our survey suggests a generally low key approach to human rights and race relations issues within Gypsy/Traveller policies – around four out of ten local authorities had reviewed Gypsy/Traveller policies and procedures in the light of the Human Rights Act; very few authorities include Gypsy/Travellers as an ethnic group in ethnic record keeping and monitoring.

M2: “The women used to go there every Sunday, Karaoke, and then cos he found out they were Gypsies, he barred them”

F3: “Barred ‘em, for no reason at all”

F5: “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 on LA site)
CHAPTER 4
Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites

This section presents information collected in the research about the current network of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites.

The Sites Network

Every January local authorities make a return to ODPM providing details of the Gypsy/Traveller sites in their area. The postal survey distributed to local authorities as part of this research asked for similar basic information and provides a check on the ODPM sites count – although only for the 80% of sites where a postal questionnaire was returned.

NUMBER OF SITES AND PITCHES

At 2 January 2002 the count reveals a network of 324 sites2 with 5,005 pitches. Answers to the postal survey in general were similar to the counts, but:

- Two of the count sites have been sold to a registered social landlord. Five 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 was returned as 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. Seven sites in the 2002 count are apparently closed, recorded as having no residential or transit pitches at the time of the count. The postal survey revealed higher numbers of ‘temporarily closed’ sites, including some excluded from the counts. There are 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.

2 The count summary shows 325 sites, but the site owned jointly by two London Boroughs appears to have been counted twice.
The count figures for pitches overstate the number of pitches actually in use. The postal survey revealed a total of 190 pitches on residential sites (5% of all pitches recorded in the survey) which were not in use. 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; and refurbishment. Some may never come back into use.

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 – because of a temporary planning permission or a leasehold interest.

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

Table 1 shows the distribution of sites and pitches in January 2002 by region, distinguishing between residential and transit pitches. The table shows the low number of transit pitches available (6% of the total), and within this the relative sparsity of transit pitches in the southern regions of England, and especially London.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Transit</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humberside</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>930</td>
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<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5,005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Distribution of Sites and Pitches by Region

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

RECENT CHANGES IN SITE/PITCH NUMBERS

The postal survey asked about changes to site provision since 1994. The findings are shown in Table 2, which also includes grossed-up estimates for England as a whole.

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<thead>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Transit</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
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<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5,005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The recent changes in site/pitch numbers show a decrease in the number of residential pitches and an increase in transit pitches. The Southern regions show a decline in both residential and transit pitches, while the Northern regions show an increase in residential pitches and a decrease in transit pitches. London shows a decrease in both residential and transit pitches.
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.

The apparent modest gains in pitches are reduced if pitches not currently in use and sites ‘temporarily’ closed are assumed not to be brought back into use.

**FUTURE PLANS FOR SITES**

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 an 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). Such plans may have no effect on availability of site provision, but would rather affect its ownership and/or management.

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 benefited 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.
A Description of Gypsy/Traveller Sites

The physical survey covered 107 sites of which 97 were residential, and the remainder were transit or mixed transit/residential sites. Because sample numbers for transit and mixed sites are so small, the descriptions below relate to residential sites only.

Location and Environment: most sites (70%) are located in fringe areas of towns or villages (70%), and a further fifth (19%) are in rural areas. 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. Given these locations, 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.

Around half of all sites suffer from problems from adjoining land or activities to some extent. The most 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.

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.

Quality of Site: over half of sites were assessed as visually either very good (14%) or good (44%), while 30% were average. 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 (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. Some form of entrance control is common, especially to prevent unauthorised entry (or exit) of trailers. Almost half of sites (49%) have an entrance gate or barrier, and 6% have some sort of entrance control building. Eight in ten sites have safe access and egress.

Site Roadways and Paths: most site roads are constructed of tarmac or concrete. Most have some form of traffic calming measure, most commonly speed bumps. Most sites do not have footpaths, and 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.

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.
Drainage, Water and Other Infrastructure Services: the great majority of sites are assessed as adequate on basic infrastructure provision including water and electricity supply. Surface water drainage is fair on 28% of sites and poor on 19%. Another area of potential concern is storage of LPG cylinders which are used on almost all sites but rarely catered for formally. Around one site in five (all in fringe and rural areas) have some form of non-mains sewage treatment. These can provide particular management costs and/or problems.

Fire Protection: sites often do not meet basic fire safety standards required of caravan sites. 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. Over four sites in ten (43%) have no formal fire fighting equipment.

Communal Provision: very few sites have areas set aside for work purposes (4%) or animal grazing (13%). Play areas – the most commonly provided communal facility other than open land – are provided on a quarter of sites. Most play areas are used as intended and two-thirds are judged to be safe.

Residential Pitches: details were collected in the physical survey of 1,456 pitches on residential sites. 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 published by the Department of the Environment in 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 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.

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. 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 surfaces were judged poor across the site on about one site in ten. Most pitches have some form of fencing or walling. Surveyors judged that surface water drainage was not adequate on 17% of pitches, and that 12% of pitches suffer from natural flooding.

Amenity Blocks: virtually all residential sites provide amenity units with WC and washing facilities for all residents on the basis of one unit per pitch. Most (97%) are brick or block built with pitched roofs.

The 1979 DoE site design guide did not recommend a minimum floor area for amenity units, although specimen layouts 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 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 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 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). Very few amenity units are accessible to someone in a wheelchair. Around three in ten have some unheated rooms. Showers are slightly more common than baths. A small minority of units have stainless steel rather than vitreous china WC and wash hand basin.

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. In terms of decorative state, surveyors assessed external condition higher than internal condition (50% good compared with 34% good). One unit in 20 (5%) 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. 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 the 308 sites open and occupied in early 2002, and excluded sites ‘temporarily’ closed. This exclusion means that the cost of bringing sites which are currently closed back to standard and into use are additional to those quoted below. Also excluded are the costs of any desirable but significant site upgradings, for example to increase the size of small pitches or add day rooms to small amenity units. All estimated expenditure is expressed in current money terms.
Table 3 summarises estimated maintenance/improvement expenditure needs over a thirty year period by region. It also shows the average annual expenditure per site.

The grand total over the full thirty year period is £123.5 million, equivalent to £13,363 per site per year. 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 million (2%), and on mixed sites is £3.633 million (3%).

Table 4 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.

<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>
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<tr>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>£17,009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
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</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 carried out by FPDSavills
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.

### Other Perceptions of Site Quality

#### LOCAL AUTHORITY PERSONNEL

The postal survey asked local authority 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 utility blocks); standard of site management; and resident satisfaction. The great majority of respondents assessed their sites as being 3 or better. Assessments were relatively worst on appearance and physical condition and, perhaps not surprisingly from this group of respondents, best on site management.

The main perceived reasons for poor physical condition and maintenance are age and usage, vandalism and poor initial design. The last two factors seem to have been given greater weight by local authority respondents than by FPDSavills surveyors who attributed problems overwhelmingly to wear and tear.
GYPSIES AND OTHER TRAVELLERS

Gypsy/Traveller interviewees were living on sites which vary greatly in terms of location, size, design, amenities, maintenance, cleanliness and ‘quality’.

Interviewees were much more critical of sites for poor environment than for remoteness from services – although some sites were quite isolated. Residents were concerned about noise, disturbance and pollution from nearby major roads. 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.

F1: “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)

M2: “They build the site where they wanna build it”

F1: “And do you know where the majority of them’s built? On old tips, old rubbish dumps”

M2: “They build it where they want, they don’t ask the people where they're gonna build it”

F1: “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)

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’ which house bathroom and toilet facilities. Some were felt to be very badly built.

Some interviewees commented on poor site drainage, and occasionally with arrangements for foul sewage. On the whole residents approved of speed humps on site roads. 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. Reinforcing the findings of the physical survey, many sites were said by residents to have poor or inadequate fire precautions. Points raised include poor water pressure, not enough hoses, hoses too small or not long enough and no alarms. There had been fires on some sites.

F5: “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 no even water pressure, it trickles out”

F4: “That's right, we haven't even a hose pipe – we have to buy our own hose pipe” (Gypsy on LA site)
Pitches vary in size. Some are judged 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. This can pose various problems. It is difficult to get trailers level and leads to dangers of tripping. While areas of grass, shrubs or a garden on a pitch were not often asked for spontaneously, they were appreciated where they existed.

The size, content and layout of the amenity ‘sheds’ varies. 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 size (too small); lack of storage; poor build quality; damp; infestation with mice and other vermin; problems with plumbing or electricity; and heating which is either lacking or said to be inadequate, non-functional or too expensive to run.

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 on private site, previously LA owned)

F1: “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”

F7: “Specially in the wintertime when we’re doing the cooking in there”

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

F7: “There’s a blow-out heater, but we can’t afford for the price of electric, ‘cos it’s so expensive” (Irish on LA site)

F1: “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, for the bathing and washing and things I do in there, washing me clothes, kids clothes in there” (Irish on LA site)
CHAPTER 5
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 section looks at how local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites are currently managed with the emphasis on residential sites.

Managing In-House and Contracting Out

The postal survey revealed quite a variety of site management arrangements. Overall, the most common pattern is for sites to be owned and managed by the same authority (63%), followed by the site being owned by one authority and managed by another (24%) – most usually a district council managing a county council site, but very occasionally the reverse. 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. Site managers almost always have sole responsibility for allocating pitches and authorising day-to-day repairs. Managers are solely responsible for setting licence fees on only one site in five where management is contracted out.

The case studies included sites managed on contract by a private company and a Gypsy/Traveller body, and one owned by a county council and managed by the district council. Respondents in case study authorities managing in-house generally thought this the best option, while respondents in areas with contracted-out management saw distinct advantages in this arrangement (although some also saw disadvantages in one area where there were differences in perception about contractor performance). 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.

Opinions are very mixed 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. However, respondents in the case study where management was contracted to a Gypsy/Traveller body 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.

The views of Gypsies and other Travellers interviewed for the research were also mixed on the question of Gypsy/Travellers as site owners or managers.
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)

F1: “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 warden” (Irish Traveller on LA site)

Organisation and Staffing

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.

STAFF NUMBERS AND SALARIES

The management survey provides information on staffing levels devoted to managing a site. Levels varied widely – from 0.05 to 3.0 full time equivalents (FTEs). Very broadly the figures imply about 1 FTE for 16 site pitches – very much higher than the average ratio between stock and management staff in social housing.

The survey attempted to collect information about the ‘site manager’ who has front-line, day-to-day responsibility for site management and contact with site residents. Despite careful question wording, it is apparent that different authorities interpreted this 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’. Given these inconsistencies it is perhaps not surprising that ‘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. However there is consensus on the 'site manager' task which includes the bulk of day-to-day management tasks but not cleaning or minor repairs. This suggests a 'generic' approach to site management. 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' (a term disliked by some as it smacks of prison). 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, and this understandably tends to be resented. One of the most important features is that residents should feel that site officials ‘respect’ them.
Site Occupancy

The management survey and case studies collected information about the characteristics of site residents and site dynamics.

ETHNIC GROUPS HOUSED

The majority of sites (78%) caters for a single broad group of Gypsy/Travellers (English Gypsy, Irish Traveller or New 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 management survey sites. Irish Travellers live on 28% of sites and New Travellers on 3%. Just over seven out of ten survey sites (71%) 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.
The conventional wisdom among site managers is that the different ethnic groups rarely mix on sites without trouble, although most can quote exceptional examples – including several of the case study sites. This conventional wisdom is often shared by Gypsies and Travellers themselves.

M2: “They was going to make it 25 Irish and 25 English”

M1: “Well that’d be a war zone that if they’d done that, it would be a war zone. Don’t mix, different way of living, different kind of people” (Gypsy on LA site)

F1: “But not everybody on here is the same. There is English, Irish – all different things on here”

F3: “Irish, Scotch”

F1: “It’s not like we are all the one family”

F2: “We are all different families. All single families”

I: “But everyone gets on here, there is no problem?”

F2: “Yes” (Gypsy LA)

**DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Sites included in the management survey housed up to 183 people. Expressed as persons per pitch (the nearest approximation to household size possible) there was a range between 1 and 10.5 persons (an Inner London Borough). The median number of persons per occupied pitch was 3.13 persons, higher than the 1999 average household size among the English population as a whole of 2.36 persons. Child density on sites are often higher than is normal in the settled community (on almost two-thirds of sites children make up more than a third of the population).

On seven out of ten sites a minority of households work although this is a difficult calculation to make given the intermittent and casual nature of some Gypsy/Traveller employment. Another factor is a tendency for pitches to be licensed to women and children, effectively as single parent families. Male partners may come and go over time; they may well be working and travelling in order to work in traditional ways.

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.

**SITE DYNAMICS AND TURNOVER**

Most residential Gypsy/Traveller sites appear to have very low turnover, and are stable. Most residents have lived on site for three years or more on 86% of sites. 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. 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.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Social mix and cohesiveness is often one of the most important factors to residents on residential sites. Interviews illustrate the importance of community, but also how quickly things can change for the worse.

F4: “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 on LA site)

F3: “There was a lot of strange people started coming on . . . . site a couple of year ago”

M2: “There’s so many mixed people on there now, that there’s arguments there all the time” (Gypsy LA)

F3: “About children or whatever, or blocking the road” (Gypsy LA)

A break down of social cohesion can lead to disharmony and fights, or to people leaving to avoid nuisance and conflict.

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 on owner occupied site)

I: “So why did you move from one site to the other?”

F1: “Different people moved on there, right, we didn’t get on with them. A lot of Gypsies don’t get on together” (Gypsy housed)

While in general Gypsies and Travellers seem prepared to be tolerant of different lifestyles of neighbours, many interviewees maintain that there are a few ‘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, rackets or other crime; destroying property; and damaging the site environment, tipping serious rubbish etc. ‘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.
M1: “It was good till the wrong crowd come in – everybody was happy like then we had the wrong crowd come 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 everybody, making the police come in around you then” (Irish housed)

Aspects of Site Management Policies and Procedures

Site management is commonly seen as central to the viability and sustainability of Gypsy/Traveller sites. The research looked at various aspects of site management and made some comparisons with housing management.

LICENCE AGREEMENTS, RULES AND ENFORCEMENT

Gypsy/Traveller site pitches are let on a licence rather than a tenancy. This in itself is contentious with Gypsies and other Travellers and their supporters. As licensees, site residents enjoy less security and fewer rights than council tenants. At best, site licensees have security of tenure granted by the Caravan Sites Act 1968 which gives basic protection from eviction without 28 days notice. If appropriate notice is given, a court must grant possession which may – legally – be sought without any specific grounds. Gypsy/Traveller interviewees proved to be very unclear about their security of tenure – some under-estimating and some over-stating it.

I: “The licence only legally entitles you to four weeks notice. Did you know that?”

F3: “Well none of us is scholars and they was never read out to us before we signed”

F2: “I can’t read, I can’t write, I wouldn’t know” (Gypsy on private site)

Under a licence, residents’ rights and responsibilities essentially depend on the terms of the licence agreement. 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, although it takes place on a much larger proportion of sites suggesting that rules are not rigorously enforced, even so far as some polluting and probably illegal activities are concerned (cable/tyre burning).

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 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.
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. In order to enforce at all, site managers must be aware of what is going on on site, underlining the importance of frequent visits, including some at unexpected times. Rules must be applied consistently, avoiding any hint of favouritism or unfairness. 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.

Site residents usually want lightly managed sites, putting a lot of emphasis on individual freedom and tolerance. Some ambivalence was apparent in interviews about rules and regulations on sites. 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 – people feel protected rather than threatened by the rules and are happy about the high quality of their environment. 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.

**PITCH ALLOCATIONS**

Pitch vacancies on residential sites arise infrequently. Eight out of ten residential sites have a waiting list for places. There are few formal exclusion policies except for outstanding rent arrears (a pitch would not normally be offered on 76% of sites). However, family or personal compatibility is the single most important factor taken into account when allocating pitches suggesting scope for further discretionary exclusions of families thought to be ‘incompatible’ with residents. Other important factors taken into account in allocations are need for accommodation, medical needs and previous known behaviour.

The case studies emphasised the importance of getting allocations ‘right’ and selecting those who will live peacefully with existing residents and generally ‘behave’ well. ‘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?’. Managers are well aware of their power as gate keepers, but seek to exercise their discretion in the interests of both existing residents and newcomers – ‘No-one would want to go to a site where they are not wanted’.

Given the importance of community cohesiveness and fear of ‘bad families’ Gypsies and Travellers seem more likely to praise than to criticise such practices.

F1: “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 on LA site)
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Reporting repairs is most commonly through an officer when on site – more common than use of the telephone which is the main means of repairs reporting for social housing tenants. 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.

Contractors were reported to have been reluctant to work on almost three-quarters of Gypsy/Traveller sites, and this is clearly an issue. Case study respondents put reluctance down largely to ignorance and prejudice, although some contractors have suffered theft, aggression and even violence (not confined to Gypsy sites).

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. 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.

F3: “We went to the council for about four year to fix them fences and they’ve just done it just last week” (Irish Traveller on LA site)

COLLECTING LICENCE FEES AND HOUSING BENEFIT

Residents make weekly licence fee (‘rent’) payments and may pay separately for water and sewage charges. On some sites, managers also collect payments for electricity. 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. The single most important way of collecting licence fees and other charges not met by housing benefit is door to door collection. This is much more common on sites than in social rented housing. 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 manager’s 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. 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.

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. Housing benefit officers had mounted a large, and largely unsuccessful, fraud investigation on one site. One interpretation is that this authority had tried, largely unsuccessfully, to take the lid off a can of worms that many others are carefully avoiding.
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. Repairs and refurbishment proposals were the most common topic for consultation. The most common means was verbally with individual 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 common, in part because of literacy problems. Regular forums or resident groups are rare. The case studies included some formal consultation mechanisms, but these were the exception.

Gypsies and Travellers 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. They commented that Travellers ‘have their own ways’ and may have different priorities and needs, which are not understood by outsiders. Despite the perceptions of the managers reported above, a common perception among residents is that many site operators just go ahead and do things without talking to the residents first about what they should do.

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 on private site)

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. Health and education workers stand out as those most likely to visit sites, and to do so on a regular basis. The police also visit the majority of sites, but normally on an ad hoc basis. Service providers are reported to have been reluctant to visit the site on some occasion on 40% of management survey 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%.

SITE MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

Site managers identify a number of problematic areas in carrying out their jobs – some are similar to those faced by managers of social housing. The most significant problem area identified were fly-tipping, rubbish etc; vandalism and damage to the site and amenities; site condition and need for refurbishment; disputes between incompatible individuals or families. Also mentioned were issues arising from the Gypsy/Traveller culture and avoiding or dealing with squatters and unauthorised residents.
Fly-tipping and waste disposal was also an issue picked up in interviews with Gypsies and other Travellers. 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. Gypsy/Travellers are also concerned because they feel they often get blamed for rubbish tipped by members of the settled community. 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.

M2: “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 on LA site)

The management survey attempted to identify the extent of disputes between residents and between site residents and the neighbouring settled community. 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). 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. 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 referred to difficulty in getting evidence about perpetrators, even where site residents were troubled by the nuisance.

**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. Table 5 presents the information for residential sites and includes some possible comparators for social housing. There is a problem in making direct comparisons of percentages because of the small size of sites which means that even a single vacancy, for example, will represent 7% on a 15 pitch site. The median rather than the mean is shown because a few unusual sites greatly influence the mean.
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. In the latter case the very high proportion of residents on full housing benefit sometimes accounts for very low arrears levels.

**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, people living there 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 frequently mentioned ideal style of management is firm, fair and consistent.

Site management is often more intensive than is the norm for social housing, and involves much more contact between licensees and managers. There seems to be a greater expectation that the manager knows everything that is going on on the site – or should try to. Many managers stress the need for mutual trust between residents and the site manager. Retaining this trust while acting in a fully professional and firm manner is perhaps more of a challenge to site managers than is usual for their social housing colleagues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Residential sites</th>
<th>Social housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitches vacant and available</td>
<td>Zero on 81% of sites</td>
<td>Not really comparable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover of pitches</td>
<td>Nil on 33% of sites</td>
<td>3% to 9% net voids in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relet time</td>
<td>Median 7% of pitches</td>
<td>local authority stock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evictions</td>
<td>Median 1 week</td>
<td>Housing Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licence fee arrears</td>
<td>Nil on 44% of sites</td>
<td>standard 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median 1.5% of debit</td>
<td>standard 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: **Management Performance Indicators for Residential Sites**
Financial Aspects of Site Management

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. Some licence fees are above the average social housing rent of about £50 a week, although for very different – and generally poorer – services and rights. Site residents resented very high licence fees and felt they represent poor value for money.

However, because so many residents receive housing benefit, other charges often have similar or greater impact on affordability. No charges in addition to licence fees are levied on only a fifth of sites. Common extra charges are: a damage deposit (on 44% of sites); charge for water (51% of sites); charges for sewage disposal (11% of sites); and small charge for electricity metering (18% of sites). Site residents sometimes felt that they pay a lot for electricity, and compared their bills adversely with those of house-dwellers.

HOUSING BENEFIT AND LOCAL REFERENCE RENTS

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.

It is apparent from the management survey and information collected at the scoping stage of the research that there can be a big gap in some counties between the licence fee charged and the LRR set by the Rent Officer. Licence fees leading to big gaps (£10 a week and over) are not unusually high. Some site owners faced with a gap have reduced licence fees to the LRR, thus losing income. Others have maintained licence fees, but do not try to collect the shortfall from benefit recipients. Others seek to collect the full licence fee from all residents. 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 make 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 all respondents were able to provide detailed site income and expenditure figures in the management survey. The median site income per pitch was £2,040 (based on 67 sites), while the median site expenditure per pitch was £2,300 (based on 59 sites). Where both pieces of information are available, and excluding any expenditure on major repairs and improvements, the median site profit/loss comes out at a deficit of £200 per pitch per annum.

It is clear that site finances vary widely from site to site. However, it is also clear that financial viability is quite finely poised, and is very dependent on housing benefit being available to fund licence fees at current levels. It is also clear that there is little scope for funding investment on site major repairs or improvements out of site income.
CHAPTER 6

Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs and Aspirations

This section looks to the future and considers what accommodation might be required to meet the needs and aspirations of Gypsies and other Travellers.

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, in order to meet the needs and aspirations of individual families.

**Permanent Housing:** Gypsy/Traveller attitudes to living in houses were 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. An owner-occupied house or bungalow would be more attractive than a social tenancy (perhaps the most likely housing option for many Gypsy/Travellers).

M2: “I couldn’t move in a house, guv, to be honest with you”

F4: “No, I couldn’t live in a house, no”

F5: “You’re all closed in”

M2: “It’s like catching a wild bird off a tree and putting him in a cage, it’s not your life”

F3: “You’ve got somebody next-door to you, there. You’re not a free person”

M2: “That will always be against you, because you’re a Gypsy” (Gypsy on LA site)

F1: “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 Traveller on LA site)

M1: “If you come into money and you had your own house, that’s different, ain’t it”

F2: “Well you wouldn’t have anyone around you, would you? Only your own family”

M1: “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 it’s own, wouldn’t you. Something you have built” (Gypsy on LA site)
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. 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. More and better quality sites may well reduce ‘demand’ for permanent housing among those who effectively see bricks-and-mortar as second best.

**Group Housing:** Group housing was developed in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and has recently been introduced on a pilot basis in Northern Ireland. 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.

In interviews, Gypsies and other Travellers were 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. 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 Travellers.

F1: “Oh I’d love it, love it”

F7: “Oh we’d love that, we’d love that”

F6: “I’d love it”

I: “So it’s not that you don’t like living in houses”

F6: “No, it’s living in a community” (Irish Traveller on LA site)

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 Traveller-friendly way, and to consult potential residents in more detail about how it should be done.

**PRIVATE SITES**

Most local authority personnel 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. Sales and leases of local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites to ‘private’ bodies seem set to continue, which will increase the stock of ‘private’ commercial sites. In this context it is important that site licensing and housing benefit issues are resolved rapidly.
Gypsies and other Travellers interviewed expressed few views on commercial private sites, and reactions were similar to those expressed in relation to local authority sites. Owner-occupied sites developed by and for single families is often a dream, but one which few think they can realistically fulfil because of costs and the problems in getting planning permission.

F: “It’s every Travellers’ dream – every Travellers’ dream” (Gypsy owner occupier)

F1: “We couldn’t do it, because we wouldn’t have the money, love, to buy it, I think you would need permission, wouldn’t you, 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 Traveller on LA site)

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 argue with the slant of guidance given in DoE Circular 1/94 (Gypsy Sites and Planning, which urges local planning authorities to enable site provision to meet assessed needs), but many doubt it is heeded by local planning authorities.

Local Authority Residential Sites: 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.

For many of the Gypsy/Travellers interviewed, the local authority site option was 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. Some active Travellers have no desire to settle at all, and would not favour living on a large rented site. This was a particularly unpopular idea for most New Travellers. 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: “You’ve got experience of living in a house, living by the roadside, living on a site like this, what’s the best way?”

F1: “I’d rather be in a site”

F2: “There’s more company here”

F1: “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 like, 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 on LA site)

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)
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 and keeping open the option of travelling for short periods but who do not have the financial and other resources needed to buy land for themselves.

**Accommodation for Nomadism**

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. 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.

**A Range of Provision:** 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. A range of 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:** 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, with obvious potential problems in controlling access, behaviour and length of stay. 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. It follows that transit site management is likely to be expensive, and certainly not a cheap option for local authorities.

**Emergency Stopping Places:** Emergency 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 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. Getting planning permission for such sites is identified as a particular problem.
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. Some local authorities which have developed transit sites are enthusiastic and see great advantages accruing in saving money on managing unauthorised camping. Other authorities with transit site provision admit that the sites are not working as planned, and have found them difficult and expensive to manage. Officers in some local authorities without transit sites share these doubts as to their practicality.

Gypsy/Traveller Views: 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, because of physical or social conditions, or because they get clogged up and become low grade residential sites.

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. Interest in transit site provision is also limited by diminishing interest in active travelling in many quarters.

I: “Do you think they need more of what they call transit sites, sites where you can pull on for three or four weeks?”

F7: “They could do with some more of them”

M3: “All over the country”

F7: “All over – not just here”

F1: “Yeah but, whoever would come on them? 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”

F3: “Cos anyone could be on it, like perverts or – ”

F1: “Murderers or anything, like we don’t know all the Travellers, we can’t say they’re all OK” (Irish Traveller on LA site)

I: “When you were travelling, did you prefer living by the side of the road or did you prefer living on an organised site?”

M1: “I preferred living on the side of the road because I was free”

F3: “Yeah because an organised site, down come Hitler, telling you how to live your life” (Irish Traveller housed)

The interviews with Gypsies and other Travellers also covered attitudes to travelling and its future. 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.
F: “Eventually travelling life will just go”

I: “And again, are you sad about that?”

F: “Very. Eventually it will go, because it’s getting harder and 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)

F7: “They’ll never get rid of the travelling people, they’ll never stop that”

F4: “There’s always be people out there travelling”

M3: “While there’s wheels there’ll be caravans on them” (Irish LA)

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. 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.

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?”

F1: “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 Traveller on LA site)

Measuring Requirements for Sites

There has not been an official assessment of need for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation since the first Gypsy census in the mid 1960s. Our postal survey showed that only about one in ten responding authorities had carried out an assessment of needs for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation over the past five years.

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 several difficulties, not least of which is a lack of basic information beyond the bi-annual Gypsy caravan count which has been widely criticised as inconsistent.

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. At best, this should be seen as an estimate of orders of magnitude rather than an accurate assessment. Gypsy counts form the basis for the estimate. 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 have made separate calculations for residential site requirements (Table 6) and for provision for mobility, which might take the form of transit sites, stopping places or the
roadside (Table 7). 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. The estimates are very significant in terms of existing provision. The upper estimate assumes the need for additional pitches equal to around a third of existing provision. Table 6 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 (Table 7) 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. One critical element

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### Table 6: 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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: 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><strong>Total requirement to 2007</strong></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.

These estimates are similar in magnitude to the sum of estimates of local needs given by local authority respondents to the postal survey. It is apparent that there are significant shortfalls and requirements for further site 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.

**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 relatively small – perhaps between 12 and 20 pitches.

M2: “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 is 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 on LA site)

- 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.
M1: “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 on LA site)

- Many Gypsy/Travellers would like larger amenity blocks, with day rooms.

F3: “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 on LA site)

- 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.

F5: “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?”

M2: “Well, to shut the Gypsies off from the road”

F5: “We’re like rats, we was an eyesore”

F3: “Yeah – it’s to hide the caravans” (Gypsy on LA site)

F1: “This is like a reservation – you have no pleasure thing have you? You’ve no trees, no grass, no anything” (Irish LA)

Obstacles to Site Provision

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 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 tops the list, as it did for Cripps. This is also likely to be related to problems in getting planning permission. 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. 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. There is also a feeling that providing for Gypsies and other Travellers is a national as much as a local responsibility which can contribute to lower local commitment.
CHAPTER 7

Conclusions and Recommendations

This section summarises some of the main findings and presents recommendations from the research.

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. Essential elements in a strategy 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 and might well be re-examined. Further research is probably needed on specific issues.

- A national (and regional) assessment of need. The estimates made in this research might be refined through consultation with interested parties to reach agreement both on target numbers and the relative roles of different accommodation options.

- The strategy would also 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.

- 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.

The definition of a ‘Gypsy’ should be debated nationally. 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 the research is that Gypsies and other Travellers are often socially excluded and still suffer discrimination in many areas of life. There is a need 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. There is also a need to make Gypsies and other Travellers less ‘invisible’ in policies aimed to help socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

**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. Trends in numbers since 1994 are hard to read because of site sales and leases and ‘temporary’ closures. Unless currently closed pitches and sites are re-opened there will probably 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 outside the strictly local authority sector. The importance of keeping existing sites available is clear.

The 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 1-5 (2002-2007), rising to over £24 million in years 11-15 and 16-20.

The Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant (GSRG) 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.

- 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.

- 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.
New Site Provision

On balance it seems that there will be continuing need and demand for accommodation specifically provided for Gypsies and other Travellers, where they can live in caravans and with others sharing a similar culture and lifestyle. Many Gypsy/Travellers will continue to travel with caravans and other vehicles for part of the year.

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 and population growth over the next five years. 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. Owner-occupied sites for individual families or small groups of families are popular and these should continue to be enabled through the planning system. However, 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. There are roles for both private sector and local authority provision.

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. Close consultation on design matters is vital. The locations and environment of many existing sites are poor, in respect of isolation from services and/or proximity to noisy or polluting land uses. 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 much more difficult to predict the level of need for formal transit sites and stopping places to accommodate the desire for nomadism and periodic travelling. It is also hard to be sure about the appropriate style of provision – there is very little successful experience to draw upon and conflicting views of what will and will not work. 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.

A national, or at least regional, network of transit sites and stopping places 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.

A distinction is drawn between transit sites and stopping places related to the standard of provision and anticipated length of stay. There seems to be some consensus that transit sites must be well equipped and closely managed. They will not be cheap, either in initial
build costs or in continuing running costs. There is much less consensus about whether stopping places with basic amenities and lighter management can work effectively.

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. However, one-off sites cannot be expected to work anyway. One way out of this might be to run a pilot scheme within a particular geographical area to attempt to develop a mini-network of sites rather than scatter pilots over the country.

GROUP HOUSING

Group housing, as developed in the Republic of Ireland, 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 by the Housing Corporation.

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. 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.

Overcoming Barriers to Site Provision

There are many barriers to site provision – not least resistance from the local settled community. 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. There would have to be central commitment to enforce the duty.

The Government has signalled its intention to introduce ‘sticks and carrots’ for site provision, stopping short of legislation. 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. 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, especially given the widespread doubts about the likely effectiveness of this form of provision.

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.

- Housing associations could become involved in site provision and management, and the Housing Corporation could provide social housing grant as for other general and special needs housing. Issues around site licensing and model standards, and tenure (that is whether or not the Mobile Homes Act 1983 might apply) 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. Better understanding between the travelling and settled communities is needed as a prelude to reducing ‘knee-jerk’ objections to proposals for site provision. Challenging unacceptable Gypsy/Traveller behaviour, especially in the context of unauthorised camping, is important since this is a factor in creating and maintaining public attitudes.

Lessons for Site Management

ORGANISATION, RESOURCING AND STAFFING

The research found a wide variety of site management arrangements. There is no real consensus as to whether management is better in-house or externally, and no evidence that any one management arrangement works better than any other. 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.

There are some more definite conclusions:

- 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. 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.
Conclusions and Recommendations

• 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. In this context local authorities with only one site to manage might consider sharing management responsibilities with neighbours.

• Training, mutual support and sharing experience for site management are areas worth developing in the future. Government funding might be made available to support training as has happened in the past for mainstream housing management.

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.

• Licence agreements vary widely both in terms of the ground they cover and their style. Many are very much less balanced and less resident-friendly than most modern social housing tenancy agreements. A ‘model’ agreement might be produced to give an idea of the balance and style normally expected of such contract documents today.

• The consensus 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 are some areas where manager discretion appears to be more widespread than is common in social housing. There may be scope for more formal recording of discretionary pitch allocation decisions and their consequences. 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. 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. 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 local reference rents for housing benefit purposes, while sites owned by local housing authorities are not. This introduces uncertainty and unfairness for both residents and site owner/managers, and restricts the feasibility of Gypsy/Travellers providing sites for themselves on a commercial basis.
MEASURING PERFORMANCE

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 site managers 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 managers could use to begin to compare with others. More formal national benchmarking might be considered.

LICENCES OR TENANCIES?

Residents of residential Gypsy/Traveller sites are licensees with only basic protection against harassment and illegal eviction. 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. Given the changes in tenancies currently being considered, it would be worth thinking further about the status of site residents. However, we believe that a right to buy would cause considerable problems for site managers if exercised on a piecemeal individual basis.

Further Guidance and Support

Current guidance to local authorities on Gypsy/Traveller site design and management is dated. 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 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. In particular officers would welcome good practice examples of transit site provision and management.
Further copies of this short report available from:

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