

North Surrey

**Gypsy and Traveller
Accommodation Assessment**

2006-2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINAL

April 2007

1. This report contains a summary of the results from an Assessment of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation (GTAA) in the North Surrey Districts of Elmbridge, Runnymede, Spelthorne and Woking.
2. The assessment of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation need is a statutory requirement under s.225 of the Housing Act 2004. This assessment is carried out to inform the future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation strategies in the above Boroughs and enable these authorities to provide advice to the Regional Planning Body (RPB), the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) in order that they might allocate future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation pitch requirements between Local Planning Authorities (LPAs).
3. The aims of this project were to:
4. Assess and project the extent of Traveller and Gypsy accommodation need across North Surrey by;
5. Providing a needs forecast for the next 5 years and a subsequent indicative forecast up until 2016.
6. Providing robust information with which to support the implementation of planning policies and guidance
7. Identifying the needs, aspirations, intentions and preferences of households and the extent to which these can be met within existing housing resources
8. The completion of these objectives is achieved through a methodology informed by the Draft Practice Guidance on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments published by the Gypsy and Traveller Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in February 2006.
9. A total of 147 face-to-face interviews on sites of all types and in housing within the study area were undertaken within the study with additional data taken from the official six-monthly counts of caravans, local data and information and other research undertaken in the study area. (Report paragraph 1.1.3)
10. Gypsies and Travellers make up less than 1% of the population of England but only a proportion of Gypsies and Travellers live in caravans. While this population is relatively small, estimated to be approximately 650 individual Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans in the North Surrey districts, the accommodation needs of this group are notably different from that of the 'settled community' and need to be appropriately incorporated within modern sustainable and inclusive communities. (Report Paragraph 2.2.5)

11. Gypsies and Travellers are defined as:

persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or living in a caravan; and all other persons of a nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including;

- (i) such persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependents' educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently; and
- (ii) members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such).'

12. This study includes an assessment of the accommodation of need of Gypsies and Travellers as defined above, however the specific needs of caravan dwelling Gypsies and Travellers as distinguished from Travelling Showmen is considered separately as the delivery of any identified need will be distinct due to the differing needs and requirements of the two groups.

13. While both groups tend to prefer extended family living and habitually undertake seasonal or other occasional travel, Travelling Showmen do so in order to pursue a specific economic purposes, the running of travelling shows, funfairs or circuses. For these reasons the accommodation need for permanent bases for Showpeople, often called winter quarters, differs from that of other Travellers as these quarters require additional space and facilities for the maintenance and storage of rides and other equipment.

14. This study identifies that the North Surrey Gypsy and Traveller population is relatively stable with little evidence of seasonal travel originating within the four districts. This does not preclude other Gypsies and Travellers resorting to the North Surrey area as evidenced by the occasional rise in authorised encampments. (Report Paragraph 2.4.1)

15. The official caravan counts demonstrate that Surrey had a good record of site provision during the period when this provision was a statutory requirement and at a time when many authorities in the South East Region failed to adequately provide new pitch accommodation. This data also shows a reduction in the number of unauthorised caravans since the late 1980's and a slight increase in the numbers of private authorised caravans. (Report Paragraph 3.1.2)

16. In January 2007 a total of 136 caravan pitches were identified by this study. Though the identification of separate family units is difficult within Gypsy and Traveller sites, each pitch was considered to equate to one household. The average household size identified through interviews in this study was 3.6 persons, notably higher than the 2.3 person average household size of the settled community of England though lower than found in other Gypsy and Traveller surveys undertaken by the appointed consultant. (Report Paragraph 2.2.5)

17. The Gypsy and Traveller caravan dwelling population in North Surrey is roughly evenly spread across public and private sites with the most recent data showing 72 of the 126 authorised pitches in the study area, 57%, provided on public pitches run by the constituent Borough Councils and the County Council and the remaining 54 pitches, 43%, provided on privately owned land, normally owned and occupied by extended Gypsy and Traveller families. (Report Table 6)
18. The large majority, 88%, of Gypsies and Travellers in the study area have self identified as English Gypsies with 9% identifying as Irish Travellers and 4% of 'other' ethnicity. 1% of Survey respondents identified themselves as Travelling Showmen. This distribution is considered to be representative of the wider population of the area. (Report paragraph 2.1.3)
19. Even in the most stable of communities the population can be expected to rise through family growth, families arriving from elsewhere and new family formation. National guidance in this field identifies that new site provision has fallen short of population growth resulting in a national shortage of Gypsy and Traveller sites.
20. The study identifies that there are currently 18 households on unauthorised developments within North Surrey and the current Gypsy and Traveller population is forecast to grow requiring a need for 18 new pitches in the next five years. This population growth is calculated on a 3% year on year growth as advocated in the most recent ODPM/DCLG guidance. (Report Paragraphs 4.1.4 and 4.1.11)
21. The assessment of 'hidden households' is extremely difficult within any community, more so with the fluid Gypsy and Traveller community. While the study provided no evidence of any likely households coming from elsewhere, whether from outside of the study area or likely to be generated from housed Gypsies and Travellers wishing to transfer to caravan accommodation, survey responses identified some overcrowding of existing sites within the area. In order that a rational estimate could be made of the pitch requirement generated by this overcrowding an adjustment of 10% to the current pitch supply has been used. This would result in an additional need of 13 pitches. This adjustment is considered appropriate based upon the judgement and professional experience of the research team. (Report paragraph 4.1.5)
22. The full assessment is summarised in Table 6 of the report, reproduced below.
23. The full sets of background data have not been included in this report due to their size and complexity. Also due to the small population size it is possible that individual identification of survey participants would be possible and therefore additional time is needed to collate and present this data in such a way as to protect individuals rights to privacy. This data will be made available separately.

**Table 6: Gypsy/Traveller future accommodation need 2007-2016 in
North Surrey
(pitches rounded, excluding Travelling Showmen)
DCLG variable number in brackets**

| | Total |
|--|--------------|
| Part A Current residential supply | |
| Current supply of occupied local authority residential site pitches (1) | 72 |
| Current supply of occupied authorised privately owned site pitches (2) | 54 |
| Total Households | 126 |
| Number of unused local authority pitches, and vacancies on privately owned sites available in North Surrey (3) | 3 |
| Number of existing pitches expected to become vacant in near future (LA and privately owned) (4) | 0 |
| Number of households in site accommodation expressing a desire to live in housing (5) | 0 |
| New local authority pitches planned in year 1 (6) | 0 |
| Private sites likely to gain planning permission during year 1 (7) | 0 |
| Total pitch provision available (2006) | 129 |
| - seeking permanent site accommodation in the area (8) | 0 |
| - on unauthorised encampments (9) | 0 |
| - on unauthorised developments for which planning permission is not expected (10) | 18 |
| - currently overcrowded (11) | 13 |
| - new households expecting to arrive from elsewhere (12) | 0 |
| New family formations expected to arise from within existing households (13) | 0 |
| In housing but with a need for site accommodation (14) | 0 |
| Current shortfall | 31 |
| family formation 2007 – 2012 (15(i)) | 18 |
| Extra pitch need 2007 – 2012 | 49 |
| family formation 2012-2016 (15(ii)) | 21 |

Conclusions

Travelling Showmen

- 2.1 An initial assessment of accommodation need in Surrey was carried out by WS Planning in 2004 and was subsequently endorsed by the Showmen's Guild. This assessment identified an additional need to meet current shortfall of 24 pitches for Travelling Showpeople and it is now estimated that a further 5 pitches are required to deal with population growth since the completion of that study in 2004. Information on current provision produced by the Boroughs for this GTAA study has identified that the 2004 WS Planning study underestimated the provision of showmens pitches, including several long-standing sites in Spelthorne. In addition it also failed to identify a large seasonal provision in the Borough of Runnymede.. In light of this it is considered that there is no evidence of any current shortfall in Showmen accommodation in the study area or likely need to provide more accommodation in the next five years. However further discussion with the Showmen's Guild will need to be undertaken to allow continued review of this matter.

Gypsies and Travellers

- 3.1 This study of North Surrey indicates an additional need for Gypsy and Traveller sites of 49 new pitches in the next five years, comprising a current shortfall of 31 and an estimated family formation, to the end of the period 2012, of 18.
- 3.2 The accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers currently within and wishing to remain within conventional housing is not discussed in this report as it will be dealt with in the North Surrey Districts' own Housing Need Assessments.
- 3.3 The allocation of pitches across or without North Surrey is a political decision to be made by the constituent authorities and SEERA. Any allocation may seek to meet identified needs where they arise. This may reinforce existing patterns of provision and population or may be based on a more strategic assessment to protect or enhance other considerations including social inclusion.
- 3.4 However, the provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation across the South East is quite variable with particularly high numbers provided for in Surrey but with a relatively low level of unauthorised sites. Some other counties, notably Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, East and West Sussex, and Kent have high unauthorised provision relative to their current authorised provision, this would suggest a significant under-provision of sites in these areas currently and in the past (see Draft SE Plan, page 91). The strategic implications of this regional imbalance in

provision and unauthorised sites, and the findings of individual GTAAs, all need to be taken into account by SEERA in the current review.