

OXFORD CITY, SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT AND VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCILS

GYPSY, TRAVELLER AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE ACCOMMODATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2013



February 2013



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1. Introduction

The Survey

- 1.1 Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned by Oxford City, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District to undertake a Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment.
- 1.2 The main objective of this study was to provide the Councils with robust, defensible and up to date evidence about the accommodation needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople in the period until 2026 for Oxford City, 2027 for South Oxfordshire and 2029 for Vale of White Horse. It also required recommendations on whether or not any of the local authorities need to plan for the provision of transit sites or emergency stopping places.
- 1.3 A secondary objective was to assess the needs of people living on existing sites in terms of any extra pitches that may be required. The study also seeks to highlight how Government planning guidance for Traveller sites will impact upon the planning and housing strategies employed by the local authorities.
- 1.4 The commissioning partners were:
- Oxford City Council;
 - South Oxfordshire District Council; and
 - Vale of White Horse District Council.
- 1.5 We would note at the outset that the study also includes the needs of New Travellers, but for short hand ease of use we have referred to the study as a Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment. However, in the course of the study, no evidence was found of any New Traveller populations.
- 1.6 This document is the main report and summarises the key findings of the study in particular where they relate to existing policies or have implications for future policy decisions across the partners. A separate executive summary has also been produced.

Legislation and Guidance for Gypsies and Travellers

- 1.7 Decision making for policy concerning Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople sits within a complex legislative and national policy framework and this study must be viewed in the context of this legislation and guidance. For example, the following pieces of legislation and guidance are relevant when constructing policies relating to Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople:
- Planning Policy for Traveller Sites 2012;
 - National Planning Policy Framework 2012;

- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments Guidance October 2007;
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 for statutory nuisance provisions;
- The Human Rights Act 1998, when making decisions and welfare assessments;
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as subsequently amended);
- Homelessness Legislation and Allocation Policies;
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (sections 61, 62);
- Anti-social behaviour Act 2003 (both as victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour);
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- Housing Act 2004 which requires local housing authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople as part of their housing needs assessments. This study complies with this element of government guidance;
- Housing Act 1996 in respect of homelessness.

^{1.8} The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (Sections 61, 62) is particularly important with regard to the issue of planning for Gypsy and Traveller site provision. This repealed the duty of local authorities to provide appropriate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. However, Circular 1/94 did support maintaining existing sites and stated that appropriate future site provision should be considered.

^{1.9} The previous Labour Government guidance focused on increasing site provision for Gypsies and Travellers and encouraging local authorities to have a more inclusive approach to Gypsies and Travellers within their housing needs plans. The Housing Act 2004 required local authorities to identify the need for Gypsy and Traveller sites, alongside the need for other types of housing, when conducting Housing Needs Surveys. Therefore all local authorities were required to undertake accommodation assessments for Gypsies and Travellers either as a separate study such as this one, or as part of their main Housing Needs Assessment.

^{1.10} Local authorities were encouraged rather than compelled to provide new Gypsy and Traveller sites by central government. Circular 1/06 ‘Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites’, released by the DCLG in January 2006, replaced Circular 1/94 and suggested that the provision of authorised sites should be encouraged so that the number of unauthorised sites would be reduced.

^{1.11} The Coalition Government announced that the previous government approach contained in Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites (Circular 01/06) was to be repealed, along with the Regional Spatial Strategies which were used to allocate pitch provision to local authorities. This happened in 2012 with the publication of the CLG document ‘Planning Policy for Traveller Sites’ in March 2012.

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

^{1.12} The document ‘Planning Policy for Traveller Sites’ sets out the direction of government policy. Among other objectives, the new policy’s aims in respect of Traveller sites are (Planning Policy for Traveller Sites Page 1-2):

- that local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning;
- to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites;
- to encourage local planning authorities to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale;
- that plan-making and decision-taking should protect Green Belt from inappropriate development;
- to promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites;
- that plan-making and decision-taking should aim to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and make enforcement more effective;
- for local planning authorities to ensure that their Local Plan includes fair, realistic and inclusive policies;
- to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under-provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply;
- to reduce tensions between settled and traveller communities in plan-making and planning decisions;
- to enable provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure;
- for local planning authorities to have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment.

^{1.13} In practice the document states that (Planning Policy for Traveller Sites Page 3):

Local planning authorities should set pitch targets for Gypsies and Travellers and plot targets for Travelling Showpeople which address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of Travellers in their area, working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities.

Local planning authorities should, in producing their Local Plan:

- *identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of sites against their locally set targets;*
- *identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years six to ten and, where possible, for years eleven to fifteen;*
- *consider production of joint development plans that set targets on a cross-authority basis, to provide more flexibility in identifying sites, particularly if a local planning authority has special or strict planning constraints across its area (local planning authorities have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries);*

- *relate the number of pitches or plots to the circumstances of the specific size and location of the site and the surrounding population's size and density;*
- *protect local amenity and environment.*

^{1.14} A key element to the new policies is a continuation of previous government policies. Local authorities now have a duty to ensure a 5 year land supply to meet the identified needs for Traveller sites. However, 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' also notes on Page 3-4 that:

Where there is no identified need, criteria-based policies should be included to provide a basis for decisions in case applications nevertheless come forward. Criteria-based policies should be fair and should facilitate the traditional and nomadic life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.

^{1.15} Therefore, criteria-based planning policies sit at the heart of the new guidance, irrespective of whether need is identified or not.

Tackling Inequalities for Gypsy and Traveller Communities

^{1.16} In April 2012 the government issued a further document relating to Gypsies and Travellers in the form of 'Progress report by the ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers' (CLG April 2012).

^{1.17} This report contains 28 commitments to help improve the circumstances and outcomes for Gypsies and Travellers across a range of areas including (Page 6) :

- *Identifying ways of raising educational aspirations and attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children;*
- *Identifying ways to improve health outcomes for Gypsies and Travellers within the proposed new structures of the NHS;*
- *Encouraging appropriate site provision; building on £60m Traveller Pitch Funding and New Homes Bonus incentives;*
- *Tackling hate crime against Gypsies and Travellers and improving their interaction with the criminal justice system;*
- *Improving knowledge of how Gypsies and Travellers engage with services that provide a gateway to work opportunities and working with the financial services industry to improve access to financial products and services;*
- *Sharing good practice in engagement between Gypsies and Travellers and public service providers.*

Funding for New Sites

- 1.18 The new Coalition Government policies also involve financial incentives for new pitch provision in the form of the New Homes Bonus. Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople sites receive a New Homes Bonus of 6 times the Council Tax plus £1,800 per pitch provided. This is the equivalent of around £10,000-£15,000 per pitch.
- 1.19 Direct grant funding is also available for Gypsy and Traveller sites. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) took over delivery of the Gypsy and Traveller Sites grant programme from CLG in April 2009. Since then they have invested £16.3m in 26 schemes across the country providing 88 new or additional pitches and 179 improved pitches.
- 1.20 HCA have now confirmed allocations for £47m of future funding which will support 71 projects around the country, for the provision of new Gypsy and Traveller sites and new pitches on existing sites, as well as the improvement of existing pitches. As of January 2012 a further £12.1m of funding was available for scheme outside of London and bidding will remain open until all the money is allocated.

Research Methodology

- 1.21 The research methodology for identifying the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers adopted in this report was largely based upon face to face interviews with Gypsies and Travellers across the three authorities. We sought to undertake a census of Gypsy and Traveller households in November 2012 (for a map of existing sites, see Appendix A). This is typically a good time of year for reaching Travellers, as it is generally a period of relative inactivity, after any summer work has finished and before winter and Christmas work begins. The response rate to the survey supports this as interviews were attempted with every known Gypsy and Traveller household present during this time period and 58 interviews were achieved in total on-site for Gypsies and Travellers (an 85% coverage rate of identified pitches) with a further 12 interviews with Showpeople. 24 of the on-site Gypsy and Traveller interviews were in Vale of White Horse and 34 in South Oxfordshire. For Travelling Showpeople, one interview each took place in Oxford City and Vale of White Horse and the remaining 10 were in South Oxfordshire. Throughout the report we have typically reported details of Gypsies and Travellers separately from Showpeople because the issues affecting them are very distinct.
- 1.22 The evidence from the household survey was then tied to existing information from planning records and waiting lists for site for the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities.
- 1.23 This study also included extensive stakeholder engagement with council officers from the three authorities' neighbouring councils, and other stakeholders (such as planning agents and housing associations). The aim of this engagement was to help understand the current situation in the authorities, particularly households on known existing sites and also to discuss Duty to Cooperate issues with neighbouring councils.

2. Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Population

Sites in the Study Area

- 2.1 A mainstream Housing Needs Survey typically focuses upon the number of dwellings required in an area, and how many of these should each be provided by the public and private sector. The central aim of this study was to follow a similar format for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation requirements.
- 2.2 The main consideration of this study is the provision of pitches and sites for Gypsies and Travellers. A pitch is an area which is large enough for one household to occupy and typically contains enough space for two caravans, but can vary in size. A site is a collection of pitches which form a development exclusively for Gypsies & Travellers. Throughout this study the main focus is upon how many extra pitches are required in the study area.
- 2.3 The public and private provision of mainstream housing is also largely mirrored when considering Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. One common form of Gypsy and Traveller site is the publicly-provided residential site, which is provided by the local authority, or by a registered provider (usually a housing association). Places on public sites can be obtained through a waiting list, and the costs of running the sites are met from the rent paid by the licensees. Therefore, public sites are a direct equivalent of social housing among bricks and mortar tenants. There are currently three public sites in South Oxfordshire and two in Vale of White Horse.
- 2.4 The alternative to public residential sites is private residential sites for Gypsies and Travellers. These result from individuals or families buying areas of land and then obtaining planning permission to live on them. Households can also rent pitches on existing private sites. Therefore, these two forms of accommodation are the equivalent to private ownership and renting for those who live in bricks and mortar housing.
- 2.5 The Gypsy and Traveller population also has other forms of sites due to its mobile nature. Transit sites tend to contain many of the same facilities as a residential site, except that there is a maximum period of residence which can vary from a few weeks to a period of months. An alternative is an emergency stopping place. This type of site also has restrictions on the length of time for which someone can stay on it, but has much more limited facilities. Both of these two types of site are designed to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers whilst they travel.
- 2.6 Further considerations in the Gypsy and Traveller population are unauthorised developments and encampments. Unauthorised developments occur on land which is owned by the Gypsies and Travellers, but for which they do not have planning permission to use for residential purposes. Unauthorised encampments occur on land which is not owned by the Gypsies and Travellers.

Caravan Count

- 2.7 The best quantitative information available on the Gypsy and Traveller communities derives from a bi-annual survey of Gypsy and Traveller caravans which is conducted by each local authority in England on a specific date in January and July of each year. This count is of caravans and not households which makes it more difficult to interpret for a study such as this. It must also be remembered that the count is conducted by the local authority (or in Oxfordshire's case, by Oxfordshire County Council) on a specific day and that any unauthorised encampments which occur on other dates will not be recorded. The count also only features those caravans the local authority is aware of. Therefore, it may not reflect all of the Gypsy and Traveller caravans in the authority. We would also note that the caravan count figures are provided for illustrative purposes to demonstrate the relative size of the populations and are not used in any modelling of future pitch requirements. The results of the most recent published Gypsy and Traveller caravan counts for Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts are summarised below. Figures have also been included for the recently introduced Travelling Showpeople caravan counts, which have been carried out yearly since January 2011. At the time of writing, the results of the January 2013 caravan counts for both Travelling Showpeople and Gypsies and Travellers have yet to be published.

Oxford City

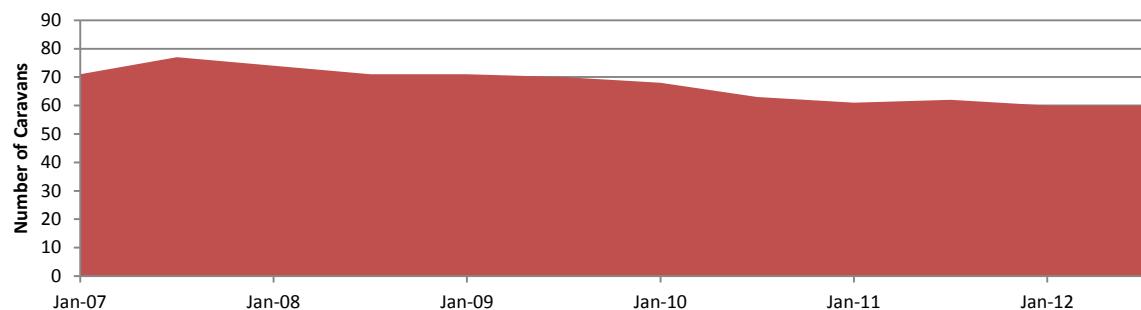
- 2.8 Oxford City contains no Gypsy and Traveller sites and has seen only one caravan recorded during the caravan count in the past 5 years. The 2011 Census indicates that the Gypsy and Traveller population is 92, which indicates that there are a number of households in bricks and mortar.
- 2.9 Travelling Showpeople caravan counts indicate no Showperson caravans within Oxford City.

South Oxfordshire District

- 2.10 Figure 1 shows that during the caravan count in July 2012 there were 60 caravans in South Oxfordshire. South Oxfordshire District contains three public sites with a combined capacity of 37 pitches and one long-standing unauthorised private site. The 2011 Census indicates that the Gypsy and Traveller population is 135 people.
- 2.11 The 2012 Travelling Showpeople count indicates 20 caravans in South Oxfordshire, a decrease of 6 from the 2011 count.

Figure 1

Gypsy Caravan Count for South Oxfordshire: January 2007 – July 2012 (Source: CLG Bi-annual Local Authority Caravan Count)

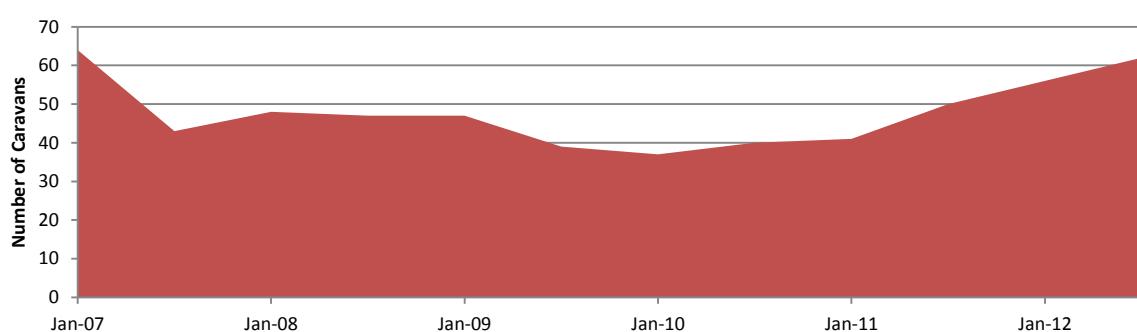


Vale of White Horse District

- 2.12 Figure 2 shows 62 caravans in Vale of White Horse at the time of the most recent caravan count. Vale of White Horse contains 2 authorised public sites with a capacity of 36 pitches and one private site which planning records indicate was designed to have 6 pitches with 12 caravans used for permanent residency and another 6 travelling caravans allowed. This site also has separate provision for up to 8 transit caravans. The 2011 Census indicates that the Gypsy and Traveller population in the district is 109 people.
- 2.13 Travelling Showperson counts in both 2011 and 2012 recorded three caravans in the district.

Figure 2

Gypsy Caravan Count for Vale of White Horse: January 2007 – July 2012 (Source: CLG Bi-annual Local Authority Caravan Count)



3. Stakeholder Consultation

Introduction

- 3.1 In order to set the context of the research and ensure the study was based on a sound understanding of the relevant issues, a list of 42 contacts was provided to ORS with the aim of carrying out telephone interviews. This list was provided by the lead authority and all those on the list, including 10 additional names that were provided during the course of the interview process, were contacted on at least 4 occasions.
- 3.2 Out of the 52 contacts, ORS conducted 26 semi-structured, in-depth telephone interviews during October, November and December 2012. The interviews typically lasted between 15 and 40 minutes. Reasons for not being able to conduct interviews were:
- Because people did not wish to be interviewed;
 - Agreed times for interviews were missed and not rescheduled regardless of requests;
 - Those requested by e-mail to provide telephone contact details did not do so;
 - Those contacted did not respond.
- 3.3 The interviews were carried out with officers representing Planning, Health and Housing, Corporate Strategy and Economy, Leisure and Property departments of Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse district councils and officers working in Housing, Planning, Enforcement, Development and Policy in surrounding council areas of Aylesbury Vale District Council, Oxfordshire County Council (Oxon and Bucks Gypsy and Traveller Service), Swindon Borough Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Wycombe District Council. The aim of interviewing these stakeholders was to provide background information on the framework within which they operate, and on the perceptions of the Gypsy and Traveller and Showpeople communities within their operational areas.
- 3.4 ORS also interviewed wider stakeholders and this included interviewing 2 planning agents whom, although not locally based, did have experience of working and supporting Gypsies or Travellers with planning applications within the study area and one as recently as within the last 6 months. Wider stakeholders that were interviewed included those who support Gypsies and/or Travellers such as Oxfordshire County Council (Gypsy and Traveller Service, and on the education side, the Equality and Diversity Achievement Service), Thames Valley Police (Neighbourhood Policing) and the Primary Care Trust (Health Advocacy Services).
- 3.5 With the aim of obtaining bricks and mortar contacts ORS also interviewed 7 representatives from housing management, policy, lettings and development departments of those work for the following housing associations:
- A2 Dominion;

- Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association Limited (BPHA);
- Bromford Housing Group;
- Catalyst Communities;
- Jephson Housing Association;
- South Oxfordshire Housing Association (SOHA).

3.6 Although numerous attempts were made to gather information about those who had moved into bricks and mortar this proved extremely difficult. Unfortunately, housing associations together with other organisations found they were able to provide very little data or secure any contacts within bricks and mortar housing. Some of the reasons that were put forward were because housing applicants did not declare their ethnicity on the Equality and Diversity forms. When information was collected it was often difficult to analyse because IT systems were not able to extract the information. As there is no need to monitor this data at present it is not felt to be cost effective to update IT systems.

3.7 The following section summarises the overall findings from each of the groups interviewed:

- Council officers and officers from surrounding council areas;
- Wider stakeholders (Planning agents, housing association etc).

3.8 Due to issues surrounding data protection and in order to protect the confidentiality of those who took part, this section uses minimal verbatim comments and represents a summary of the views expressed by council officers and stakeholders.

Council Officers and Officers in Surrounding Areas

Main Policy Tools

- 3.9 Legislation highlighted by some of those interviewed included the Human Rights Act 1998, Equalities Act 2010, Housing Act 2004, Race Relations Act (Amendment) 2000, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites 2012, Criminal Justice and Public Order Act and Mobile Homes Act 1983. Respondents stated that they had some policies relating specifically to Gypsies and Travellers such as Oxford City Council's Adopted Core Strategy Policy CS26 Accommodation for Travelling Communities, Unauthorised Encampment Policy and South Oxfordshire District Council's Core Strategy Policy CSH5 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and criteria-based saved South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 policy H17. Vale also has a saved Gypsy policy in their Local Plan 2011 Policy H22. This will be replaced by a new policy in their emerging Local Plan 2029 Part One.
- 3.10 There was mention of the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Group and it was acknowledged that there were officers that worked primarily with these communities (including Showpeople). Officers also mentioned a Lead Teacher (Gypsy Roma Traveller Achievement) and a Community Liaison Teacher who works with schools to support the raising of attainment of Gypsy Roma Traveller pupils in Oxfordshire. The main group of officers working with the communities are the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Gypsy & Traveller Service, based within Oxfordshire County Council.

Management: Unauthorised Encampments

- 3.11 It was generally agreed that there were few instances of unauthorised encampments; there was only one identified in Oxford City Council's last Gypsy and Traveller caravan count. Some argued that this was because Gypsies or Travellers or Showpeople were generally travelling through the districts or that in the past, Thames Valley Police had been "enthusiastic" in moving these communities on and into other districts.
- 3.12 When an unauthorised encampment does occur it is dealt with by the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Gypsy and Traveller Service. They ensure that a Code of Conduct is issued and that if it is not adhered to, then action is taken. Where there is unauthorised development, it is dealt with in house by Development Management Enforcement Teams at the district councils.

Accommodation: Sites and Unauthorised Encampments

- 3.13 Officers mentioned that there had been an unauthorised site at Watchfield located within the Vale of the White Horse District Council area some years ago but this site no longer existed. In addition to this there is another site in the village that has been refused permission, but another planning application had recently been submitted on the same site. Officers in surrounding areas mentioned the long running encampment at Hemley Hill at Princes Risborough (Wycombe District Council) which is currently involved in a High Court Appeal, and where residents have been given an 18 month compliance period.
- 3.14 Officers had little information on those living in bricks and mortar, and therefore included in the study brief a requirement that this should be looked at carefully. Contact needed to be made in order to find out whether there were any members of these communities that wish to live on a site.

Trends, Favoured Locations and Stopping Points

- 3.15 When asked to consider trends Officers observed there to have been a decrease in the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers coming into the areas.
- 3.16 There was mention of the Council run Rye Farm commercial vehicle pay and display car park (in South Oxfordshire just outside Abingdon-on-Thames) being a favoured spot for Gypsies and Travellers to stay for a few days. Other than this there were very few places that had been regularly used for unauthorised encampments.
- 3.17 Officers believed that the main reason for Gypsies and/or Travellers coming to the area was to visit family and friends and when this occurred it was more likely that they would look to stay on the same site as those they were visiting.
- 3.18 Officers believed that there were no regular travelling patterns for these communities and that those who were in the area had been static for a good few years.
- 3.19 Some officers believed that a few of the private sites in the area were not being used exclusively for Gypsies and/or Travellers and this again may show a lack of need for further site provision:

There is a site that is exclusively for Traveller use that isn't being used exclusively for Travellers, and that leads me to think that there is plenty of capacity in the area.

Accommodation Needs: Permanent Provision

- 3.20 Although the officers stated that there had been few instances of unauthorised encampments or unauthorised development they still believed there was a lack of permanent site provision. This was based on the officers' belief that although there are 5 sites that are owned and managed by Oxfordshire County Council, there are rarely any vacant pitches available. The current public provision is listed below:
- Middle Ground, Wheatley (South Oxfordshire) - 16 pitches;
 - Ten Acre Park, Sandford-on-Thames (South Oxfordshire) - 16 pitches;
 - The Sturt, Oakley Wood, Benson (South Oxfordshire) - 5 pitches;
 - Redbridge Hollow, Hinksey Hill (Vale of White Horse) - 24 pitches;
 - Woodhill Lane, East Challow (Vale of White Horse) - 12 pitches.
- 3.21 Most officers did not mention any Showpeople sites and acknowledged that this was a section of the community, if it existed in their areas, with which they had very little contact. Only one officer mentioned sites at Watlington.
- 3.22 Some officers mentioned a large new housing development at Didcot that should the Section 106 be agreed, could deliver a new Gypsy and Traveller site as there is a genuine wish by officers to provide further site provision that would contribute to sustainable housing provision.
- 3.23 It was mentioned by an officer for West Oxfordshire that the district has limited space to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers and reported that the results from their GTAA found that there is a need for sites to

be close to Oxford City, due to the desire amongst the Gypsy and Traveller community to be close to the hospital.

Accommodation Needs: Transit Provision

- ^{3.24} Although the Twelve Oaks site has permission for transit provision, the majority of officers perceived no transit provision was available in the districts and they generally believed that because there were few instances of unauthorised encampments on the roadside, it was hard to qualify or quantify what need there would be for such provision:

There is possibly a lack of sufficient or acceptable provision and [a lack of] suitable sites that could be used temporarily, without the risk of being moved on immediately.

Site Management

- ^{3.25} Officers did not refer to any issues in relation to the management of permanent sites in their areas. They referred to the fact that these sites are managed by Oxfordshire County Council and they appeared to be well run.

Cross Boundary Issues

- ^{3.26} When asked to consider cross boundary issues there was no evidence to suggest that the same Gypsies and/or Travellers were moving between district council areas. However, it was felt by some officers working for some authorities neighbouring the study area that at least one site should be provided in the city of Oxford although there was recognition that this might be a challenge, given the lack of suitable land within the district boundary:

Oxford City has no sites at the moment... they will be needing to look beyond their boundaries to meet their need (like Cheltenham).

- ^{3.27} There was no feeling reported by any authority that the study area authorities were failing to address needs or move households across boundaries, and a history of joint working between the authorities was evidenced by the previous Thames valley-wide GTAA study and Oxfordshire-wide Showpeople's study. Officers reported that an Oxfordshire-wide officer working group had been in existence since 2007 to work on Gypsy and Traveller planning.

- ^{3.39} With regards to possible opportunities for cross border working, a number of suggestions were made by stakeholders. The officer for West Oxfordshire suggested that there was opportunity for the sharing of information and practice between primarily urban districts, such as Oxford City, Bristol, Gloucester and Cheltenham with regards to the possibility of meeting their need in their respective surrounding authorities.

- ^{3.28} It was suggested that the provision of transit sites was an issue that was not limited to a single authority:

When you are talking about cross boundary issues, that's one of the obvious ones.

Consultation Activities

- ^{3.29} There was little evidence to suggest that there was regular consultation with Gypsies or Travellers or Showpeople. However it was confirmed that the district councils have Gypsy and Traveller representatives

and organisations on their consultation databases and regularly consult with them on emerging policies and allocations for their development plan documents. It was further acknowledged, however, that although there had been some instances of consultation on specific issues with Gypsies and Travellers and Showpeople communities, these were not generally in relation to planning. Some council officers stated that there had been some consultation with Gypsies and Travellers and Showpeople in relation to the elections process for example.

The Future

- 3.30 It was generally believed by officers that the area would see little change in the numbers of Gypsies or Travellers or Showpeople in the area:

I think things are fairly static, I am aware of capacity locally for Travellers that is not being used; I see things as being pretty stable.

- 3.31 Some officers stated that they were not aware of any particular issues or trends in relation to these communities; they acknowledged, however, that there may be a need for additional site provision should other Gypsies or Travellers or Showpeople move into the area or existing local families create new households.

- 3.32 It was believed that further site provision either through new sites or the extension of existing sites should be progressed if need was demonstrated, but that this would mean a lot of consultation and it would be a difficult process.

Wider Stakeholders

Accommodation: Sites and Unauthorised Encampments

- 3.31 In addition to officers from the study authorities and neighbouring areas, a number of wider stakeholders were interviewed, including planning agents, housing associations, Thames Valley Police (Neighbourhood Policing), the Primary Care Trust (Health Advocacy Services) and Oxfordshire County Council's Equality and Diversity Achievement Service. These stakeholders were able to provide a broader view of any issues with provision, as well as any problems related to education, health and community cohesion.
- 3.32 The general opinion of the stakeholders interviewed was that they believed there to be a static community of Gypsies or Travellers in the area and that this was likely to increase because of newly forming households:

It will increase the problems there are in terms of lack of sites as their communities are getting bigger.

- 3.33 Stakeholders confirmed that Oxford city and the surrounding area was an attraction to these communities generally because of existing family ties, good road networks and work opportunities:

Gypsies and Travellers will generally be attracted to where they can find work, so Oxford is an attraction and also there are good access to motorways such as the A34 ... as it will get them to the M40 and M1;

Where work is given to them in certain areas they will go back, especially seasonal work and also any transit routes, so we have the M40.

- 3.34 There was no evidence to suggest that the same Gypsies or Travellers were being moved backwards and forwards from district to district.
- 3.35 Some stakeholders had experience of working with Gypsies and Travellers on both authorised and unauthorised sites. There was concern raised by some stakeholders about the condition of the privately owned sites, especially in relation to toilet and showering facilities.
- 3.36 Other concerns raised by stakeholders included fly tipping, flooding of existing sites and anti-social behaviour on some sites. It was stated that this anti-social behaviour between residents on sites resulted in empty pitches because other Gypsies or Traveller did not wish to live there. This may, therefore, give a reason why some Officers and/or stakeholders believe there is adequate site provision within the area:

Mainly there is a lack of pitches, but most of the problems are at one of the sites... there is plenty of space there but many Travellers are unwilling to go there.

Trends, favoured locations and stopping points

- 3.37 It was argued that there was some evidence to suggest that more Gypsies and Travellers would like to own their sites, but it was recognised that many were unable to do so because of the high land prices in the area, difficulties in gaining planning permission and lack of political will:

I know they are trying to get more privately owned sites and they have bought land, but planning permission is difficult;

Because of the high cost of land local authorities are going to have to move people on because of a lack of land and accommodation. Oxfordshire is quite a pressure point for affordable housing in general.

- ^{3.37} When asked about seasonal fluctuations stakeholders stated there appeared to be a marginal difference and an increase in numbers in the summer months as compared to the rest of the year. This was mainly due to Gypsies or Travellers moving in to the area to visit friends/family or attend events such as the Stowe Horse Fair or local Gypsies or Travellers moving out of the area for similar reasons:

From my experience there is a lot of movement during these times through the area for such things as the Stowe Fair and because of these historical reasons this is why we have Gypsy and Traveller communities here;

There are some Born Again Christians who attend the conventions so they still travel, but usually from a more settled base.

- ^{3.38} It was acknowledged that local Gypsies or Travellers tended to remain static and did not often travel out of the area, although one stakeholder highlighted an increasing trend to travel abroad for Christmas:

They are not transient because you cannot afford to lose your pitch, because unless you are living there, there is no room at the inn;

Only in the summer when people tend to move around to visit family ... but there is now a trend to go abroad at Christmas;

I think there is an increasing trend for more settled bases with the amount of travelling in pursuit of work being less and less, although they will still travel for other reasons.

- ^{3.40} Showpeople were highlighted as either living in the area or travelling through it:

We will see an increase of Showpeople when they will pull up for Abingdon-on-Thames Fair (in October) – they pull on April-October at any fairs.

Accommodation Needs: Permanent Provision

- ^{3.41} The lack of legal sites was seen as an issue:

The housing providers are not making adequate provision for Gypsies and Travellers that require social accommodation. It is forcing Gypsies and Travellers into bricks and mortar.

- ^{3.42} No stakeholders were able to identify land that they would consider suitable for future site provision.

- ^{3.43} Very little information was gathered from the wider stakeholder interviews in relation to Showpeople, other than that there is a piece of land at Abingdon-on-Thames, believed to be called Eric's Field, which is occasionally used by Showpeople either on a temporary basis and/or for storage, but who are not looking to settle in the area.

3.44 Some stakeholders claimed there was a lack of political will both locally and nationally:

The councils will send them into housing or into other areas where there are long waiting lists for sites;

Councils being required to identify a 5 year supply is generally a good thing ... although some make assumptions in their GTAAAs that suppress need well below its true level;

Not only a shortage of sites in most cases, but also a lack of will to do anything about it on behalf of the local authorities and a lack of understanding of the problems by planning officers ... it translates into a lack of effective action.

Accommodation Needs: Transit Provision

3.45 It was acknowledged by some stakeholders that although there was little evidence of unauthorised encampments, transit stopping sites should be provided.

Some transient sites would be good when travelling through to Devon/Cornwall and that would be useful as they often find themselves overcrowding family pitches.

Community Relations

3.46 Overall, interviewees were concerned that adverse media coverage preserved the negative perceptions held by some members of the settled community, particularly programmes such as My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding.

3.47 There was also recognition of the stigmatisation, discrimination and general suspicion of Gypsies and Travellers by the settled community especially in relation to planning applications for new sites (either private or publicly funded):

Normal knee jerk reactions that all the objections come in around crime and the value of their housing will drop ... just normal comments on any new application.

Site Location Criteria

3.48 When commenting about where sites should be located there were differences of opinion in that some believed they should be in rural areas and some in more urban areas:

Near public services and close to facilities such as being in catchment areas for primary and secondary schools;

Realistically, Gypsies will not walk or cycle they tend to use cars, so these policies that try to direct them to within or edge of settlements are unrealistic because Gypsies and Travellers cannot afford land in those areas;

Sites should be on a bus route near a town, near facilities, but not in a town centre, but just outside.

3.49 However, the majority of those interviewed believed that land within an urban or urban fringe area was the best location for sites. This was because it was believed that being close to local facilities such as health centres, shops and schools would facilitate Gypsies and Travellers to become more integrated with settled

communities, rather than isolating themselves in rural areas. However, the point should not be lost that the interviews did highlight the high cost and likely low availability of land on the edges of existing larger towns that makes buying land prohibitive to Gypsies and Travellers and that is why they often bought land where it was unlikely to receive planning permission.

Cross Border Working and Consultation Activities

- ^{3.51} As already noted, consultation already occurs with regard to specific events and issues. However, there was an acknowledgement by some stakeholders that consultation needed to be improved:

Professional people come to us and ask us to ask the Gypsy and Traveller communities, so it is about joining up people and it would be of fantastic benefit for the County Council to perhaps invest in a start-up of such a community group that could have input into any consultation that was being undertaken.

The Future

- ^{3.52} Wider stakeholders were of the opinion that the local authorities need to provide permanent and transit accommodation. One interviewee suggested that when determining accommodation needs now, thought needs to be given to the future needs of in-migration. This is because some existing sites in neighbouring areas may close because of the living conditions on site; one that was mentioned was in Banbury. This could result in in-migration into the study area and further pressure on existing sites:

The needs are immediate and they need to be dealt with on an immediate basis. The challenge is that the government is asking authorities to predict where sites should be and have removed targets for site provision, so all it is doing is going back 20/30 years; it is fundamentally flawed.

- ^{3.54} However, interviewees expressed some scepticism that accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers or Showpeople would improve over the next five years and felt that little would happen as a result of the forthcoming GTAA:

I don't think there will be any increase in sites;

I don't think it will get any better unless something is done because of the lack of social provision in particular;

I just think there is reluctance by local authorities to over provide sites because of the 'anti' feelings of the existing communities and that is going to slow down the provision of suitable sites.

4. Gypsy and Traveller Population

Survey of the Gypsy and Traveller Population

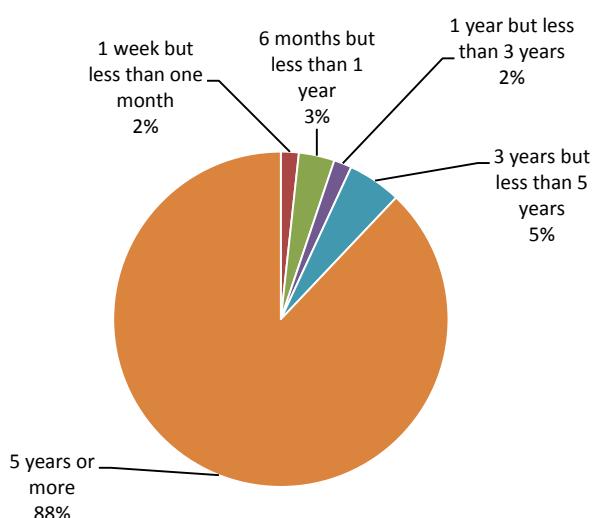
- 4.1 One of the major components of this assessment was a detailed survey of the Gypsy and Traveller population in Oxford City, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District. This aimed to identify current households with housing needs, and to assess likely future household formation from within the existing households to help judge the need for future site provision. The survey sought to provide a baseline position on the resident Gypsy and Traveller population of Oxford City, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District.
- 4.2 Interviews were attempted with every Gypsy and Traveller household in the area who were present in November and early December 2012. Therefore, the baseline point for the findings of this study is November 2012. Throughout the survey period interviewers worked from 9am to 7pm each day and made repeated visits to each household until a successful interview was concluded. In total, interviews were achieved on-site with 58 households. 55 of the interviews occurred at the public sites in the study area, giving a 75% response rate. In total the households interviewed contained 162 people with an average of 2.8 persons per households, which is a slightly lower average household size than is typically found in surveys by ORS.
- 4.3 We would note that for the private Twelve Oaks site in Vale of White Horse at the time of the survey the site was locked with a keypad entry system and no intercom. It is believed that the site is being used on a limited basis by non-traveller households, and that the owners are currently residing outside the study area. ORS fieldworkers were unable to gain access, and while a letter was left at the site there was no response, and no interviews took place at this site. Nonetheless, the 6 pitches on the site have been counted within the model as if they were occupied by Gypsies and Travellers, and have thus contributed to future household formation figures on the basis that the site's owners may return to the site in the near future.
- 4.4 Throughout this study the person responding to the survey will be referred to as the respondent, and in questions which refer to all people in the household they will be referred to as household members. Throughout the remainder of this report the majority of numbers which appear on the charts represent the percentage of respondents who appear in that category. The purpose of showing percentages is to allow the results of the survey to be extrapolated to the whole Gypsy and Traveller population of Oxford City, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District. In a few cases it is more appropriate to use the actual number of respondents, and these cases are clearly identified. In all charts those respondents who answered 'don't know', or did not answer the question, are omitted unless otherwise stated.

Length of Residence

- 4.5 Most Gypsies and Travellers surveyed had a long period of residence. 51 respondents (88%) had lived on their current site for more than 5 years.

Figure 3

Length of Time Respondents Have Lived on Their Current Site, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

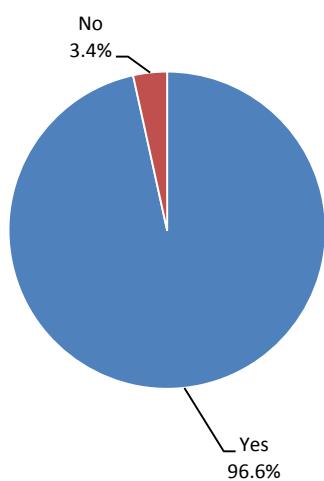


Permanent base

- 4.6 97% (56 respondents) identified their current site as being their permanent base.

Figure 4

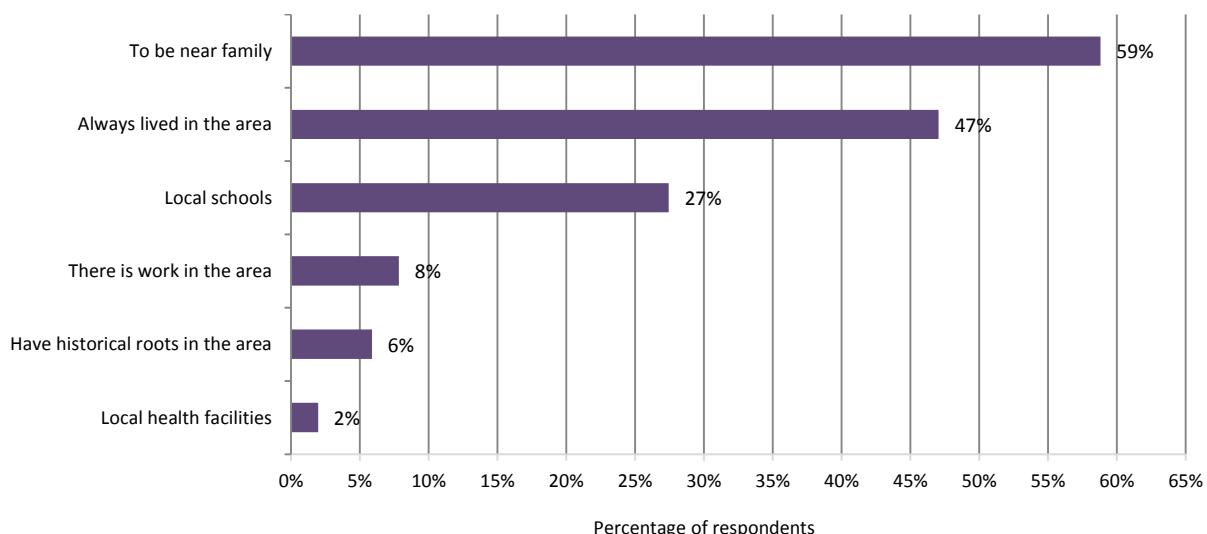
Whether Respondents consider their current site to be their permanent base (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



Attractions of Living in Oxford City, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District

- 4.7 Respondents were asked to identify the main reasons that attracted them to live in Oxfordshire. They were allowed to select as many reasons as they wished from a list of nine options.
- 4.8 The main factors which attracted respondents to Oxford City, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District were to be near family, and because the respondent had always lived in the area.

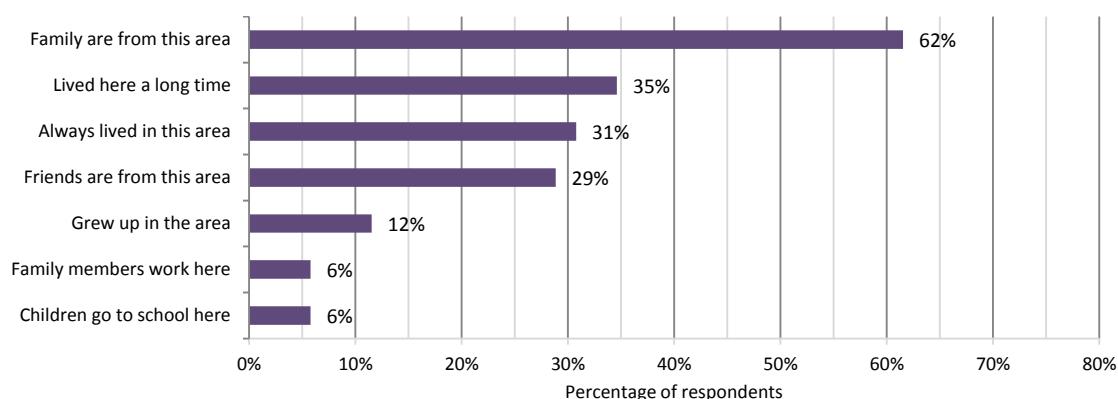
Figure 5
What Attracted Them to Live in the Area, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



Connections with the Area

- 4.9 Nearly all respondents felt they have strong connections to the area (96%). The main connection that Gypsy and Traveller households felt they had with Oxford City, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District was that their family are from the area; while many had either lived in the area for a long time or had always lived in the area.

Figure 6
Nature of Local Connection, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

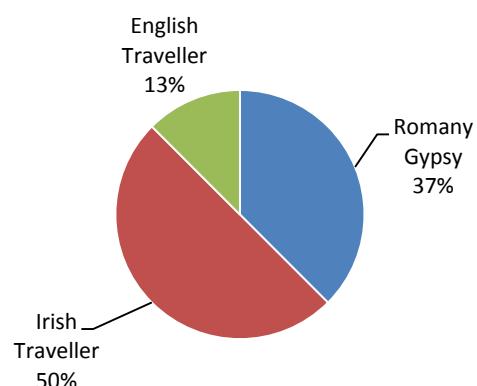


Ethnicity

4.10 Half of the respondents identified themselves as Irish Travellers. 37% said they were Romany Gypsies, and the remaining 13% of respondents said that they were English Travellers. We would note that sites were typically split by ethnicity with very little crossover between the two communities.

Figure 7

Ethnicity of Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

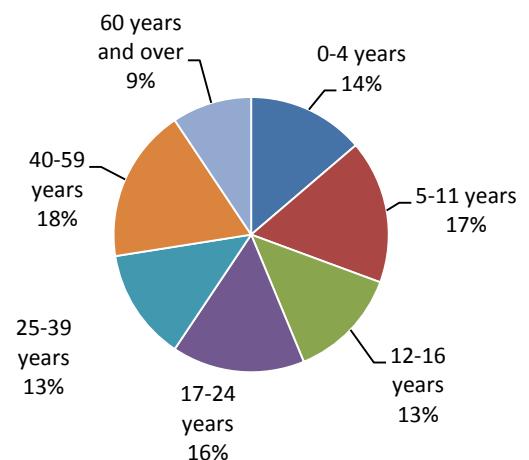


Age and Household Profile

4.11 The households showed a mixed range of ages across their members. 9% of household members were aged 60 years or over, but 44% of all household members were aged 16 years or under. 30% of all household members were of school age and another 14% were children aged 4 years or less. This distribution of ages is typical of those obtained by ORS from Gypsy and Traveller household surveys.

Figure 8

Age of Household Members, by all Household Members (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

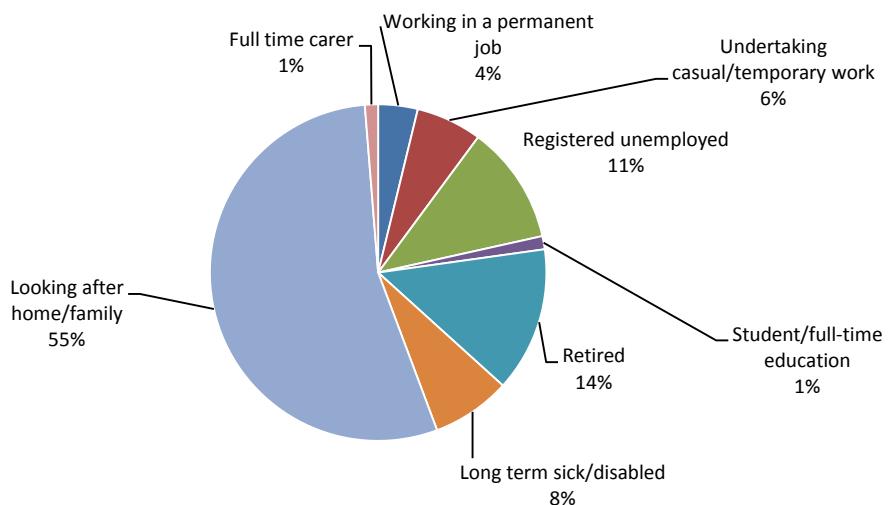


Employment Status

- 4.12 Respondents were asked to give the employment status of all members of their household. Of those household members who had their employment status recorded, 55% were looking after their home/family, 14% were retired and 11% registered unemployed. 4% had a permanent job, while another 6% had casual/temporary work. Employment trends amongst the Gypsy and Traveller community can vary significantly from area to area (as with the settled community), with some areas having a much higher rate of employment. However, these figures are similar to the results of other surveys carried out by ORS in the past in other areas with similar levels of public or social site provision.

Figure 9

Employment Status of Household Members, by All Household Members Aged Over 16 Years (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



Health Problems

- 4.13 28% of respondents interviewed reported that their household contained at least one member with a long-term health problem. However, none of these respondents reported that adaptations were required in their home to meet the needs of the household members currently suffering with health problems.

5. Existing Sites for Gypsies and Travellers

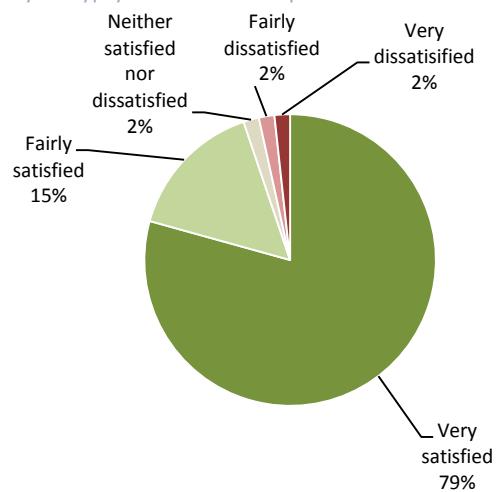
Additional Caravans

- 5.1 All respondents were asked if they require extra caravans. The evidence from the survey is that only one household would like more caravans. This household had space at their existing pitch to accommodate the one extra caravan required.
- 5.2 The phrasing of this question focused on a need rather than a demand for more caravans. Respondents were asked, irrespective of who was purchasing the caravans, whether they needed more caravans for household members. Therefore, this question simply reflected a perceived need for more caravans, rather than an ability to afford (demand for) more caravans.

Views of Sites

- 5.3 The vast majority of respondents were satisfied with their sites. 94% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their site, with 79% stating they were very satisfied. Only 4% expressed dissatisfaction.

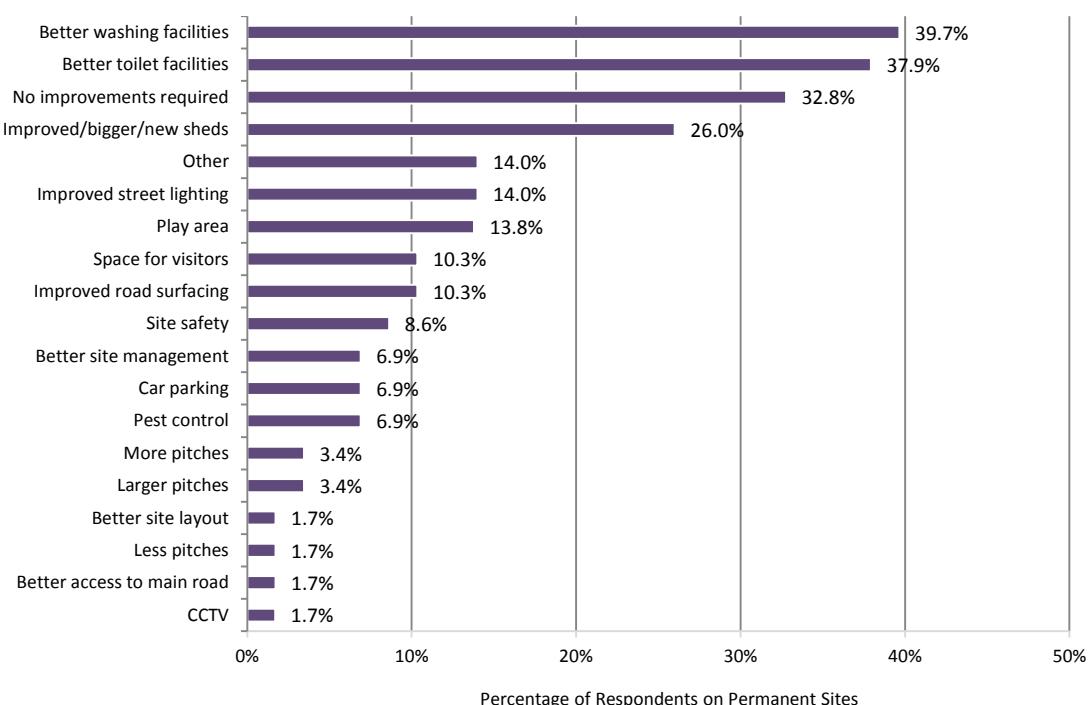
Figure 10
Satisfaction with Current Site, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



- 5.4 Figure 11 shows the improvements which were identified by respondents as being required at their permanent sites. 40% identified better washing facilities and 38% identified better toilet facilities as being needed. Many respondents suggested other improvements which were not listed on the questionnaire, the most common of which related to sheds on the site (26%) and lighting (14%). A third of respondents said no improvements were required, with respondent from the two public sites in Vale of White Horse being most likely to identify no problems at their site.

Figure 11

Improvements Respondents Would Like to See on Their Site, by all Respondents on Permanent Sites (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



5.5 76% of respondents feel that their current accommodation and site meets all of their needs in terms of accommodation quality, space and site facilities (Figure 12). However, 14 respondents stated that their current site did not meet their accommodation needs.

5.6 The main reasons given by those who feel that their current accommodation and site do not meet their needs was the site drainage and quality of the sheds on sites. This particularly applied to the Middle Ground and Ten Acre sites in South Oxfordshire.

5.7 Of the 14 respondents who felt that their current accommodation and site did not meet their needs, 13 said that their needs could be addressed at their current pitch.

Figure 12

Whether current accommodation and site meet all of respondents' needs (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

