Cannock Chase Council

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Final Report on a programme of work completed on behalf of Cannock Chase Council by Localecon Associates

January 2013
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1. Introduction

Localecon Associates was appointed by Cannock Chase Council in November 2012 to complete an update and review of gypsy and traveller accommodation needs and related issues of access to amenities and local services.

This report sets out the objectives of the exercise, the approach and assessment methodology that was adopted in completing the tasks required, the results of the consultations involved, and estimates of residential pitch requirements at five year intervals over the period to 2028.

2. The setting for gypsy and traveller accommodation in the District

The Cannock Chase Local Planning Authority is required to establish pitch targets for gypsies and travellers and plot targets for travelling showpeople that can be identified in its Local Plan. As stated in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), March 2012), central government’s overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers in a way that facilitates their traditional and nomadic way of life while respecting the interests of the settled community. Part of the recommendations to achieve this in terms of sites and plots are that local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning.

In assembling the evidence base necessary to support their planning approach, local planning authorities should ‘pay particular attention to early and effective community engagement with both settled and traveller communities (including discussing travellers’ accommodation needs with travellers themselves, their representative bodies and local support groups); co-operate with travellers, their representative bodies and local support groups, other local authorities and relevant interest groups to prepare and maintain an up-to-date understanding of the likely permanent and transit accommodation needs of their areas over the lifespan of their development plan, working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities; and use a robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs to inform the preparation of local plans and make planning decisions’ (DCLG, March 2012, pp1-2).

Cannock Chase District has a small number of well-established gypsy and traveller sites, all of which are located within the existing Green Belt. These include two family sites, one rented site with twenty pitches, one unauthorised site in Norton Canes, and one travelling showpeople site, together with...
consent for an additional site at Rawnsley which has recently been completed. In total, it was estimated prior to the programme of work that there were up to 150 gypsy and travelling people involved. The most recent work on accommodation needs had been completed in 2008 as part of the Regional Spatial Strategy\(^1\) and this research was deemed no longer adequate for current planning purposes. As such, it was necessary to review and update the understanding of local gypsy and traveller accommodation needs, carrying the assessment forward to 2028.

3. The accommodation assessment work required

On this basis, and in line with the brief provided, our interpretation of the work required to produce an effective gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment was as follows.

A brief contextual review of the challenges and opportunities for designating and/or developing gypsy and traveller sites and plots in the District. This was conducted, as part of the start-up, in liaison with designated representatives of the Council in order to provide a clear picture of the potentials that are available to the community and hence the advantages in engaging with the accommodation needs work. It also provided a forum for discussing and developing initial ideas on planning issues with regard to this community of interest and, latterly in the project development programme, an opportunity to consider funding opportunities and how they might be accessible for potential projects within Cannock.

This stage of the work led to an assessment of the challenges and opportunities for designating and/or developing gypsy and traveller sites and plots in the District. Linked to this, there was a brief review of all relevant background data, including the 2008 evidence, together with locational information on sites and the content of six monthly counts supplied to the DCLG.

This contextual review aside, the main part of the work involved the production of a user-focused accommodation needs analysis built from direct consultation with the gypsy and traveller community and, where possible and appropriate, its representative agencies. This was designed to be completed from the perspective of the gypsy and traveller community, exploring the need for pitch growth and the desire to expand existing sites or to identify new sites.

4. The assessment approach

Advice on the completion of accommodation needs assessments was produced in 2007 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)\(^2\) and this has guided the research reported here. In particular, DCLG suggests that, where the scale of the gypsy and traveller community is relatively small, then a full survey of local populations should be feasible and thus attempted. This of course avoids the necessity for sampling and provides a more accurate picture of accommodation issues as observed by the researcher and, more important given the community engagement thrust of recent planning guidance (DCLG, 2012), as seen by the gypsy and traveller community.

In line with DCLG guidance, the work completed was mainly focused on locally gathered evidence through a direct survey. Initially, a catch all questionnaire was developed. This was amended and adapted from earlier surveys conducted in the London Boroughs and suitably tailored to the needs of the Cannock gypsy and traveller setting. This was an extensive document that set out the maximum level of information that was deemed feasible, although it was not expected that such detail would necessarily be obtainable from many of the Cannock families and groups.

Most important for the work, consultation interviews were conducted on an on-site face-to-face basis with representatives of each of the gypsy and traveller families or family groups currently residing in the District. The aim of these consultations, covering all gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople, and numbering up to around ten separate sets of interviews, was to gather information on their key accommodation needs in three five year tranches over the period to 2028, to consider any improvements in the quality of existing accommodation that may be needed, to assess the perceived and actual social and economic issues and problems facing them, and to garner ideas on potential actions and activities to address these accommodation and related issues. In order to establish the longer-term needs it was necessary to review the size and age structure of families, their educational and health access needs, and their broad employment activities. On this basis, and applying some simple assumptions about household formation over the focus period, using the ages of children and young people and their likelihood of independent living or household set up before 2028, it was possible to broadly estimate future pitch requirements.

Although they are not prominent in their operation within Cannock, representatives of key gypsy and traveller groups such as the Gypsy Council were also briefly consulted. This gave a wider context to the likely needs of the Cannock-based families.

5. Research outcomes: the consultations

All gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople groups resident in the area were approached with a view to consultation. The survey covered key a range of accommodation issues. In its main focus this was a qualitative survey, identifying issues, and discussing and recording them around a broad structure of topics. These included length of residence in the area, any movement intentions, the level and suitability of site facilities and areas for children; access to retail, health and educational services; the nature of any pitch problems and the likelihood of moving from the site. In addition, participants were asked for their views on the accommodation needs of the gypsy and traveller community in the Cannock area. Details on family structures, including age and gender, were sought, together with future family needs for accommodation types, and seasonal travelling behaviour was captured. In addition to the pre-selected questions, there was space to record any other issues emerging during the interview.

Where possible, quantified responses were recorded, although the small scale of the survey population - a small number of residence clusters and relatively few non-family residents - meant that this was secondary to the qualitative thrust of the approach.

Where necessary, the questionnaire was adapted to fit the situation of different residential scenarios linked to a travelling showpeople site, and family sites that contain high quality bricks and mortar buildings, together with pitches that are rented to family members and other gypsy families.

All family groups were interviewed as part of the assessment. This covered six separate sites and, from the information provided by the gypsy and traveller community, included some 149 residents, including 59 children and young people. Of course, it should be noted that these levels change frequently as people travel outside the area for work, leisure or, particularly important, family reasons. In addition, site owners permit the occasional stopover or short stay by friends and relatives and this can affect the numbers. In the survey, a small number of transit stayers were found but these have not been included in the future permanent pitch need estimates.
Understandably given past events outside of the Cannock environment, it was anticipated that there might be reticence to engage with the work but, with a small number of exceptions, this was not the case. Indeed, many local gypsies, travellers and showpeople were extremely helpful in discussing future accommodation needs.

6. Estimating accommodation needs from the research findings

6.1 Taking stock of the previous research exercise

The 2008 research concluded that there was a need for some 60 additional pitches in Cannock District over the period from 2007 to 2026. This included 52 for gypsies and travellers and 8 for travelling showpeople but also built in (and consequently overestimated overall needs) a figure of 17 through unauthorised encampments. Part of this – perhaps 13 or 14 - is likely to have been a temporary encampment with no long-term intentions to remain in the Cannock area and thus skews the figures. Adjusting for this, and reworking the figures using the 2007 methodology that is discussed below, the pitch needs for 2007-2026 are likely to have been around 35.

The estimates were based on simple quotients applied to evidence for the 2007-2012 period obtained through survey activity conducted across Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire. Accommodation needs for the period from 2007-2026 were calculated as follows. The needs for 2007-2012 – a total of 25, albeit based on household formation estimates and unauthorised encampments - were estimated from survey activity with the local gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople community. The 2012 estimated needs were then increased by the application of standard annual percentage growth rates (in household formation) of 3.0% for 2012-2016, 2.5% for 2016-2021, and 2.0% for 2021-2026 (DCLG, 2007). This was, perhaps necessary given limited survey resources, a relatively crude, generalised approach that was not able to account for the fine detail of family development within each area. Moreover, the growth factor was applied to not only authorised but also unauthorised pitches when it is generally believed that the latter are often linked to more transient and mobile families and groups.

6.2 Building a survey-based assessment approach

In contrast to the 2008 approach, the research reported here used a much more straightforward method that built estimates from two sources: first, directly stated evidence of current overcrowding and thus additional pitch need; and, second, predicted family growth-based needs - household formation - which involved recording the gender and age structure of Cannock clusters and then, with
assumptions about household formation through marriage or the desire for independent living by adult single people, estimating future pitch needs. Young gypsies and travellers tend to set up with partners, or seek individual autonomy, at the average age of approximately 18-21 years and this assumption was made in the calculations.

In combination this approach enabled us to generate survey-based estimates for pitch demand in 2013, 2018, 2023 and 2028.

The estimation process was as follows. Initially, the numbers of male and female offspring were recorded and then assigned to an expected household formation period (2013-2018, 2018-2023 or 2023-2028). Following the assumptions applied by other GTANAs\(^3\) a reduction of 10% was made for offspring remaining in the family unit and a further 10% for movement into bricks and mortar housing. The latter figure may be an overestimate but there was evidence for substantial previous and recent shifts of this type from at least one of the family sites. A factor of 0.7 (for males) and 0.5 (for females) was then applied to generate a final estimate of localised pitch need through household formation. These proportions were based on empirical evidence collected during the survey and reflect the fact that sons are more likely to remain on the local family site than girls, as the latter will tend to reside in or around the family unit of their husband’s family. New households involving single adults are likely to remain at the family site if space permits.

Similarly mirroring the assumptions of previous GTANA work\(^4\), and in the absence of data on this aspect, future turnover in the form of out-movement from sites within the area is assumed to be equivalent to in-movement into Cannock.

### 6.3 Assessing the current situation

The 2012 research was able to confirm the existence of six clusters of gypsies, travellers and showpeople within the Cannock Chase local planning area. It was also able to estimate future additional pitch needs and to comment on the general environments within which the gypsy, traveller and showpeople reside.

\(^3\) For example, Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group (2011) Cambridge Sub-Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Analysis (GTANA), October.

\(^4\) For example, see the Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire GTANA (Brown, P.; Hunt, L.; Condie, J.; & Niner, P. 2008), para 15.7, p129
The nature of the Cannock gypsy, traveller and showpeople community

The gypsy, traveller and showpeople community within Cannock Chase District is long-established with several sites occupied for over twenty years and, in the main, developed to high standards. Many of the mature members of the community were born and bred in and around the area and thus there is a strong attachment to Cannock and its environs. As a result of this longevity of association some have developed their sites to high specification and included some bricks and mortar buildings, and there are well-established links to shops, schools and health services.

The Cannock cluster thus comprises mainly family-focused sites which are relatively small and diverse but with links to other families in nearby Districts. Most will accommodate a small number of short-term travellers but only families that they know are of good character and with high standards of cleanliness.

There are few economic and social problems specific to the gypsy and traveller community (for example, unemployment is community wide). As we note elsewhere, traditional work patterns have been maintained with typical activities involving landscaping, car sales, tree work, power washing services and recycling (tatting) activities for the men and an array of, often part-time, work such as cleaning for the female members of the sites.

The family sites and future accommodation aspirations

The six clusters involve four groups of English gypsies, one Irish traveller family, and a travelling showpeople family. In total, there are 90 adults in 53 family or single person households, and 59 children and young people in permanent residence.

Site 1 houses some 13 adults and 17 children and young people on a permanent basis. As with many gypsy groups, short term residency by family or friends is also catered for on an occasional basis. This is a site that mainly houses members of a single English gypsy family, with both senior members having strong local roots. They have occupied the site since 1979 – starting with a bungalow and permission for a single trailer. It is a neat, well laid out and well managed family site with a small provision for (selective) transit stopovers. At the time of the survey, the sale of holly and Christmas decorations was being marketed. Other family members are engaged in tree surgery and roofing, as well as power washing services.
The family have relations in and around the area – in particular in Bloxwich and Essington – although there is not much social interaction. Senior members of the family do not travel in the traditional sense although their offspring do engage in this tradition. They have no intention to move but there is some dissatisfaction with unpleasant odours from an adjacent landfill site. Moreover, the family recognise that there is insufficient space at present and certainly inadequate scope for expansion as regards the longer term with grandchildren reaching adulthood and the predisposition for the family members (most males of the family and a small number of females) to settle at the family group site and bring in their partners following marriage.

The site is seen as generally excellent with good access to services, shops and schools and all residents are registered with a GP. A small number of burglaries have occurred but, generally, and aside from the issue of air pollution confronting the site, there are few problems.

The family would favour a planning approach for gypsies and travellers that enabled expansion and new sites – in fact they would be keen to move to another site if the family could all be accommodated as it feels a little tight even at this time. They would like to purchase land if the price was within their means, perhaps selling the existing site. That said, if a 15m strip behind the back perimeter fence could be made available this could help to meet predicted needs. Again, they would be interested in purchasing such land.

In general it is felt that there are insufficient places for gypsies and travellers in Cannock – the family receives a steady stream of requests for short-term and, mainly, longer-term plots on the site. There is little or no demand for house or flat type accommodation with most children aspiring to retain the culture and lifestyle of nomadic and semi-nomadic people. According to the family, “most kids would like a mobile home of their own”, and would tend to shun council sites because of the chances of “bad neighbours and other problems.”

In terms of future accommodation needs, this family would like to be able to expand the site to accommodate expected family growth or locate an alternative site with greater capacity for such future family growth.

Site 2, also privately owned, houses some 10 adults and 5 children on a permanent basis, although perhaps more so than others, this English gypsy family tends to accommodate transit stopovers amongst family and friends. Family events sometimes attract large numbers and these are
accommodated on the site. Thus, although family focused, the operation of the space as a permanent residential and, to a degree, transit site, is complex. The owners have been on the site for over twenty years and their six children were brought up there, although four now live with their families outside of the area.

The family are strongly attached to Cannock, where the children attend local schools and all are registered with local health services. Although the Cannock area is very much favoured, the family are unhappy with air (smells) and noise (sirens at night) pollution emanating from the landfill site that abuts their residential site. This makes it impossible to entertain friends, or to have barbecues in the summer, and is seen as a constraint on social life. As a result of the unpleasant odours, one of the family's daughters recently left the site with her four children. Another has moved into housing in a quest to secure 'better' living conditions for her children.

There is no space to expand and the condition of the site is limited. The amenity and toilet block is in good condition and a mobile home at the entrance to the site has been block paved to a good quality. However, there is no tarmacked roadway and only three toilets service the site. Other caravans on the site are on a gravel base but there are no concrete slabs.

The site has been gradually built up over the twenty year period since it was purchased by the family but needs some improvements. Funds are not available for this and, as such, improvement support would be beneficial and is favoured. Priority areas would be tarmacking the entrance and individual pitches to provide a sounder foundation for the caravans, improved toilet facilities, a children's play area and, if it was possible, individual amenity bungalows for each pitch. It is estimated by the owners that the site could accommodate ten pitches plus themselves. If improvements could be made they feel that the site could sustain a larger population in this way. They even think that some of their family could return to the area and family home site.

In terms of future accommodation needs, this family would like to improve the quality of the site to include better access and hard standing. They feel that a council site could be usefully developed in Cannock to accommodate the excess demand for pitches that, from anecdotal evidence, they feel is evident. They receive numerous requests for pitches on a regular basis.
Site 3 is, in terms of site size, the major cluster in the area. This is an English gypsy family-based site that caters for immediate and other family members together with a small number of other gypsies and travellers who are able to rent pitches and/or accommodation units.

It is a well-developed, high quality site on the edge of the Cannock Chase District planning area and away from main shopping and service locations. Services such as health and education are accessed in nearby settlements such as Pelsall. Most residents have access to a car and thus are able to access shops and related services. The community is very much self-help focused.

The site comprises two brick and mortar houses, and around twenty-five chalets, mobile homes and caravans. It is well served with amenity blocks and is in excellent condition. There is no space for expansion on the site; indeed there has been a need to double up to meet the demand which exceeds available pitch supply. Several family members who would ordinarily locate on the site have not been catered for and are currently on sites outside of Cannock. As the owner says, “the site has outgrown itself.”

At present, there are 27 family and single person groups residing on the site, most of whom are near or distant family members. Due to the shortage of space, some of the single person groups are having to remain on the family pitch.

In total, at the time of the survey, this involved some 48 adults and 29 children and young people (a figure that fluctuates on a short term basis with itinerant working and suchlike). Together with many other people of English gypsy origin in the area, the family attends the Light and Life Gypsy Church in Willenhall. Together with the conventions and outreach events that it organises, this functions as not only a Christian centre but also as a social hub. Many of the residents travel in the Summer, as is the tradition within the gypsy and traveller community. This is mainly for work (fruit picking for example) or for holidays. Events such as the Appleby Horse Fair are popular destinations.

In terms of future accommodation needs, this family views expansion of the existing site as a major goal although, in the past, the cost of adjacent land has proved too high. In addition, some improvements could be made: for example, the site urgently needs play space for the 20 or more children who are under 16 years.
There is existing unmet demand for at least 7 families and many of the young people on the site will require their own accommodation in the near future. Another site – designated for travelling showpeople – has been developed in the near vicinity. This is a good access site but is within a different local planning authority and thus subject to their planning process. It could accommodate 14 families and has been developed to a high standard. At present, discussions are in progress with regard to the operation of the site.

Site 4 has recently received approval for a two pitch development adjacent to a semi-detached house owned by the family, an Irish traveller group with wide associations across the Midlands and strong roots in the area. The site, built to a high quality and with an impressive amenities block, currently has permission for two chalets and caravans to accommodate two families. It is in a quiet location but with good access to the A5. The intention is that the owner will occupy one of the two approved pitches, with family members in the other, and that the house will be rented.

At present the owner and his young family reside in the house. However, they feel a need to return to the gypsy/traveller way of life that is associated with living in clusters of chalets/caravans and travelling in the Summer months. Employment involves a landscaping and block paving business which involves travel outside of the area. The area is favoured by the family as “a quiet and pleasant environment”.

Since the site has been completed, the owner has received a number of requests from friends and family within the gypsy and traveller community for pitches but has been unable to meet these demands with his present level of permission. Some of these people live a transient life, moving between unofficial locations – such as the car park of a local supermarket - on a regular basis.

In terms of future accommodation needs, this family would like to be able to meet the needs of (known) transit stayers. In addition to these enquiries, they would like to house other family members with their respective partners and children. In fact, using the existing walled site, and using the area designated for stables as further residential space, he is keen to cater for up 6 or 7 additional pitches.

Site 5
The one exception to a relatively high quality of living environment amongst gypsy and traveller families in Cannock is a small unlawful, tolerated encampment set up over fifteen years ago on County
Council land and adjacent to a working farm. Given the length of time that the site has been occupied it is essentially immune from enforcement action under planning legislation.

Using the outcomes from a brief visit to the site and minimal consultation with a senior resident, as well as from local knowledge, it seems that this site has access to fresh water but no other power or sanitary services. Although a neatly laid out site it has no hard standing and poor access from the main road.

Site 6
Within the area there is one site settled by travelling showpeople. This is well located in an accessible area with good access to the major roads. The group - third generation showpeople and highly professional - run fair attractions across the Midlands and largely in an around Birmingham from Spring until late Summer. They are members of both the Showman’s Guild (mainly closed to non-travellers) and the Association of Independent Showmen.

This is a family business operated in conjunction with one other family. Although well-kept by the incumbents and well organised the site is inadequate for the group. In effect, a larger site is needed with more space for both the family and showmen pitches and heavy equipment. The site in Cannock would traditionally be described as winter quarters but this is now a misnomer as it is part used all year round. Aside from the array of heavy equipment (including five rides, catering wagons, a stage, and a mobile presentation (ex Learning Direct) suite), the site accommodates some 13 people in 9 trailers or caravans.

They are long-established on the present site (around 20 years) but need a more suitable and sizeable space. Indeed, the site only has the benefit of temporary planning permission because of medium to long-term plans to develop the area as a countryside tourist destination focused around the canal and for which there is a policy in the Local Plan.

In terms of future accommodation needs, this group is seeking a larger site with a chance to develop quality facilities such as an amenity block (lack of this has curtailed their social life when entertaining visitors); good access; and creating a sense of autonomy with an owner-occupied, non-rented site.

They are interested in running the yard as a dual function showpeople base and transit (stopover) site for travelling showpeople (predominantly AIS members); possibly also for other in transit gypsy and
traveller families. Another potential role is that they could also offer emergency accommodation for councils.

The estimated need is to purchase a 6 acres or more site, generating a need for at least two extra families (a caretaker and one other showman) and with possibly 4 acres for other uses. The family is very keen to stay in the Cannock area and would be interested in the St Modwen owned land adjacent to the Watling Street business park.

**Summarising the family structure profile of the Cannock families**

In order to both summarise the nature of the gypsy and traveller community of interest in Cannock, and to demonstrate the basis for the estimation of future pitch requirements, it is useful to analyse family structure. This includes household type and the age and gender profile of children and young people (Table 1).

**Table 1: Family size and structure on the Cannock sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household type by pitch</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single adult under 30 years of age</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single adult over 30 years of age</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 1 child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 2 children</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 3-4 children</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 5-6 children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple under 40 years of age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple over 40 years of age</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Cannock Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Survey, December 2012*

Table 1 shows that, whilst there is a wide mix of family types residing on the Cannock sites, there is a large concentration (43.4% of all household types) of families with children and young people. Reflecting the continuity of the extended family that is a typical feature of gypsy and traveller groups, there is strong interrelation between the households. For example, the parents and other relatives of young family heads often live on the same site. In fact, some 73.6% of those households recorded in the Table have at least one (and often more than one) other family member on the same site.
Some 59 children and young people were recorded in the survey of Cannock sites. As shown in Table 2, over 60% were in the 9-18 years range with around 30% 8 years or less. From the perspective of future accommodation needs, it is important to note that these will virtually all attain adulthood by 2028 at the latest.

Table 2: Gypsy and traveller children and young people on the Cannock sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 years or less</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cannock Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Survey, December 2012

Access to services and employment activities

Aside from the key area of family type, children and young people, the survey also focused on access to services and employment issues.

Access to services is viewed as good by all of the Cannock gypsy and traveller groups participating in the survey. All are registered with local health services and schools, and senior members of the families have traditional links to GPs and other support services that have built up over twenty or more years.

Access is generally viewed as easy and, whilst not all sites are close to settlements and hence services such as health centres, a post office and shops, all families have access to private transport or, alternatively, rely on friends and neighbours in the community. Self-help is a strong element in the gypsy and traveller clusters surveyed.

Employment activities across the gypsy and traveller community in Cannock cover the range of areas traditionally pursued by this community/societal group. These include travelling fairs with major rides, catering and other facilities, part-time cleaning jobs, car and caravan sales, landscaping and block
paving services, power washing services, the production of plants and the sale of holly and Christmas decorations, waste collection and recycling (tatting) activities, and the management and letting of pitches and accommodation units (caravans, chalets or mobile homes). Some of the work - such as fruit picking or landscaping work - involves travelling to other regions and it is common for groups to be away for periods of time, particularly in the Summer.

**Cultural and lifestyle aspects**

Many of those consulted are highly supportive and positive about the traditions of the gypsy and traveller lifestyle. This involves life in clusters of family members, in chalets, mobile homes and/or caravans, with all of the social interaction that is facilitated in such an environment. Families are close knit and self-supporting and, they feel, any failure to support their residential preferences in the future would have deleterious effects on the culture and community. Travelling at specific seasons remains prevalent, but with families retaining their pitches whilst away. Cultural events such as Appleby Horse Fair, work opportunities, holidaying, and visits to friends and family were all mentioned in the survey.

Family groups are not particularly linked but, partly reflecting the nature of the self-help ethos which typifies this community, there is an awareness and friendly association between them. Some meet regularly at the Light and Life Gypsy Church in Willenhall which serves as an important social hub for the English gypsy community.

**Current and future accommodation needs**

Table 3 sets out estimated additional pitch needs for the period from 2012 to 2028. This is derived from specified existing need as well as estimates based on family growth and household formation by young gypsy and traveller groups as they reach maturity. It is thus estimated that, as a result of overcrowding and pent-up demand, there is an immediate need for around 16 pitches within Cannock. Additional to this immediate shortfall is a need for a further 9.8 up to 2018, 10.8 up to 2023, and 8.9 up 2028. This sums to a total of around 45 additional pitches by 2028.

No allowance has been made for any gypsies and travellers who are currently resident in bricks and mortar accommodation because they were unable to find suitable residential sites although there is likely to be some pitch demand from such sources. In the survey, the only incidences of the shift to such housing involved one of the site owners who expressed a “dislike for the claustrophobia” of bricks and mortar living and an intention to occupy his own gypsy and traveller site and let the house, and a
number of family members of another family site who had deliberately shifted into housing on comfort grounds.

**Table 3: Additional permanent residential pitch needs, 2013-2028**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current pitches and estimated needs</th>
<th>Gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople family sites in Cannock</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GT1</td>
<td>GT2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate unmet need through overcrowding and specified pent-up demand</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional pitch needs 2013-2018</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional pitch needs 2018-2023</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional pitch needs 2023-2028</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total additional needs 2013-2028</strong></td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: GT – gypsy and traveller family site; TS – travelling showpeople site. Additional to these permanent residential pitch needs, and as set out in the next section, is a proposed transit provision of 5 pitches to be met on an ongoing basis from 2013-2018.

**Source:** Estimated from data collected as part of the Cannock Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Survey, December 2012

**The need for transit pitches in the area**

The nomadic and travelling lifestyle remains an important feature of the gypsy and traveller identity and way of life. As is evident from the survey, purposeful rather than general travelling beyond the area is still an important feature of the Cannock clusters. This involves work, leisure and family-focused activity.

The various research surveys conducted for GTANAs show that some gypsies and travellers are still highly mobile without a permanent base, and others travel for significant parts of the year from a winter base. Indeed, more might travel if it were possible to find places to stop without the threat of eviction.
The main evidence of need for transit pitches in the area emerges from the survey where participants recalled that they do get requests for stopovers from a small number of gypsies and travellers passing through the area. This tends to be, although not exclusively, friends and family. The Cannock area is well-placed and adjacent to major routeways - such as the A5 and M6 - that are used by this community and thus should realistically anticipate a demand for stopover sites.

Previous work focused on the wider Southern Staffordshire and North Warwickshire sub-region\(^5\) estimated that the equitable provision of at least 5 transit pitches for, but not necessarily within, each local authority area would provide the capacity required to cater for the households identified as in need of transit accommodation\(^6\).

At present, existing sites do cope with a proportion of the occasional transit pitch requests but at the expense of overcrowding, although some requests are not met. As such, it seems that provision could usefully be made for a small number of perhaps 5 transit pitches. In accepting that the Cannock families do offer such facilities it may be that the provision could be covered within existing sites or future developments focused mainly on the ‘permanent’ gypsy and traveller community. This could be as part of the expansion of existing sites, thus obviating the need to manage such provision. In any case, in order to avoid duplication there would need to be liaison with adjacent planning authorities.

In the survey, most families felt that there could be a viable transit (stopover) provision made for the area whether that be a separate transit site or provision within existing (perhaps expanded) or new sites for the current gypsy and traveller families in the area.

### 7. Implications of the accommodation need research

Research has generated information on the challenges of current sites and how they could be rectified, as well as needs to 2028, and how these could be met as well as the views and aspirations of the gypsy and traveller community in these respects. In this final section, we discuss these issues.

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\(^6\) The need then was considered in terms of unauthorised encampments and linked movement but that is not really appropriate for the current circumstances of the unauthorised Cannock gypsy and traveller family (site 5) involved as it is long established on the site.
7.1 Challenges and needs in the current quality and distribution of sites and pitches

The main challenges confronting the existing gypsy and traveller sites in Cannock relate to capacity and quality issues. Participants in the survey reported that sites are generally full to capacity, in some cases overcrowded with ‘doubling up’ occurring but, beyond that, there is pent-up demand that cannot be specified. The general view within the gypsy and traveller community is that, aside from specific, documented need, there is also substantial non-specific need for pitches. This view is based on knowledge gained via networks of contacts between family and friends and is evidenced, albeit only anecdotally, by the volume of requests addressed to family site owners. As such, the estimates included in the present report should perhaps be viewed as minimal as they are confined to the internal processes within the Cannock clusters.

Aside from capacity, there are quality issues associated with the existing sites. None have dedicated play areas for children and some are in need of improvement in terms of roadways and pitch foundations, as well sanitary and related facilities. Thus, additional to the provision of estimated pitch requirements, there is a need for quality improvements in these areas.

7.2 Meeting the need over the period to 2028

This assessment estimates a need to cater for future accommodation requirements beyond the confines of existing capacity in the period up to 2028. It is based on specific, documented need from existing unmet demand plus family growth and thus household formation implications. That said, there is also an indication of some non-specific unmet need although, given the lack of hard data in this area, we must assume that in-mover demand will be broadly equivalent to the release of pitches through out-movement. In other words, make no allowance for non-specified demand other than for transit pitches. As such, the exercise estimates a need for around 45 additional pitches up to 2028 together with a small provision for transit needs. The question that remains is how could the needs be met.

An operational challenge in meeting the need is that it is closely aligned to individual families and groups at the residential locations. For example, some of the immediate unmet need is linked to its potential provision at specific sites and not neatly or easily elsewhere. That implies the expansion of existing sites as the priority where it is feasible and, only if that proves difficult, the identification of a new site or sites in the vicinity of existing clusters.
There is thus a need to make provision for additional pitches between 2013 and 2028. This could be:

- support for the expansion and/or reconfiguration of existing sites to provide additional pitches; and/or,
- an allocation of space within the area to facilitate the provision of an additional site or sites.

In addition to this, there is scope for the improvement of some existing sites to bring them up to a higher quality of provision.

Table 4 summarises the outcomes of the survey in terms of the attitudes and priority aspirations of the Cannock families. In this respect there were a range of ideas and responses but predominant amongst these is site expansion and/or improvement followed by new site allocation. Support for the development of a Council-run site was low. Finally, a ‘do nothing’ option was not viewed as tenable.

**Table 4: Summary of attitudes and priority aspirations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of action</th>
<th>Gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople family sites in Cannock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GT1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand existing site</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance existing site</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify potential new private site/s</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up a council-run site in the area</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing to change the present situation</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: responses are ranked in order of priority with no score indicating no response to a particular potential action. The rankings for GT5 are inferred from the brief consultation that took place. GT – gypsy and traveller family site; TS – travelling showpeople site.

**Source:** Cannock Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Survey, December 2012
It is perhaps useful to consider the implications of the ‘do nothing’ approach, in other words, not meeting future needs through engineered actions and solutions. If provision remains at current levels the following outcomes are likely;

- the continuation of ‘doubling up’ leading to overcrowding; potentially,
- pressure to seek unauthorised sites; and,
- the dislocation of family units with young adults being forced to move out of the area.

The survey and estimation approach reflects some of these processes. In the case of overcrowding, some of the specified unmet demand has been built into the pitch need estimates. Linked to this, in the latter case, there was evidence from the survey that some young people had left the immediate area as pitches were not available.

Servicing the need will require liaison with adjacent local planning authorities, in particular those in Walsall, South Staffordshire and Lichfield. These have sites and a gypsy/traveller presence in the vicinity of the Cannock Chase area boundary. In addition, families currently residing on Cannock Chase sites have indicated that, although interaction is not necessarily strong and/or frequent, they have relatives living in these areas and that could be a source of demand for some Cannock pitches. This is likely to be a particular feature where good quality sites are available and recognised through the informal gypsy and traveller network.

Improved transit pitch provision could be accommodated within the future developments of the family sites.

### 7.3 The need and potential for support

There is evidence from the survey that the owners of private sites are willing, given the availability of finance, to consider expansion, improvement or even movement to new sites. We recommend that consideration be made to the potential for accessing the traveller pitch funding stream within the 2011-2015 Affordable Homes Programme. Although this is confined to local authorities, registered social landlords and community-based organisations, any support for the development and/or improvement of the gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople sites within Cannock – perhaps through a council-led programme of support that draws on the funding stream - would be highly beneficial in meeting the future accommodation needs of this community.
Appendix 1: Consultations

Ian Collingham, Cannock Chase Council
Alison Heine, Planning Consultant
John Heminsley, Cannock Chase Council
Joseph Jones, The Gypsy Council
Appendix 2: Glossary of terms used in the report

Amenity block
A small permanent building on or adjacent to a pitch with bath/shower, WC, sink, washing machine/s and dryers, and (in some larger ones) space to eat and relax. This may serve one or a number of pitches. Also known as a utility block or shed.

Authorised site
A site with planning permission for use as a gypsy and traveller site. This can either be privately owned (often by a gypsy or traveller) or socially rented (owned by a council or registered social landlord).

Bedroom standard
The bedroom standard is that used by the General Household Survey, and is calculated as follows: a separate bedroom is allocated to each co-habiting couple, any other person aged 21 or over, each pair of young persons aged 10-20 of the same sex, and each pair of children under 10 (regardless of sex). Unpaired young persons aged 10-20 are paired with a child under 10 of the same sex or, if possible, allocated a separate bedroom. Any remaining unpaired children under 10 are also allocated a separate bedroom. The calculated standard for the household is then compared with the actual number of bedrooms available for its sole use to indicate deficiencies or excesses. Bedrooms include bed-sitters, box rooms and bedrooms which are identified as such by respondents even though they may not be in use as such.

Bricks and mortar accommodation
Permanent brick-built accommodation, whether within the settled community or on established gypsy and traveller sites.

Caravan
Mobile, non-motorised living vehicle. Also referred to as a trailer.

Caravan Count
A count of caravans (also including mobile homes) on recognised sites that is conducted every six months - in January and July - for gypsies and travellers and annually - in January - for travelling showpeople.

Concealed household
A household or family unit that currently lives within another household or family unit but has a preference to live independently and is unable to access appropriate accommodation (on sites or in housing).

Doubling up
More than one family unit sharing a single pitch.

Family unit
A group of related people who live and/or travel together. It is assumed that each family unit would require one pitch to live on. It is used as the basis for assessing accommodation requirements.
**Gypsy**
Member of one of the main groups of gypsies and travellers in the UK: English (Romany) Gypsies, Scottish Travellers, Welsh Travellers and Eastern European Roma. English Gypsies were recognised as an ethnic group in 1988.

**Gypsy and Traveller**
As defined for the purpose of the Housing Act 2004, in this report it includes all Gypsies, Irish Travellers, New Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, Eastern European Roma and other Travellers who adopt a nomadic or semi-nomadic life.

**Irish Traveller**
Member of one of the main groups of gypsies and travellers in the UK. Distinct from gypsies but sharing a nomadic tradition, Irish Travellers were recognised as an ethnic group in England in 2000.

**Mobile home**
For legal purposes it is a caravan, but not a unit normally capable of being moved by towing.

**Net need**
The difference between need and the expected supply of available pitches (such as from expansions or the construction of new sites).

**New Traveller**
Members of the settled community who have chosen a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle (formerly New Age Traveller).

**Newly forming families**
Adult individuals, couples or lone parent families living as part of another family unit of which they are neither the head nor the partner of the head and who need to live in their own separate accommodation, and/or are intending to move to separate accommodation, rather than continuing to live with their 'host' family unit. The process is known as family formation.

**Overcrowding**
An overcrowded dwelling is one which is below the bedroom standard (see Bedroom Standard above).

**Pitch**
Area on a site developed for a family unit to live. On socially rented sites, the area let to a licensee or a tenant for stationing caravans and other vehicles. Sometimes known as slabs.

**Plot**
Area on a yard for Travelling Showpeople to live. As well as dwelling units, Travelling Showpeople often keep their commercial equipment on a plot.

**Private rented pitches**
Pitches on sites which are rented on a commercial basis to other gypsies and travellers. The actual pitches tend to be less clearly defined than on socially rented sites.

**Settled community**
Used to refer to non-gypsies and travellers who live in housing.

**Site**
An area of land laid out and used for gypsy and traveller caravans.

**Socially rented site**
A gypsy and traveller site owned by a council or registered social landlord.

**Tolerated**
An unauthorised development or encampment that is tolerated by the local planning authority meaning that no enforcement action is currently being taken.

**Trailer**
Term commonly used by gypsies and travellers for a non-motorised moveable caravan.

**Transit site/pitch**
A site/pitch intended for short-term use, with a maximum period of stay.

**Travelling Showpeople**
People who organise circuses and fairgrounds and who live on yards when not travelling between locations. Most Travelling Showpeople are members of the Showmen’s Guild of Great Britain and/or Association of Independent Showpeople.

**Unauthorised development**
A site owned by gypsies and travellers, but without the appropriate planning permission to station caravans.

**Unauthorised encampment**
Refers to a site where gypsies and travellers reside on land they do not own and without permission from the owners. The land can be public or privately owned.

**Unauthorised site**
Land occupied by gypsies and travellers without the appropriate planning or other permissions. The term includes both unauthorised development and unauthorised encampment.

**Winter quarters**
A site occupied by Travelling Showpeople, traditionally used when not travelling to provide fairs or circuses. Many now involve year-round occupation.

**Utility block**
See amenity block.

**Yard**
Term used for a site occupied by Travelling Showpeople. They are sometimes rented by different families with defined plots.

**Source:** this glossary has been developed, adapted and amended from the London Boroughs’ Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Final Report, Fordham Research, March 2008.
Acknowledgements

The present report could not have been completed without the generous support of all those gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople who participated in the survey. In addition, Alison Heine offered some useful suggestions, and Ian Collingham and John Heminsley of Cannock Chase Council gave valuable support in conducting the survey and making contact with the community.

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