
Report to: Cabinet **Date of Meeting:** 11 September 2014

Subject: Merseyside and West Lancashire Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Report of: Director of Built Environment **Wards Affected:** All

Is this a Key Decision? Yes **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes

Exempt/Confidential No

Purpose/Summary

To report on the findings and approve the Merseyside and West Lancashire Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Recommendation(s)

To approve the Merseyside and West Lancashire Traveller Accommodation Assessment

How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?

	<u>Corporate Objective</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		✓	
2	Jobs and Prosperity		✓	
3	Environmental Sustainability		✓	
4	Health and Well-Being	✓		
5	Children and Young People	✓		
6	Creating Safe Communities	✓		
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	✓		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy		✓	

Reasons for the Recommendation:

To approve the findings of the Merseyside and West Lancashire Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Local Plan purposes

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

None arising from this report.

Note that, insofar as the assessment forecasts future additional requirements, there is the potential for the need for additional funding in future years. Further reports will therefore need to be prepared as and when the requirements for additional facilities are specifically identified and developed.

(B) Capital Costs None

Implications:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

Financial		
Legal		
Human Resources		
None		
Equality		
1.	No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

None

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Head of Corporate Finance and ICT (FD3120/14) notes that there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

The Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD2412) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Background Papers:

Merseyside and West Lancashire Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2014

www.sefton.gov.uk/travellerstudy

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites [see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites>]

1. Background

1.1 Local Authorities have a duty to provide for the accommodation needs for travellers through their Local Plans. This requirement is set out in the government's 'Planning policy for traveller sites' [March 2012] an accompanying document to the National Planning Policy Framework. Local Plans must identify sufficient land to provide for traveller accommodation based on objectively assessed needs. A number of authorities that have failed to do so have had their Local Plans found unsound.

1.2 Paragraphs 8 and 9 of 'Planning policy for traveller sites' state that:

'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'.

1.3 To ensure that the evidence on the needs for Traveller sites in the Liverpool City Region was up-to-date and robust for the purposes of Local Plans, six authorities in the city region [i.e. Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, West Lancashire and Wirral] decided to jointly commission an assessment of traveller needs. Sefton as the lead authority was the commissioning body.

1.4 Following a competitive bidding process a company which specialises in traveller assessments, arc4, was commissioned in March 2013.

2. Study Methodology

2.1 In order to meet the requirements of Government Guidance the methodology for this study has comprised:

- Desktop analysis of existing documents, data and pitch information;
- Interviews with Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople;
- A Key Stakeholder on-line questionnaire for professionals who have contact with and knowledge of local Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities; and
- Discussions with community representatives and representative bodies including Irish Community Care Merseyside and the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain North West Section.

2.2 The primary fieldwork for this study comprised surveys with Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople; this was undertaken by Gypsy and Traveller fieldworkers. A total of 111 interviews were carried out across the study area, including 21 in Sefton.

3. Study Findings

Permanent traveller pitches

3.1 The assessment of current need for permanent traveller residential pitches takes account of existing supply and demand in line with the Guidance. This took account of the survey work and information from the Local Authorities.

3.2 In terms of **supply**, the assessment considers:

- Total supply of pitches on authorised sites;
- Turnover on existing authorised sites;
- Vacant pitches on authorised sites;

3.3 In terms of **need**, the assessment considers:

- The number of existing households currently living on sites which are intending to move in the next five years, either between pitches on the same site, to a site elsewhere or to 'bricks and mortar accommodation' [the term used to describe traditional housing];
- The number of existing households currently living in bricks and mortar accommodation who are intending to move onto a site within the study area or elsewhere within the next five years;
- The number of emerging households (newly forming) in the next five years which are currently living on a pitch or in bricks and mortar accommodation and will need their own pitch on the same site, or will need to move elsewhere in the study area, outside the study area or to bricks and mortar accommodation.

3.4 The assessment then reconciles total need and existing authorised supply by summarising:

- Total need for pitches; and
- Total supply of authorised pitches.

Summary of future permanent pitch requirements

3.5 The table below sets out the identified future pitch requirement for each local authority in the study area, split by five year time periods.

	Liverpool	Knowsley	Sefton	St. Helens	West Lancashire	Wirral	Merseyside and West Lancashire
2013/14 to 2017/18	0	0	4	6	14	6	30
2018/19 to 2022/23	-4	0	6	1	3	1	7
2023/24 to 2027/28	-4	0	4	-1	3	0	2
2028/29 to 2032/33	-3	0	1	2	2	1	3
Total need 2013/14 to 2032/33 (20 years)	-11	0	15	8	22	8	42

3.6 There is a range of requirements across the study area from an apparent over supply in Liverpool to a need for 22 pitches in West Lancashire. Sefton have the

second highest need for permanent traveller pitches. The study recommends that each Local Authority meets its own needs and that Liverpool closely monitors its traveller population to see if the predicted demographic changes are borne out.

3.7 There are currently two traveller sites in Sefton both of which provide permanent accommodation:

- A Council run site [Red Rose Park] located at Broad Lane, Formby, which was recently extended by four pitches in 2014 [approved in 2013], and now provides 20 permanent pitches,
- A private site at Broad Lane which has two pitches.

3.8 The additional four pitches provided at Broad Lane in 2014 meet the requirement for permanent pitches in the period 2013-18. There is need therefore to identify land for a further 11 pitches in the Local Plan to meet the needs to 2030.

3.9 These figures show a decrease in the number of sites for Sefton from the previous traveller accommodation assessment study [from 2008]. This suggested a need for 16 additional permanent pitches in Sefton to 2016 [and a 3% annual increase after that].

Transit pitches

3.10 Transit sites are authorised and usually permanent but there is a limit on the length of time residents can stay. In practice the length of stay on a transit pitch is generally limited to a maximum of 12 weeks (three months). They are often used by traveller families as they travel from a more permanent base to elsewhere for social or employment purposes. A lack of transit pitches often results in unauthorised encampments. There are currently no transit pitches available in the whole of the Merseyside and the West Lancashire area.

3.11 The two key elements used in determining a need for transit provision were:

- Unauthorised encampment data; and
- Contextual information and views of Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officers.

3.12 Unauthorised encampment data for the two and a half year period [January 2011 to June 2013] was collated and analysed to give an indication as to the level of activity across the area. As unauthorised encampments are generally indicative of a lack of transit accommodation, this is a useful starting point.

3.13 Overall, analysis of unauthorised encampment data and contextual information indicates that new transit sites are needed across Merseyside and West Lancashire. It is recommended that 22 transit pitches be provided across the study area as a whole. This is broken down for each individual local authority as follows:

Authority	Five year pitch requirement (single van use)	Total maximum caravans that could be accommodated
Knowsley	3	6
Liverpool	4	8
Sefton	4	8
St Helens	3	6
West Lancashire	4	8
Wirral	4	8
Total	22	44

3.14 The identified need for transit pitches indicates a broad spread across the sub-region. For short periods or for family groups it is possible that a pitch could accommodate two caravans. Given the lack of transit sites, this requirement should be met in the first five year period of the assessment [i.e. 2013-18]. It is not expected that further transit pitches would be required beyond this period, although this should be monitored.

Travelling Showpeople

3.15 Travelling showpeople are a community of people who travel specifically in relation to their employment at fairs. They require a permanent base where they can store, maintain and repair their equipment and where they can station their caravans when they are not travelling for their business. The assessment did not identify a need for sites travelling showpeople in Sefton.

Other findings

3.16 The survey work undertaken with the travelling community looked at a range of issues that went beyond future accommodation requirements. This included questions on the quality of existing accommodation, social issues and barriers and other problems travellers experience. The full report contains detailed surveys results on the following issues:

- Ethnicity
- Tenure
- Facilities
- Repairs and improvements
- Space standards and overcrowding
- Location and safety
- Cost of accommodation and services
- Planned moves and mobility
- Travelling practices and experience

Conclusions

3.17 The study identifies a small but challenging traveller accommodation need for Sefton. The identification of sites for travellers is often controversial as travellers receive a bad press and there is a perception in the wider community that they do not make good neighbours. Some of these issues, e.g. unauthorised encampments, relate to the lack of suitable sites. Nevertheless the Council has a

duty to identify suitable sites for travellers and this must be addressed through the Local Plan.

3.18 It is recommended that the Traveller Accommodation Assessment is updated regularly basis to ensure that the number of pitches and plots remain appropriate for the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople population across the study area.

4. Next Stages

4.1 To identify sites that could potentially be allocated for traveller accommodation we have undertaken a number of tasks to do this:

- A 'call for sites' requesting local landowners to let us know of any suitable sites. This included placing an advert in the local press.
- Liaising with our traveller community to ask if they have sites that may be suitable
- Assessing whether there is suitable land in Council ownership
- Asking a range of Council officers if they have come across suitable sites in undertaking their work.

4.2 These tasks have identified a very small number of potential sites and it is hoped that further sites will be suggested. We are in the process of assessing these sites based on a number of criteria to determine how suitable they are for traveller accommodation. This is a similar process that is being undertaken for bricks and mortar homes but also looks at impact on existing non-traveller residents. It is anticipated that the findings of the process of identifying and assessing sites will be presented in a subsequent report and approval sought to include these sites in the Local Plan.