

**Needs Assessment for Travelling Showpeople -
Executive summary**

Services for life

Executive summary

Introduction

1. This study was commissioned as a follow-on study to the Gypsy and Traveller needs assessment carried out by Tribal for The Association of Councils of the Thames Valley Region (ACTVaR). The specific aim of this follow-on study was to carry out an accommodation needs assessment for travelling showpeople in the county of Oxfordshire.
2. The study has been funded by Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.
3. The purpose of this study was to carry out an assessment of the accommodation (including spatial requirements for storage and maintenance of fairground rides) needs of travelling showpeople in the county of Oxfordshire. The aims and objectives of this study were to:
 - Identify the current presence of showpeople in the Oxfordshire area, including household characteristics, the types of accommodation currently occupied, links to the local area and/or other areas; specific accommodation requirements (including space required for storage and maintenance of vehicles/rides)
 - Understand, document and quantify the accommodation and related needs (for instance for housing related support, education and health services) of showpeople in Oxfordshire
 - Provide analysis of these needs at the county and district level
 - Ensure that the coverage of the study and calculation of need arising from it comply with the guidance issued by CLG for needs assessments
4. The types of accommodation used by showpeople identified within this study fall into four broad types
 - Authorised sites – are sites owned by private individuals. Showpeople may either own the site, a plot on the site or rent a plot. This study included interviews with 25 households living on authorised sites.
 - Unauthorised developments – are developments that occur when showpeople buy a piece of land which does not have planning permission for a dwelling and place a chalet, trailer or caravan on it. This study identified two plots of land without planning permission. One was owned by a showperson but not currently used for residential purposes because it has no planning permission. The other is not owned by a showperson but is occasionally used on a temporary basis. No interviews were carried out with people residing on unauthorised developments at the time of the interview.
 - Those with no fixed address – where showpeople do not have a base and are moving between fairs and making temporary accommodation arrangements. This study included interviews with three households with no fixed address and a strong local connection with Oxfordshire.
 - Housing – There is no specific housing reserved for showpeople but the study estimated that around 10% of showpeople live in general housing. This study included interviews with two households living in housing.

Methodology

5. Tribal met with the steering group to discuss the proposed methodology and logistics, the questionnaire content and structure, the background and local context to the work, to agree a timetable, and the required coverage of the survey.
6. A questionnaire was developed which included questions on household formation, accommodation, storage and maintenance needs, views about site provision, movement patterns and views on existing accommodation.
7. Information was gathered about the location of travelling showpeople in the area living in housing and on sites from the five local authorities and the Showman's Guild. A letter was then sent by the Showman's Guild informing members of the study and encouraging participation.
8. A total of 30 interviews took place during July 2008. The exact size of the showpeople population in Oxfordshire is not known, however we estimate that our sample of interviews represents around 45% of the local population. Because the population size is not high a sample of this size cannot be assumed to be necessarily representative of the population. In other words, we cannot assume with certainty that the needs and preferences reported during the study interviews will necessarily be the same as those held by the total population of showpeople. This is particularly the case when attempting to draw conclusions about sub-groups covered by the study, for instance showpeople living in housing. Guidance issued by Government to local authorities accepts that may often be the case for studies of this type.

General findings

9. All those interviewed expressed a need to live on an authorised site. A small number said that they would prefer to live in a house on a site but none said that they wanted to move to general non-site based housing. There is a strong preference amongst many showpeople to live alongside other members of their extended family.
10. Just under half of those interviewed said that their current accommodation does not meet their current needs and the most commonly cited reason for this was lack of space. Other problems were also mentioned including lack of facilities, flooding, insecurity, problems with neighbours and lack of footpaths to walk to local amenities.
11. The average household size was larger than for the general population in the Oxfordshire area with an average of three members per household, compared to 2.41 for the overall population.
12. Almost all interviewees stated that they had lived in Oxfordshire for over ten years with some having lived in the county all their lives. Almost all interviewees travel to shows but said that the pattern of travel has changed and that they are much more likely to travel shorter distances and return to their site more frequently during the main months of travel which are Easter through to November. For those with children this is often to enable their children to take up a more settled education.
13. Employment patterns are considered to be changing with an increasing number of showpeople taking on alternative employment. In most instances the alternative work is taken to supplement their income from fairs as business costs increase. Most interviewees did however think that the family business would grow as children would need to acquire more rides to maintain the business. Others commented that showpeople need to expand their businesses in order to make the same profit levels in the current economic climate.
14. The types of rides and equipment for which storage and maintenance space was needed varied across households however the space for storage and maintenance is generally considered to be needed on the site where people live. A number of interviewees were not able to store their equipment nearby which had led to problems with vandalism and theft. Others had their

equipment stored at numerous locations which creates problems for maintenance and also general logistics.

Need for permanent site accommodation

15. As the interview sample could not be assumed to be necessarily representative, we also considered the findings from other needs assessments when developing our assumptions about the need for new site provision in the area. In general we took the needs and preferences expressed by our interview sample and compared these findings to those from other studies. Where these were broadly similar this provided some evidence of the validity of the findings. Where they were dissimilar, we considered whether this indicated that our sample may be unrepresentative and, where necessary, developed our assumption on an adjusted figure. An example of this is given below.
16. All of our interview sample living in housing expressed a preference for living on a site. This proportion was much higher than the proportion from other recent studies. We therefore adjusted this assumption downwards to 30% on the basis that our sample may not have been representative of all showpeople living in housing in the Oxfordshire area, and that not all of those with a preference for site accommodation would necessarily complete a move to take up that preference (for instance because they did not wish to disrupt their children's education). We then used this percentage to calculate the need for site based plots for showpeople thought to be living in housing.
17. As required by the brief, we have used the findings from the overall study to assess needs arising at the district and unitary council level. The study provides an assessment of needs for site based accommodation arising in each local authority area; however it should be noted that the results will be less reliable than at the regional level. The development of separate assumptions at the local authority level was not realistic given the very small sample sizes at that level. We have therefore divided the needs calculated above between each district based upon the percentage of the assumed population of showpeople in the county.
18. In section five of the main report we have described the basis of all our assumptions in full. Readers are strongly encouraged to read this before interpreting the findings at either the regional or local level. These assumptions are summarised in the table below which shows the assessments of need at the regional level.
19. The calculation of the need for new site based accommodation set out below firstly quantifies need (based on the survey findings adjusted where necessary), and then subtracts from this the calculated supply of site based accommodation for showpeople. The validity of the final figure (indicative requirement) depends upon the reliability of the assumptions of need that we have developed.

CURRENT RESIDENTIAL SUPPLY		
A Current supply of socially rented residential site plots in county	0	Based on information from local authorities
B Current supply of lawful/authorised privately owned site plots in county	58	Based on data from the survey and the local authorities (see table 2)
C Total plots on lawful/authorised sites (A + B)	58	
D Number of lawful/authorised plots not available for letting (due to management problems, awaiting refurbishment etc)	0	

E Number of available plots (C – D)	58	
F Currently vacant plots	6	
G Number of existing plots expected to become vacant and lettable through normal annual turnover (LA and privately owned)	2.3	Based on an assumption that 4% of private plots will become vacant each year (4% of E)
H Number of households in site accommodation expressing a desire to live in housing	0	Number of households on authorised sites who would take up housing(off site) if offered (as per survey findings)
I New local authority plots already planned	0	There are no known new sites planned at present
J Existing applications for private site development / extension likely to gain approval	0	There are no known plans for site development or extension at present
K Net Available Supply (F + G + H + I + J)	8.3	
CURRENT NEED		
L Households who are currently of no fixed abode	3	No record of unlawful/unauthorised encampments involving showpeople but three households with no fixed address
M Households on unlawful/unauthorised developments	6	Total number of households living on authorised sites outside the terms of the fire regulations and planning permission for that site
N Concealed households in this study area currently in need of accommodation	20	Based on 30% concealed households (based on survey findings) requiring site accommodation from a total assumed number of 66.7 households.
O In housing but with a need for site accommodation	1.9	Based on 30% of estimated 6.3 households living in housing
P Current Gross Need (L+M + N + O)	30.9	
Q Current Net Need (P - K)	22.6	

R Additional household formation 2008 – 2018	31.8	Number of new households likely to form in next ten years who will wish to take up site accommodation. Based on 53% household growth taken from the survey (using the overall household estimate but excluding those in housing i.e.60)
S Gross need to 2018 (Q + R)	54.4	
T Supply of plots available from current supply over 2009 – 2018	20.7	Assumes: Vacancies arising on lawful/authorised sites over a ten year periods due to normal net turnover of 4% (9 x 2.3 = 20.7)
U Net need for additional permanent plots 2008 – 2018 (S - T)	33.7	

20. Tribal has used the same assumptions developed at the county level to calculate need for additional plots arising at the district level. These needs should be viewed in the context of the overall needs for the county as they inevitably result in a need for a greater proportion of plots arising from those areas that are already making the greatest contribution to supply of sites in the region. The calculations at the district level should be regarded as an indication of the needs arising for site based accommodation at the local level, but not necessarily an indication that those needs have to be met in that district.

Need for transit sites

21. This study did not identify any clear evidence of a need for additional stopping places or transit sites (plots upon which showpeople can park their caravan or trailer for a relatively short space of time whilst travelling or taking up temporary work) in the county or adjoining areas. The need for transit sites and temporary stopping places within the area are more likely to arise from those from outside the county travelling through the county and there was no evidence of this gathered during the study. The study did however identify a need for improvements to accommodation conditions on fairgrounds in the county.

Next steps

22. The results of the survey appear to have confirmed the assumptions contained within recent CLG guidance on the lifestyle and needs of travelling showpeople, namely that many showpeople now need site accommodation for more than the winter period and prefer to have permanent accommodation which they can return to in-between fairs as much as possible
23. The accommodation needs assessment has revealed a need for a significant increase in the number of plots on permanent authorised sites over the next ten years. Tribal considers it unlikely that this is an over-estimate (and indeed it is more likely to be an under-estimate given the uncertainty of continued future supply at current levels), however the overall assessment is based on a number of assumptions that may not be fully accurate.
24. All of respondents to Tribal's survey expressed a need for site based accommodation rather than housing to meet the needs of showpeople. Given the high rates of household growth

within the communities, and the pressures that have operated at the local level (for instance shortages of land, competing land uses, opposition from local communities to new site provision) to limit the development of new sites, it is not surprising that a significant provision is now needed to meet the backlog of current need.

25. In deciding how to respond to the needs identified during this study the authorities should involve the local communities to ensure that the solutions identified will work in practice and adequately reflect the needs and preferences of the intended recipients.