

# **Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment: Tonbridge & Malling**

## **Part 2: Travelling Showpeople Assessment**

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October 2014



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## **About the Authors**

**The study consisted of the following core team members:**

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The team was also supported by Victoria Morris (Project Administrator) and Sharon Finney and Tracey Finney who worked as Community Interviewers for the study.

The Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit is a dedicated multi-disciplinary research and consultancy unit providing a range of services relating to housing and urban management to public and private sector clients. The Unit brings together researchers drawn from a range of disciplines including: social policy, housing management, urban geography, environmental management, psychology, social care and social work.

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# Travelling Showpeople in Tonbridge and Malling

## Background

- 1.1 Tonbridge and Malling have a settled Travelling Showpeople community resident on a designated site, which has been in situ in the Borough for at least 100 years. Additionally, there are a number of Travelling Showpeople families who own land in Tonbridge and Malling and are thought to stay in the area at different times in the year, as well as staying in other neighbouring Boroughs. This considered and in the absence of a regional or sub-regional assessment of the needs of Travelling Showpeople in this area, the issues and survey findings from Travelling Showpeople have been detailed in this part two report, separate to the part one Gypsy and Traveller report.
- 1.2 Travelling Showpeople occupy an unusual position in planning terms and a separate planning Circular, detailing the particular planning needs of Travelling Showpeople, was produced: Circular 04/07. As well as detailing the requirements for pitch identification and allocation for Travelling Showpeople, Circular 04/07 also required that the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople were included within the assessments of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs. Circular 04/07 has been replaced by the new Planning Policy<sup>1</sup>. However, it is clear that the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople should be included within the assessments of accommodation need for 'travellers' within this new framework.
- 1.3 There is one authorised site for Travelling Showpeople in Tonbridge and Malling, which is thought to have three plots and eleven caravans on site. The council believe there to be six households on this site all part of the same family group. The Council provides the following contextual information from Dr Andrew Ashbee of Snodland Historical Society about the site:

“The site has been used by the Travelling Show People community since before the first Town and Country Planning Act. There has been a travelling community in Snodland (the site) for more than 100 years and fairground equipment comes and goes from their land Woodland Avenue”

### *Unauthorised Travelling Show People Encampments*

- 1.4 Although, there are currently no unauthorised Travelling Showpeople sites in the borough, there was at the time of the survey in October 2012 one live planning application to change use of land to such a site at Castle Way, Leybourne. This application was first received and refused in 2010 and was at appeal at the time of the survey. This appeal has subsequently been dismissed (26.3.13).

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<sup>1</sup> CLG (2012) *Planning for traveller sites*

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2113371.pdf>

- 1.5 Historically, there was one unauthorised Travelling Showpeople site in the borough in 2000 at land west of Crouch Lane, Platt, which after appeal and enforcement order in the same year, is no longer there. This initially involved 15 residential caravans and showmens equipment.
- 1.6 As far as the Council is aware the land in question remains in the ownership of the Travelling Showpeople involved in the appeals and is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt. The Inspector’s report into the Castle Way appeal noted that ‘However, with reference to where that need should be met only limited weight should be given to the EiP report given its unfinished draft status. Thus little weight should be given to the suggested provision for 10 pitches in Tonbridge and Malling.’
- 1.7 It should be noted that Travelling Showpeople remain distinct from Gypsies and Travellers and further work is needed across local authority boundaries, to accurately understand their accommodation needs. There may be a need for accommodation in the borough from families working in the area, but who live in adjacent or other authorities. A cross-boundary assessment in partnership with the Showmen’s Guild would, most effectively, identify such shortage.
- 1.8 A stakeholder interview was carried out with a representative of the Travelling Showmen’s Guild in order to gain further insight into the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople. The interview highlighted that there are an estimated six to eight families currently looking for permanent sites in Tonbridge and Malling. These families reportedly currently live on fair sites around the country all year round. The families currently own land in Tonbridge and Malling but do not have planning permission to live there. The three key aspects for these families – according to the stakeholder interviewed – is that they have an overcrowding issue, have family growth and have no permanent home anywhere.

### **Travelling Showpeople: survey findings**

- 1.9 The research team conducted three interviews with members of the authorised Travelling Showpeople site in Snodland. Due to the small number of interviews secured, it is impractical to present the survey responses as percentages. The following summarises the key issues emerging from the interviews:
- All stated that the site has permanent planning permission;
  - All reported that they had enough space for trailers and equipment and that accommodating visitors was not a problem;
  - All said they had been born in the area and had always lived on their current site. The main reason for staying on the site and in the area was because of being born there and having close family in the area;
  - All said they lived on the site thirty one to fifty one weeks per year and travelled with the fair for the rest of the time;
  - All have travelled in the last twelve months and travel at least a few times a year, staying on other Showpeople Yards when they do so;

- All three work across Kent in many of the local authorities, particularly Dartford and Seveonoaks. Two also regularly work at fairs in Nottinghamshire;
- All three report having no needs or problems in terms of accessing work;
- All three report having adequate access to health services, where applicable; and
- One respondent indicated that they are going to stay on the site indefinitely whilst the other two had no plans to move.

1.10 In addition, as part of a current planning application appeal, a Travelling Showperson household, who at the time of the fieldwork was reportedly living on an unauthorised encampment in the borough, was included in the survey. Again, due to being only one interview, it is impractical to present the survey responses as percentages. The following summarises the key issues emerging from the interview:

- The respondent reported having a site without planning permission (an unauthorised development) but chose to live on unauthorised encampments around Tonbridge and Malling
- They currently do not have enough space for living, for their equipment or to host any visitors
- Reportedly, the family has connections to the local area, including having family living there. The main reason for staying in the area was because of its convenient location for work
- They live in the area for between eleven and twenty weeks per year and travelled with the fair for the rest of the time
- They tend to live on lorry parks, retail parks and car parks around the borough when in Tonbridge and Malling
- They have travelled in the last twelve months and travel every week or so, staying on country roadsides, Showpeople's yards and fair sites
- They travel for work to fairs across South East England
- They have no needs or problems in terms of accessing work
- They do not have adequate access to health services
- They report needing to move immediately, ideally to their own site if they can gain planning permission. Alternatively, they indicate that they would need another suitable site with planning permission
- The respondent indicated that they needed to move in order to create a settled base, where their children can access education, from which they can run a business and from which the whole family can access services. They intended to stay in Tonbridge and Malling and indicated that they needed to be in Tonbridge and Malling because they were born/raised here, had family in the area and had land in the area. Their preference was to live on a privately owned site with planning permission and room for equipment. They indicated that the land they currently own does not have planning permission, but is under appeal and they did not wish to live there illegally.

## **Assessment of accommodation need for Travelling Showpeople**

1.11 Table 1.1 below contains the requirements for net additional plots that need to be developed to meet the measured need of Travelling Showpeople in the study area. Accommodation need has been considered in this assessment by exploring the following factors:

### ***Current residential supply***

- Socially rented plots
- Private authorised plots

### ***Residential need 2012–2017***

- Temporary planning permissions, which will end over the assessment period.
- Concealment of households
- Allowance for family growth over the assessment period.
- Need for authorised pitches from families on unauthorised sites.
- Whether the closure of any existing sites is planned
- Movement between areas.

### ***Additional supply, 2012–2017***

- There is no evidence of potential supply for plots in the borough.

Table 1.1: Summary of Travelling Showpeople accommodation and plot need (2012-2028)

	Element of supply and need	Accommodation Need/Supply Total (households)
<b>Current residential supply</b>		
1	Socially rented plots	0
2	Private authorised plots	3
<b>3</b>	<b>Total authorised plots</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Residential plot need 2012-2017</b>		
4	End of temporary planning permissions	0
5	Concealed households	0
6	New household formation	0
7	Unauthorised sites	2
8	Closure of sites	0
9	Movement between areas	0
<b>10</b>	<b>Residential plot need (2012–2017)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Supply (2012-2017)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Residential plot need (2012-2017)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Residential plot need (2017–2022)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Residential plot need (2022–2028)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Total Residential plot need (2012–2028)</b>	<b>2</b>

### Explanation of the need requirement elements

#### *Current residential supply*

- 1.12 **Row 1:** The number of plots on socially rented yards provided by local authority information. This was reported to be nil.
- 1.13 **Row 2:** The number of plots on private authorised yards provided by local authority information. This was reported to be three.
- 1.14 **Row 3:** The total number of authorised plots within the study area.

#### *Residential plot need 2012–2017*

- 1.15 **Row 4:** The number of pitches which have temporary planning permission due to expire within the assessment period. This was reported to be nil.
- 1.16 **Row 5:** The number of concealed households occupying existing accommodation who require independent accommodation within the borough. This was reported to be nil.



- 1.17 **Row 6:** This is the number of plots required from new household formation. This was reported to be nil.
- 1.18 **Row 7:** This is the level of need arising from current unauthorised sites. As described above there was believed to be a single household currently residing on unauthorised encampments within the borough, when not travelling for work, which require the equivalent of two plots to meet their accommodation need. Since this household is, by definition, living on an unauthorised basis, they are in need of authorised, legal accommodation. It is estimated that there is a need for approximately 2 plots to accommodate these households. This need is for permanent plots, as opposed to winter accommodation.
- 1.19 **Row 8:** This is the level of need arising from sites expected to close. There were no plans to close existing sites.
- 1.20 **Row 9:** This is the level of movement of households between areas. The survey found no evidence to suggest that there was a requirement for accommodation outside of the borough from households currently living in the area. However, consultation with the Guild indicated that there were between 6-8 households who require permanent yard based accommodation in the borough. It was reported that these households currently own land in the area but do not currently have planning permission to develop this land. The households were reportedly currently accommodated by residing on active fair sites across the country throughout the year. However, this number of households is currently disputed by the local authority by drawing upon the experience and content of previous planning applications and appeals made previously by Travelling Showpeople. Specifically it is thought this estimation of need arises from a number of families who own land in the borough and have attempted to obtain planning permission for this land. The local authority have previously argued that mere ownership of land to not be a robust reason for allocating a site to meet the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople. However, it is clear that there is a need for accommodation for Showpeople living outside the area within Tonbridge & Malling and other surrounding local authorities. To establish the extent of this need and where best to meet it will require a regional or sub-regional study to be carried out.
- 1.21 **Row 10:** This is the total gross residential need for plots arising in the borough between 2012-2017.
- 1.22 **Row 11:** This is the level of plot supply over the 2012-2017 period. This is assumed to be nil.
- 1.23 **Row 12:** The total net requirement for plots in the borough over the period 2012–2017.
- 1.24 **Row 13:** The total requirement for plots in the borough over the period 2017-2022.
- 1.25 **Row 14:** The total requirement for plots in the borough over the period 2022-2028.

1.26 **Row 15:** The total overall requirement for plots in the borough over the period 2012-2028.

**In summary**

1.27 Analysis of data has shown a need for 2 plots for Travelling Showpeople over the assessment period.

1.28 Given the complexity of issues surrounding addressing the needs of Showpeople who are currently living outside of local authorities areas where they require accommodation provision we suggest that these needs would be best assessed via a regional - or at a minimum - a sub-regional approach. This would be much better suited to address the potential change in working and living arrangements and working patterns that have taken place for Travelling Showpeople over recent decades. Such an assessment would need to take into account a range of issues including:

- loss of existing sites to other land-uses;
- existing sites which need to re-locate because of inadequate space, infrastructure or access, or surrounding uses;
- overcrowding on existing sites which leads to poor living conditions and harms efficient business operation;
- family increase which cannot be accommodated on existing sites/yards;
- lack of suitable sites for year-round occupation;
- appropriate accommodation in located in areas which facilitates the current working patterns of Travelling Showpeople.