

Gypsies & Travellers Meeting Notes 18th March 2009 The Conservation Rooms, Preston

The Context – the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers

Gypsies and Travellers need secure places to live. There are not enough pitches. Lack of sites mean Gypsies and Travellers often find it difficult to see a doctor and for their children to attend school. It is especially hard for Gypsies and Travellers who live on unauthorised sites. Often there is no water or toilets.

Gypsies and Travellers in the North West were interviewed in 2007 to find out how many lived on sites, which fed into the published Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessments (GTAAs) produced for the region and five sub-regions.

This helped 4NW estimate the number of pitches needed in the North West. For each council it recommends a number. This number includes temporary as well as permanent pitches.

If agreed, the council will have to provide them. It is up to each council where they put the sites.

The following tables shows:

- The different councils
- The number of pitches in each council
- The proposed number of permanent pitches for the future
- The proposed number of transit pitches for the future.

Area	<i>Numbers (Authorised)</i>	Extra Pitches¹ Needed 2007- 2016	<i>Proposed Number of Permanent Pitches 2016</i>	Extra Transit Pitches² Needed 2007- 2016
Cumbria				
Eden	44	20	64	10
Carlisle	30	45	75	10
Allerdale	0	20	20	5

¹ These are the minimum numbers needed

² These are the minimum number as well.

Area	<i>Numbers (Authorised)</i>	Extra Pitches¹ Needed 2007- 2016	<i>Proposed Number of Permanent Pitches 2016</i>	Extra Transit Pitches² Needed 2007- 2016
Copeland	0	0	0	5
Barrow in Furness	0	10	10	5
South Lakeland	0	10	10	5
Cheshire				
Cheshire East	95	80	175	10
Cheshire West & Chester	55	80	135	10
Halton	36	60	96	5
Warrington	22	35	57	5
St Helens	70	45	115	5
Lancashire				
Blackburn with Darwen	48	60	108	5
Hyndburn	86	45	131	5
Burnley	0	20	20	5
Pendle	0	15	15	5
Blackpool	51	10	61	5
Fylde	0	10	10	5
Wyre	0	10	10	5
Lancaster	142	45	187	5
Chorley	0	10	10	5
Preston	12	45	57	5
South Ribble	0	10	10	5
Ribble Valley	0	10	10	5
Rossendale	0	10	10	5
West Lancashire	0	20	20	5
Merseyside				
Knowsley	0	10	10	5
Liverpool	14	25	39	5
Sefton	16	30	46	5
Wirral	0	10	10	5

Area	<i>Numbers (Authorised)</i>	Extra Pitches¹ Needed 2007- 2016	<i>Proposed Number of Permanent Pitches 2016</i>	Extra Transit Pitches² Needed 2007- 2016
Greater Manchester				
Bolton	26	60	86	10
Bury	17	60	77	10
Wigan	34	45	79	10
Salford	31	45	76	10
Manchester	16	60	76	15
Oldham	0	45	45	10
Rochdale	27	45	72	10
Tameside	0	30	30	10
Stockport	0	35	35	10
Trafford	83	25	108	10
Total	955	1250	2205	270

THE MEETING

The main purpose of the meeting on 18th March was to give the Gypsy and Traveller communities in the North West the chance to express their views on the proposed pitch figures. It was also an opportunity for these communities to share their own experiences and highlight other difficulties which they face in finding secure and permanent sites.

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Questions were asked about how the communities should approach the issue of site development. Concern was expressed about the high number of planning refusals and wasted costs involved in pursuing these applications. If they were to own and occupy the site would this help the planning process?

4NW made the following points:

The Local Authority planning officers are the people who consider planning applications and make recommendations, but it is the members (local councillors) who have the power to make the final decision.

Even if the land is owned and occupied by Gypsies and /or Travellers planning permission will still be needed for the site to become authorised. You do not need to own the land to apply for permission but if permission is granted it is only of value to the owner of that land.

Help can be found at your local Planning Aid. For the North West region their details are: **NORTH WEST PLANNING AID, TEL. 0161 969 3672** or nwco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk (**Jan Beaumont is the Regional Manager**).

Wasted costs do inhibit planning applications and was acknowledged to be a real concern amongst the Gypsy & Traveller communities.

It was noted that one of the delegates had just had his planning application for a site refused on the basis that part of it was outside the urban area. The proposed site was next to an existing authorised site and he had evidence of demand for more pitches. He had spent approx. £700 in pursuing this application.

If communities are able to gather information on the number of pitches needed and pass this on to both their local authority and 4NW this would help to show where provision is inadequate.

Where temporary permission on a site is to expire, re-applying for permanent permission can succeed in some cases.

It was noted that one of the delegates at the meeting was currently in a situation where she was being threatened with eviction after her temporary licence was due to expire and despite owning the site. This would lead to a huge loss of investment in the site and she felt that settled communities would not be treated in this way.

It was acknowledged by 4NW that whilst councils are evicting communities from unauthorised sites at the same time they are still turning down planning applications. 4NW will look to include wording in the supporting text in the RSS about the issue of temporary permissions.

Statistics do suggest that the success rate on planning appeals is on the increase.

THE FIGURES

These comments from the delegates were noted:

Some felt that the figures were inadequate in all cases and that the 3% growth beyond 2016 was too low. Even since the GTAA was done there will have been a significant increase in households. Some delegates felt that the GTAA figures have never been accurate and need to be redone. It was suggested that the figures may be under estimating the true picture by as much as 35%. In particular, there seems to have been a tendency to miss out the private sites from the figures. Other concerns were expressed about the difficulties in accounting for all the Gypsy & Traveller communities and the lines of communication needed

to build a true picture of numbers and distribution e.g. The Traveller Times, Pre-school Learning Alliance.

In some instances there was evidence where authorised sites were not featuring in GTAAs.

4NW acknowledged that the situation had occurred and highlighted the need to ensure that the figures provided by Local Authorities were accurate and to provide further evidence where figures are inaccurate.

Hyndburn – a further 45 was probably about right.

Southport and Barrow sites – missing from the figures.

Lancaster – most provision here is privately owned and managed and there is no great need in Lancaster.

Transit Sites:

Mixed views were expressed about the value of these sites.

In the Burnley area it was felt that there was little demand and that any increase in provision would probably be under used.

By contrast, it was felt that the existing and proposed provision for Carlisle was inadequate, particularly due to its central location.

The Leeds to Manchester route was well trodden and therefore more provision was needed in Manchester.

THE ACTION FROM THE MEETING

For 4NW and the consultation team

- 4NW to develop technical note to outline what evidence has been used to support the changes in the numbers
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- 4NW to look into investigating what further assistance could be available for the Gypsies & Travellers in dealing with planning applications. Details of the local North West Planning Aid are set out above.
- 4NW to include some information on the assumptions used in the process of redistributing the figures
- Revised figures will be produced at the end of the consultation process, based on what people say in this process
- Note of this meeting will be produced by CAG Consultants

For local authorities

- 4NW need formal responses on the figures on what the districts are 'comfortable with' by 27th March 2009

- Note of this meeting to be prepared by CAG Consultants.

Note: separate consultation for the Roma and Irish Travellers was requested. 4NW indicated that the RSS makes it clear that the Gypsy & Traveller communities are diverse but that separate consultations were not planned. However, appropriate wording would be included in the supporting text.

For the Gypsies and Travellers

- Written or verbal feedback on the figures to CAG Consultants either online ec@cagconsult.co.uk or freephone by 27th March 2009.

4NW includes all the council leaders in the North West. It replaced the North West Regional Assembly in July 2008. It has responsibility for housing, planning, transport and economic development.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is a plan for the future of the North West. It is developed by 4NW and includes the numbers of pitches needed for Gypsies and Travellers.

Local Development Framework (LDF) is each council's plan. It says how the council will provide pitches for Gypsies and Travellers. It has to agree with the numbers in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTAA), Gypsies and Travellers were interviewed to find out how many were living in the area.

For more information see: www.northwestplanpartialreview.org.uk