



# Neath Port Talbot County Council GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS STUDY



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# 1. Introduction

## **The Study**

- 1.1 Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment to inform its Local Housing Market Assessment so as to meet the requirements of Sections 225 and 226 of the Housing Act 2004 and in the advice set out in Planning Circular WG 30/2007 in respect of the Gypsy and Traveller community.'
- 1.2 The main objective of this study was to assess the need for authorised Gypsy and Traveller site provision within Neath Port Talbot. This required the identification of whether any extra site provision should be on public or private sites, and whether or not there was any need to plan for the provision of transit sites or emergency stopping places.
- 1.3 The outputs of this study will help the Authority meet the requirements of the Housing Act 2004 and provide evidence to assist the LDP on the need for additional pitches in Neath Port Talbot.

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## 2. Legislation, Guidance and Policy Context

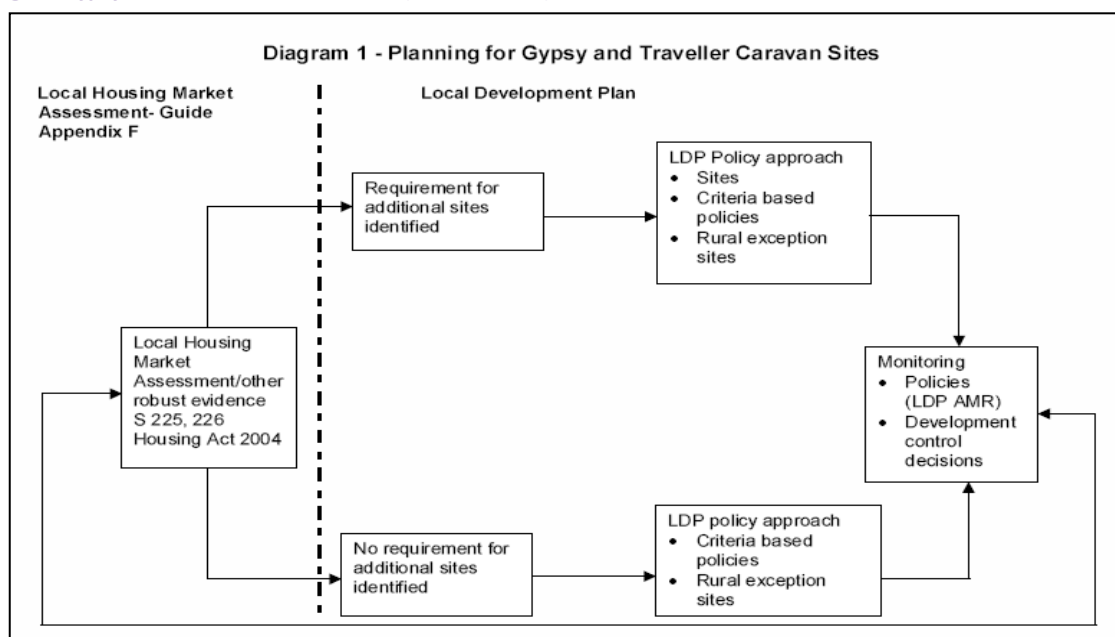
### Introduction

- 2.1 Decision making for policy concerning Gypsies & Travellers and Showmen sits within a complex legislative and national policy framework and this study must be viewed in the context of this legislation and guidance. The Welsh Government offer the following formal definition of a Gypsy and Traveller for housing purposes.
- persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan; and
  - all other persons of a nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, including:
    - such persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependant's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently; and
    - members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such).
- 2.2 The definition for planning purposes differs slightly:
- The term 'Gypsy Travellers' incorporates two main groups; Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers. Romani Gypsies are an ethnic minority community and Irish Travellers are a distinct ethnic group. The two groups have shared traditions, histories and customs that distinguish them from members of the 'settled community'.
  - Both Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers share a common history of 'travelling' and many continue to live a travelling lifestyle either on a permanent or seasonal basis i.e. to attend traditional fairs and celebrations. However, for a variety of reasons, including the need to access health care or education, many Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers no longer adopt a travelling way of life.
  - Some Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers who no longer travel have chosen to live in 'bricks and mortar' accommodation but still see themselves as either being Romani Gypsy or Irish Traveller and follow the traditional customs and culture of those communities.
- 2.3 To focus on Gypsies and Travellers, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (Sections 61, 62) is particularly important with regard to the issue of planning for Gypsy and Traveller site provision. This repealed the duty of local authorities to provide appropriate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. However, Circular 1/94 did support maintaining existing sites and stated that appropriate future site provision should be considered.

- 2.4 The Welsh Government has implicitly accepted the findings of a 2005 study of Gypsy and Traveller site provision in Wales, which was commissioned from Pat Niner at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at Birmingham University. This study identified a lack of authorised sites as a key factor which has helped to contribute to the large number of unauthorised encampments. This study estimated that 200-250 additional residential pitches and 100-150 transit site pitches were needed across the whole of Wales in the next 5 years.
- 2.5 In March 2006 the Welsh Government published guidance on conducting accommodation assessments for Gypsies and Travellers in the Local Housing Market Assessment Guide Annex F. Meanwhile, in December 2007 Welsh Government guidance on Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites was published in the form of WG Circular 30/2007. These two documents form the key framework around which this study is based.
- 2.6 Current Welsh Government guidance focuses on increasing site provision for Gypsies and Travellers and encouraging local authorities to have a more inclusive approach to Gypsies and Travellers within their housing needs plans. In June 2012 the Welsh Government published, 'Travelling to a Better Future: Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action and Delivery Plan' which included 17 core objectives across
- Community Cohesion
  - Accommodation
  - Education
  - Engagement and Participation objectives
  - Health
  - Consultation and Engagement

Local authorities are required to identify the need for Gypsy and Traveller sites, alongside the need for other types of housing, when conducting Housing Requirements Surveys. Therefore all local authorities are required to undertake accommodation assessments for Gypsies and Travellers. The diagram below illustrates this process.

Figure 1  
Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites (WG Guidance)



- 2.7 Currently local authorities are encouraged rather than compelled to provide new Gypsy and Traveller sites by Welsh Government. However, the May 2012 Welsh Government White Paper, 'Homes for Wales: A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities' sets out the wider housing objectives for Wales and includes plans to.

*'Introduce a statutory duty on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsy and Traveller communities where there is evidence of a clear need for new sites.'*

- 2.8 Therefore, in the future, it may be the case that local authorities will have a statutory duty to provide new sites if there is evidence of need.

- 2.9 Welsh Government guidance indicates that local authorities should set fair, reasonable, realistic and effective criteria for allowing the development of Gypsy and Traveller sites. In particular, they should also offer positive guidance which focuses on the criteria under which a private Gypsy and Traveller site will be granted planning permission.

- 2.10 Local authorities can also authorise private sites in rural areas under a rural exceptions policy. Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites notes that:

*'If the Accommodation Needs Assessment shows that new sites are needed, in rural areas your council should think about having a 'Gypsy and Traveller caravan rural exception site' policy in the Local Development Plan. This type of policy allows new sites to be developed on land which is next to a village or town, but where new housing would not normally be allowed. Councils can use rural exceptions policies for affordable housing for people who already live in the area, or for people who have links with local families or jobs.'*

- 2.11 Local authorities should also look at vacant or surplus local authority land as potential places for site development. Therefore, the guidance would seek to minimise the number of cases where an unauthorised development subsequently became an authorised private site by ensuring that the local authority actively engages with potential site developers to ensure planning permission is gained before the site is occupied.

- 2.12 The criteria for authorising sites should include an analysis of the impact of the site on the local infrastructure. The site should also not dominate the nearest settled community. The land should not be contaminated, but other sites such as near a motorway or power lines are acceptable provided they would also be considered for settled housing. Sites should be located near to existing settlements to allow for access to services. Discreet use of tree screening, rather than fencing, to make the site appear less intrusive should also be considered.

- 2.13 Local need does not have to be proven for private sites. All private site applications should be judged by the same criteria. At all stages the Gypsy and Traveller population should be involved and those wishing to apply for planning permission should be encouraged to engage in pre-planning discussions with the local authority.

- 2.14 Other important pieces of legislation for handling Gypsy and Travellers issues are the Race Relations Act (RRA) 1976, subsequently amended in 2000, and the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998. Both Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised as separate ethnic groups, despite not being recognised as such by the 2001 Census, and therefore the local authority must be careful to prevent any unlawful discrimination.



- <sup>2.15</sup> The RRA has particular consequences with how evictions and unauthorised developments are dealt with. In particular, it must be shown that no disproportionate action is taken when evicting someone. Consultation is also required with ethnic groups on policies that are likely to affect them.

## **Showmen**

- <sup>2.16</sup> Many of the policies and guidance which apply to Gypsies and Travellers also apply to Showmen. However, while new guidance on providing Gypsy sites in Wales is provided in Circular 30/2007, guidance for Showmen sites is still covered by the 1991 Circular 22/91 'Travelling Showpeople'. However, in England Circular 22/91 was replaced in August 2007 by CLG Circular 4/07 'Planning for Travelling Showpeople'. We would note that Neath Port Talbot is not home to any Showmen, but that a number of fairs do visit the area, with the largest being the Neath fair.

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## 3. Research Methodology

### Introduction

- 3.1 The research methodology adopted in this report followed a number of phases. Consistent with a number of other Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments undertaken by ORS, we firstly conducted structured interviews with a number of officers from NPTCBC and a representative of the Gypsy and Traveller Community. Researchers also interviewed five council officers from within and around the surrounding area, including an officer from Powys, Swansea, Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Carmarthenshire.
- 3.2 The aim of these interviews was to provide background information on local authority thinking about the provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers, and to understand how site provision operates at the present time within current and emerging national, regional and local policy frameworks.
- 3.3 The second stage of the research process was to interview Gypsy and Traveller households in Neath Port Talbot. The aim of these interviews was to understand the current and future requirements of Gypsies and Travellers in the area. To obtain interviews with Gypsy and Traveller households on site in Neath Port Talbot, ORS visited all households on the two public sites in the area.

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## 4. Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Population

### Introduction

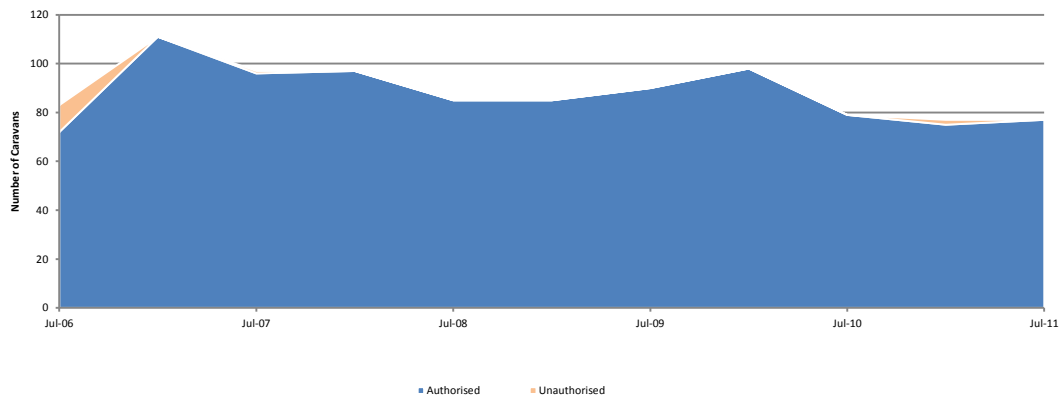
- 4.1 A mainstream Housing Requirements Survey typically focuses upon the number of dwellings required in an area, and how many of these should each be provided by the public and private sector. The central aim of this study was to follow a similar format for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation requirements.
- 4.2 The main consideration of this study is the provision of pitches and sites for Gypsies and Travellers, along with any needs they have in relation to bricks and mortar housing. A pitch is an area which is large enough for one household to occupy. A site is a collection of pitches which form a development exclusively for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 4.3 The public and private provision of mainstream housing is also largely mirrored when considering Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. One common form of Gypsy and Traveller site is the publicly-provided residential site, which is provided and run by the unitary authority, a registered social landlord or a Gypsy and Traveller representative group. Places on public sites can be obtained through a waiting list, and the costs of running the sites are met from the rent paid by the licensees. Therefore, public sites are a direct equivalent of social housing among bricks and mortar tenants.
- 4.4 The alternative to public residential sites are private residential sites. These result from individuals or families buying areas of land and then obtaining planning permission to live on them. Households can also rent pitches on existing private sites. Therefore, these two forms of accommodation are the equivalent to private ownership and renting for those who live in bricks and mortar housing.
- 4.5 The Gypsy and Traveller population also has other forms of sites due to its mobile nature. Transit sites tend to contain many of the same facilities as a residential site, except that there is a maximum period of residence which can vary from a few weeks to a period of months. An alternative is an emergency stopping place. This type of site also has restrictions on the length of time for which someone can stay on it, but has much more limited facilities.
- 4.6 Further considerations in the Gypsy and Traveller population are unauthorised developments and encampments. Unauthorised developments occur on land which is owned by the Gypsies and Travellers, but for which they do not have planning permission to use for residential purposes. Unauthorised encampments occur on land which is not owned by the Gypsies and Travellers.

## Current on-site Population

- 4.7 The best quantitative information available on the Gypsy and Traveller communities derives from a bi-annual survey of Gypsy and Traveller caravans which is conducted by each local authority in Wales on a specific date in January and July of each year. This count is of caravans and not households which makes it more difficult to interpret for a study such as this. It must also be remembered that the count is conducted by the local authority on a specific day and that any unauthorised encampments which occur on other dates will not be recorded.
- 4.8 Figure 2 shows that during the most recent caravan count in July 2011 there were 77 caravans in Neath Port Talbot, with all of these being on the two public sites in the area. The figures include any unauthorised sites in the area, with the most recent being at Seven Sisters where a planning application to develop the site was rejected following an inquiry.

Figure 2

Gypsy Caravan Count for Neath Port Talbot: July 2006 – July 2011 (Source: WG Bi-annual Local Authority Caravan Count)



## 5. Consultation Findings

### Introduction

- 5.1 In order to set the context of the research and ensure the study is based on a sound understanding of the relevant issues, ORS conducted semi-structured, in-depth telephone interviews over a period in April and May 2012 with two council officers from Neath Port Talbot, a representative of the Gypsy and Traveller Community and also a representative from each of the following local authorities: Bridgend; Swansea; Powys; Rhondda Cynon Taff and Carmarthenshire.
- 5.2 The aim of interviewing Council Officers was to provide background information on the framework within which they operate, and on the perceptions of the Gypsy and Traveller community within each of the local authorities. This report attempts to highlight how matters relating to Gypsies and Travellers are currently handled and perceived within Neath Port Talbot, the surrounding areas and to what extent there are any cross border issues.
- 5.3 Due to issues surrounding data protection and in order to protect the confidentiality of those who took part this report represents a summary of the views expressed by Council Officers.

### Local Authority Officers: Neath Port Talbot

#### Meeting the Needs of the Current Gypsy and Traveller Population

- 5.4 The Gypsy and Traveller community currently live at the two sites; Cae Garw and Briton Ferry. The Local Authority has handed over management of the two sites at Cae Garw and Briton Ferry to the Gypsy Council. The Local Authority retains a small role - providing a link to the Gypsy Council - but no longer require a Gypsy Liaison Officer and have very little involvement in site affairs.
- 5.5 The Local Authority felt they were not equipped to continue the role and, after looking into other management options, it was decided that the Gypsy Council, given their specific expertise, would be best placed to run the site. Residents have a tenancy agreement (which was checked by the Local Authority). It is thought that since the Gypsy Council took over the management cleanliness of the site has improved.
- 5.6 Residents on the site were initially opposed to the management takeover. It is claimed that the residents felt that Gypsy Council management style would be too harsh in comparison to the Local Authority.
- 5.7 There are no other sites (authorised or unauthorised) in the area. There is believed to be a very small group of travellers who pass through the area at spring with the sole intention to sell goods; once they have done this they move on.

### Community relations

- 5.8 Encouragingly community issues are not deemed as negative. That said, one interviewee felt that community relations have suffered since the portrayal of the community in the 'Big Fat Gypsy Wedding' series.

### Future site provision

- 5.9 Generally, the trend is stable across the County Borough. A very small number have moved into bricks and mortar accommodation - although this transition is considered to have been successful.
- 5.10 Overall interviewees were unaware of overcrowding issues on either site, however, one felt that more pitches may be required due to family formation and the future accommodation needs of children when they grow up and marry.
- 5.11 Thinking about future site provision smaller sites are preferred over the creation of large sites. Smaller sites tend to be easier to manage and also more likely to be able to integrate with the settled community in the local area. There is also thought to be opposition to the idea of moving residents from the Briton Ferry site to Cae Garw.

### Education

- 5.12 Education is considered to be very important to the Gypsy and Traveller Community residing at both sites. Neath Port Talbot employ a Traveller Liaison Officer with a specific education support role which covers a broad range of support including: working with families when expecting children; pre-school activities; primary education and secondary education; 16 years plus support/college; and on-site adult literacy provision.
- 5.13 The Liaison Officer serves the needs of the families living in the Cae Garw and Briton Ferry Site as well as four showmen families who reside in the area as part of the Neath fair (phoning in advance and placing their children in a local primary).
- 5.14 Children of secondary school age now access the Gypsy Traveller Unit based in Dyffryn Comprehensive School. Traditionally, families do not send their children to secondary school due to the reluctance to mix with the other children once they leave primary school. Hence, a separate classroom is now provided within the school.
- 5.15 The Unit accommodates year 7, 8, 9 and 10. It is claimed that up until twelve years ago no children from the traveller community attended secondary school – now they all attend. Children from the community are now leaving school with GCSEs and some are registering to undertake vocational courses at the local college.
- 5.16 Children of primary school age attend a local school in Neath Port Talbot. Children living at the Cae Garw site are likely to attend primary school in Bridgend. This is for geographical ease and Neath Port Talbot still support the children's other education needs if required (provision of school uniform).
- 5.17 The Unit appears to meet the needs of the community at the current time and if it were to go many of the children would end up as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

- 5.18 Funding is provided via the school as the children are on the roll for the school. Funding for the staff, however, is provided via Welsh Government Grant and supplemented by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO). Despite the success of the Unit, WEFO funding is due to cease. The Unit is expected to remain albeit on a slimmed-down basis providing less teaching days per child.
- 5.19 On a positive note it is felt that the Unit has provided a permanent part of the education of the Gypsy and Traveller community. It is envisaged that another round of funding will be available in 2014 which could strengthen the Unit.
- 5.20 Education also links up with educational welfare, health, Careers Wales, the police, Communities First and Language and Play.

## **Gypsy and Traveller Representative**

### Accommodation Needs

- 5.21 As discussed previously the Gypsy Council manage both sites at Cae Garw and Briton Ferry.
- 5.22 When discussing accommodation at the Cae Garw site the representative of the Gypsy Council felt the topography of the surrounding fields was having a detrimental effect on the site. This was particularly the case with respect to the ploughing methods executed by the farmer. The representative claimed that by ploughing the surrounding land vertically as opposed to horizontally water is being channelled into the site which results in flooding. The issue of site management has been discussed with the farmer and the Local Authority has been made aware of the issue.

### Community relations

- 5.23 The representative felt that there is some resentment from house dwellers. Similar to the view expressed by a council officer, the representative felt that community image has suffered as a result of the 'Big Fat Gypsy Wedding' series.

### Future site provision

- 5.24 The representative felt that due to overcrowding on both sites there is a pressing requirement for the provision of additional pitches. The use of the term overcrowding here does not refer to too many people living within a household, but instead to a lack of space for younger people to form their own households. In 2008, the Gypsy Council submitted a planning application to the Local Authority to develop land, occupied by former workshops and industrial buildings, for 16 static caravans.
- 5.25 The application was turned down by the Planning Department; however, the need for further provision remains an issue. The provision of smaller units/sites, as opposed to extending sites or another large site is considered the ideal solution going forward. That said, the priority continues to be increasing the amount of available pitches that serve the needs of the resident families.

## **Surrounding Local Authorities**

### City and County of Swansea (CCS)

- 5.26 There is an unauthorised encampment in Swansea Vale and a permanent site (behind Morganite on the Enterprise Zone). The families have resided in Swansea for a number of years. There are two Showmen sites located in Morryston and Gorseinon. The officer interviewed could not provide information on the numbers of Gypsy and Traveller community members living in bricks and mortar accommodation.
- 5.27 Swansea is in the process of developing its Local Development Plan (LDP). In 2008 the unitary assessment found there was a deficiency in the provision of sites for the Gypsy and Traveller community and, as a result, Swansea is currently in the process of looking for a site – no decision has been made as yet. Swansea aims to find alternative accommodation for the family in the park and ride site and, alongside that, capacity for future demand based upon the families already residing in the area expanding rather than any new families settling in the area.
- 5.28 Allegedly, families who come into the county want to be positioned along the M4 corridor, essentially Swansea East (which ties into Neath Port Talbot). This is thought to be the case due to the ease of access and the availability of land. As Swansea and Neath Port Talbot are so close it is claimed that members of the Gypsy and Traveller community could decide to go to either area as there are no overriding factors that they would prefer one over the other.
- 5.29 There is a Gypsy and Traveller Liaison group which fed into the production of the Gypsy and Traveller Policy. Once site options are available these will be presented to members of the families.

#### Carmarthenshire County (CCC)

- 5.30 There is one authorised site in Carmarthenshire and a small number of privately owned sites in the area. There is also a long standing Showman site in the area.
- 5.31 The local authority manages the Penybryn site. The site opened in 1995 and houses 15 pitches and recently refurbished utility blocks. Residents are considered to be happy at the site. However, the site is not on a main bus route and is near a cross railway line. The Gypsy Traveller Liaison Support Team works with the families on the site and there is currently a basic skills tutor on site, people have gone through food hygiene courses and have won Communities First awards for working with the Gypsy and Traveller Community. The Gypsy and Traveller community are integrating well into the settled/local community.
- 5.32 Members of the Gypsy and Traveller Community from the Briton Ferry site in Neath, Cardiff and London and local Irish Travellers have applied and been allocated some pitches at the site.
- 5.33 Carmarthenshire has a Gypsy and Traveller Policy which aims to ensure equality, access to services including health. The Council also has a Gypsy Traveller Liaison Support Team. Anyone from the Gypsy and Traveller Community can access the support of the Gypsy and Traveller team.
- 5.34 There are very few instances of unauthorised encampments and transient travellers. That said, people do pass through the area, particularly during the summer months, and stay for a few days. Some of these will be en route to Pembroke to access the ferry, others will be accessing regional employment opportunities e.g. potato picking in the Gower and some will be attending local fairs. In these cases the situation is assessed by Carmarthenshire County Council and the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Support Team will carry out a need assessment.
- 5.35 Gypsy Needs Assessments are conducted on a continual basis – when a family moves onto the site or when a pitch becomes available.



- 5.36 No cross-border issues concerning Neath Port Talbot were identified. Carmarthenshire link in with Swansea, Cardiff and Bridgend and other places around the UK- to learn from different services.
- 5.37 Carmarthenshire are working towards the aims of the Gypsy and Traveller strategy and will continue to do so until 2014 and beyond. There are unclear issues around funding in the future.

#### Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC)

- 5.38 There is one authorised private site in Pencoed. There is also one site at Cwrt Yr Hen which does not have formal planning permission. This is a private site which does not offer the possibility of further capacity.
- 5.39 A Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment was conducted in 2010 and formed the evidence base for the Local Development Plan. The needs assessment produced two options - either a management policy or a transit site. Bridgend opted for the management approach and are currently looking to develop their Gypsy and Traveller protocol and formalise it and manage it in a more tolerant way through taking services to Gypsies and Travellers on a very transient nature and for a very short period of time.
- 5.40 There are very few instances of unauthorised encampments and transient travellers. That said, people do pass through the area as it is the traditional travelling route – east to west along the M4 corridor – whether they are going to Cardiff or to England. The Needs Assessment concluded that there are certain stopping places along the main corridor where they stay for a night.
- 5.41 The numbers passing through the area was considered to be low and has reduced further due to the absence of the annual horse fair at Pencoed. The interviewee was, however, unsure this was correct.
- 5.42 When asked about community relations it is felt that due to the small numbers in the County Borough and the limited time they stay on transit sites, there are few issues.
- 5.43 No cross border issues concerning NPT were identified. The Cae Garw site is on the border with Bridgend and children of primary school age do access schools in Pyle. No issues were raised by the interviewee.
- 5.44 Bridgend does not require further provision in the short-term and will be updating their Gypsy and Traveller strategy when required. A Council Officer sits on the South East Wales Gypsy Working Group.

#### Powys County Council (PCC)

- 5.45 There is one authorised site in Powys. The site at Welshpool is managed by the local authority and has been established for thirty years. The site was previously mixed with permanent and transit pitches and accommodated both Irish Travellers and Romany Gypsies. The local authority applied to Welsh Government for a refurbishment grant and now has ten permanent pitches housing one family (Irish Travellers).
- 5.46 There is also a long-term encampment comprising of eight households (one family) who have been in and around the Brecon area for decades and are currently residing on a temporary site. A permanent site for the family is currently the only identified need in Powys and the local authority is in the process of developing a new site for the family.
- 5.47 There is a tolerated encampment (on highways land) near Brecon comprising of one new age traveller – the local authority provide a portable toilet and mains water. This has been a long-term arrangement.

- 5.48 A small number of fairs come into the county and a circus performer family lives in the North of the area. Addressing the needs of circus performers was not in the interviewee's remit.
- 5.49 There are a number of unauthorised/authorised encampments and transient travellers who pass through or stay in the area for short periods.
- 5.50 A large encampment will be set-up for the duration of the Royal Welsh Show. Initially this was done without formal planning permission. The Council applied for planning on this field and, in collaboration with the Royal Welsh, provide funding for this site which includes toilets, water and roadways and site management. Over a hundred families come from all over Wales Swansea, Cardiff (none from Powys) and parts of England and the border counties (Monmouth and Shropshire) to stay on the encampment. There are no real community issues surrounding the encampment.
- 5.51 In Machynlleth there is an encampment which occurs from January to August – the family live on a private site in Carmarthenshire but visit family in the area.
- 5.52 A small number of encampments visit family in Hay on Wye or Llandrindod Wells. A very small number of Irish Travellers pass through Llandrindod Wells and Brecon selling items on a seasonal basis (March to November – weather permitting). They allegedly stay in the area for a number of days and move to other areas across Wales. There are also travellers who pass through the area when horse fairs commence in April.
- 5.53 A number of people from the Gypsy and Traveller Community are settled in bricks and mortar across the area and currently reside in all the major towns including: Brecon; Hay on Wye, Llandrindod Wells, Builth, Newtown, Welshpool and Machynlleth. Allegedly, some would prefer to be on a site, others would prefer to be on the road travelling and a few have claimed they would like their own site if it was financially viable.
- 5.54 The interviewee highlighted other encampments which arise due to homeless people and holiday makers who park up in lay-bys.
- 5.55 No cross border issues concerning NPT were identified. The interviewee felt that they do see Gypsy and Travellers from Swansea and Carmarthen but was not sure that anyone from NPT travel into the area.

#### Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT)

- 5.56 There is one authorised site in Rhondda Cynon Taff. The site is owned and managed by the Local Authority and currently accommodates six families (two extended families).
- 5.57 The local authority site was established in the 1970s and was set up initially as a caravan park – of the families living in the site only two of the families classed themselves as being Gypsies. It was planned for redevelopment. As a result of extended family members moving onto the site the local authority made the decision to redevelop the site specifically to meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community. The LDP had recognised the need for ten pitches - the needs assessment undertaken in 2002/03 found that the need amounted to eight permanent and two transient pitches. This reduced to six as a result of a consultation. Due to the size of the site plots are contained within a third of the site. As a result of bid funding rejuvenation of the site was completed in March 2011.

- 5.58 Showmen own a plot of land in the area. There are no unauthorised encampments. There are a number of small privately owned sites – in the West and up towards Brecon. They have applied for planning permission and are currently at the planning stage.
- 5.59 Occasionally members of the Gypsy and Travel community will travel down from the shows (the main route down from Builth Wells – the Royal Welsh Show) and stop-off. Also, several families will park up for a couple of days. It is along the main routes to Cardiff, Swansea and considered to be just a stopping point not as a long-term settlement.
- 5.60 No cross-boundary issues were identified and no changes were envisaged in the next five years unless there is overspill in the neighbouring authorities. The children in the existing community are young but in ten years the need could double due to family expansion.

### ***Gypsy Traveller Local Authority Forum***

- 5.61 The Forum was set up by Rhondda Cynon Taff specifically to address cross-border issues. Information sharing has been particularly problematic and crucial when considering placing member of the community on a new site/available pitch. It is considered to be very difficult to confirm information about a family regarding their current housing status. If a family present themselves as homeless in another local authority it is difficult to ascertain who to contact within neighbouring local authorities.
- 5.62 At the moment Rhondda Cynon Taff, Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan have signed up to the Forum. The Forum are in the middle of establishing a site directory naming the person responsible for a site, the address of the site, the number of units, any voids and rents. This information will be passed onto the Welsh Government. The perceived benefits to local authorities include sharing of information, good practice and to enable local authorities to know who is in charge and who to contact. Gypsy Travellers are also thought to be beneficiaries as there would be one induction and one standard tenancy document which could be read to them and explained from start to finish and it would document their rights and responsibilities - the document would apply to wherever they would go in Wales.

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## 6. Gypsies and Travellers

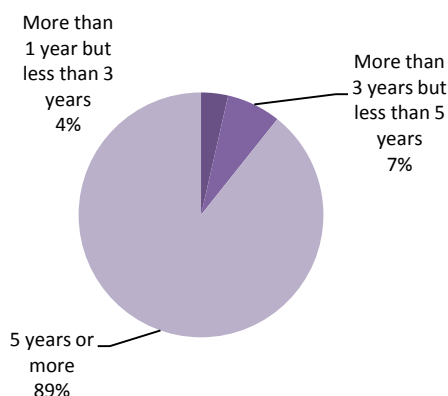
### Survey of the Gypsy and Traveller Population

- 6.1 One of the major components of this assessment was a detailed survey of the Gypsy and Traveller population in Neath Port Talbot. The survey sought to provide a baseline position on the resident Gypsy and Traveller population of Neath Port Talbot. This aimed to identify current households with housing needs, and to assess likely future household formation from within the existing households to help judge the need for future site provision.
- 6.2 The survey has projected needs for up to 15 years into the future which would cover the period of the Local Plan, but as with any projection the further into the future the data is projected the less accurate the data becomes. Provided an adequate monitoring framework is put in place, the Authority could provide for the short to medium need within the LDP and closely monitor the situation.
- 6.3 Interviews were attempted with every Gypsy and Traveller household in the area who were present in May 2012. Therefore, the baseline point for the findings of this study is May 2012. Throughout the survey period interviewers worked from 9am to 7pm each day and if necessary made repeated visits to each household until a successful interview was concluded.
- 6.4 In total 28 completed interviews were achieved in the survey. This represents over half of the 54 pitches in the borough. The average size of a household was 2.4 persons. No interviews were achieved with households living in bricks and mortar although evidence from stakeholders and also the Neath Port Talbot household survey (2008) indicates that there are few Gypsy and Traveller households in the authority who are living in bricks and mortar. It was ascertained that these households in bricks and mortar are living there through choice and therefore have no desire to move back to a site.
- 6.5 Throughout this study the person responding to the survey will be referred to as the respondent, and in questions which refer to all people in the household they will be referred to as household members. Throughout the remainder of this report the majority of numbers which appear on the charts represent the percentage of respondents who appear in that category. The purpose of showing percentages is to allow the results of the survey to be extrapolated to the whole Gypsy and Traveller population of Neath Port Talbot. In a few cases it is more appropriate to use the actual number of respondents, and these cases are clearly identified. In all charts those respondents who answered 'don't know', or did not answer the question, are omitted unless otherwise stated.

### Length of Residence

6.6 Many Gypsies and Travellers surveyed had a long period of residence in Neath Port Talbot. Nearly 9 in 10 respondents (89%) had lived on their current site for more than 5 years. All but one of the respondents to the survey identified their current site as being their permanent base.

Figure 3  
Length of Time Respondents Have Lived on Their Current Site, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

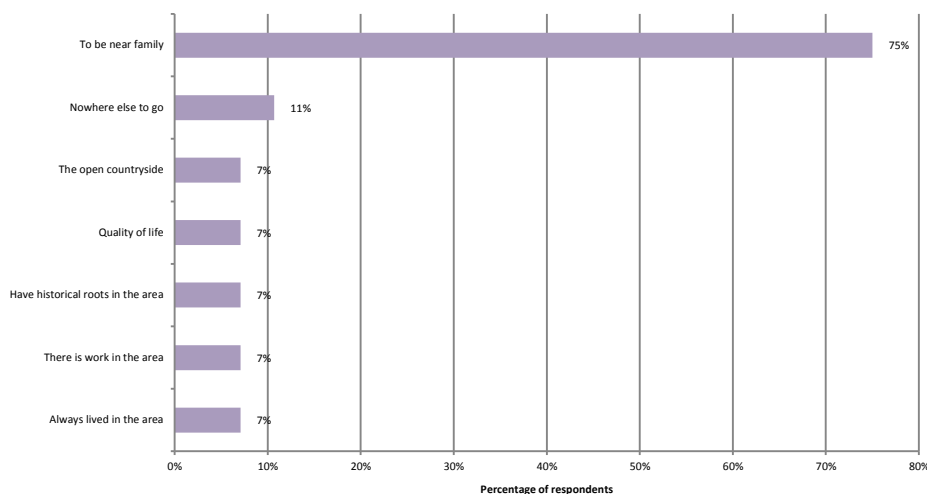


### Attractions of Living in Neath Port Talbot

6.7 Respondents were asked to identify the main reasons that attracted them to live in Neath Port Talbot. They were allowed to select as many reasons as they wished from a list of nine options.

6.8 The main factor which attracted respondents to Neath Port Talbot was to be near to their family (75%). 11% of respondents reported that they were attracted to Neath Port Talbot because they had nowhere else to go.

Figure 4  
What Attracted Them to Live in the Area, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

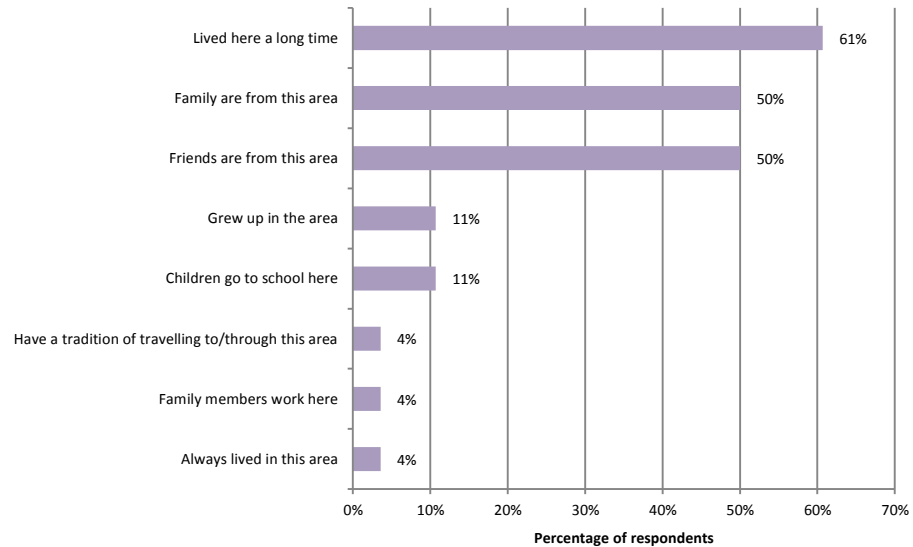


## Connections with the Area

- 6.9 Around nine in ten respondents (89%) felt they have strong connections to Neath Port Talbot. In particular, Figure 5 shows that the main connection is that they have lived in the area a long time (61%), while half said that their friends and family are from the area.

Figure 5

Nature of Local Connections in Neath Port Talbot, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

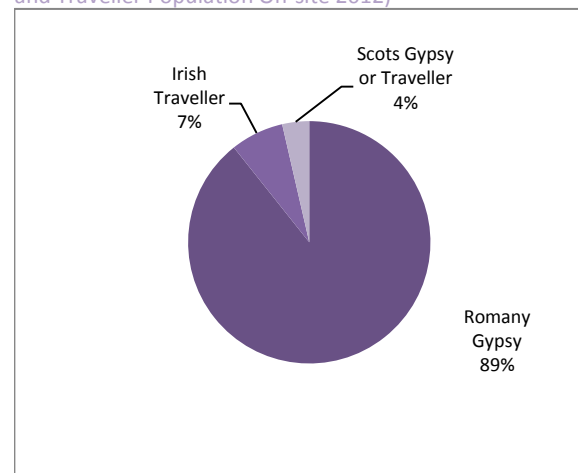


## Ethnic Background

- 6.10 Nearly nine in ten of all respondents explicitly identified themselves as being Romany Gypsies, while others stated they were Irish Travellers, Scots Gypsies or Travellers.

Figure 6

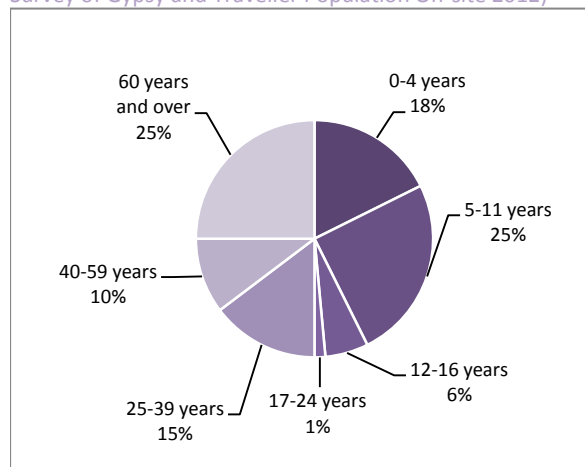
Ethnic Group by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



### Age and Household Profile

6.11 The households showed a mixed range of ages across their members. The households contained 25% of people who were 60 years and over, but nearly 50% of all household members were aged 16 years or under. 31% of all household members were of school age and another 18% were children aged 4 years or less.

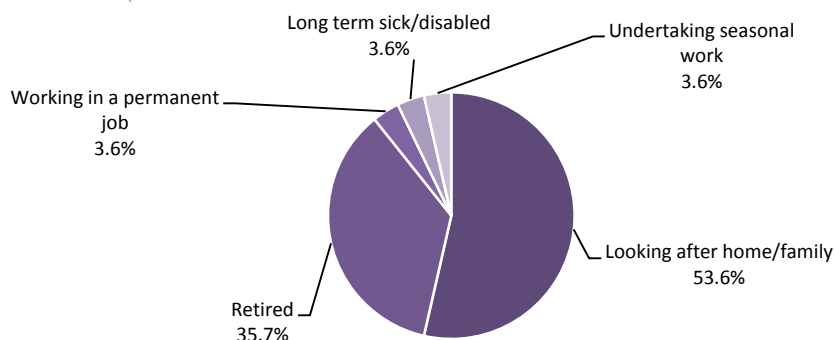
Figure 7  
Age of Household Members, by all Household Members (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



### Employment Status

6.12 The employment status of household members aged 16 years or older is shown in Figure 8. Of those who had their employment status recorded, 54% were looking after their home/family and another 36% were retired.

Figure 8  
Employment Status of Household Members, by All Household Members Aged Over 16 Years (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



### Future Planned Moves

6.13 Households were asked about future planned moves from their current sites. No household wished to move to bricks and mortar. Three households planned to leave the Neath Port Talbot for other areas in the next three years. A turnover rate of one household per annum is consistent with recent trends on the sites.

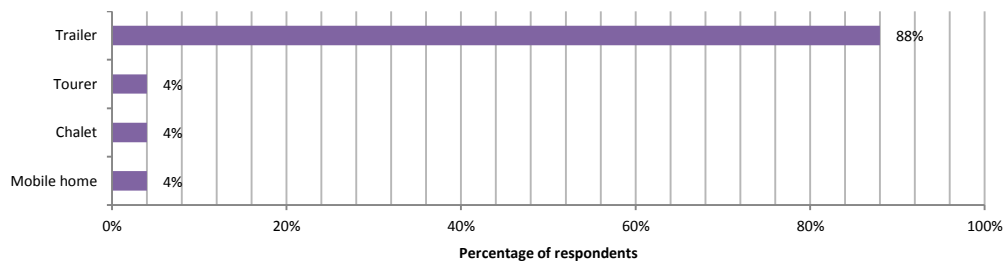
## 7. Existing Sites

### Type and Number of Caravans

- 7.1 Figure 9 shows that the type of accommodation occupied by respondents shows considerable variation. Trailer and tourers are different descriptions of moveable caravans. A chalet is a mobile home which can be dismantled, while a mobile home is not typically moveable without being carried on a lorry. Around 88% of all households occupied at least one trailer, while less had a mobile home or chalet. If the household had any combination of accommodation then they were counted in all categories.

Figure 9

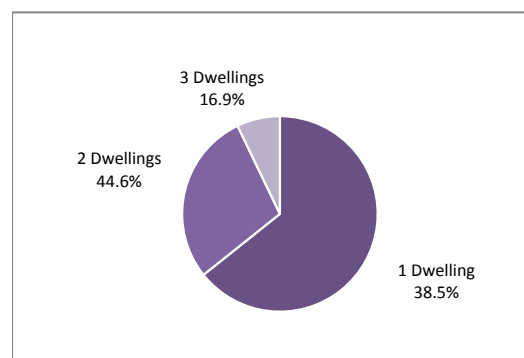
Nature of Accommodation, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



- 7.2 Figure 10 shows that nearly 40% of all the households interviewed had only one trailer/chalet/mobile home.
- 7.3 All respondents were asked if they require extra caravans. The evidence from the survey is that no household would like more caravans within their existing household.

Figure 10

Number of Trailers/Mobile Homes/Chalets Owned by Respondent, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)





## Views of Sites

- 7.4 The majority of respondents were satisfied with their sites. 86% of respondents expressed some form of satisfaction with their site, with 14% expressing dissatisfaction. The main perceived areas of dissatisfaction were with the conditions of the site and its management.
- 7.5 Figure 12 shows the improvements which were identified by respondents as being required at their permanent sites. Despite the majority being satisfied with their sites, only 32% of respondents felt that no improvements were required. Many respondents wanted improved site management, washing and toilet facilities, pest control, play areas for children and CCTV.

Figure 11  
Satisfaction with Current Site, by all Respondents (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)

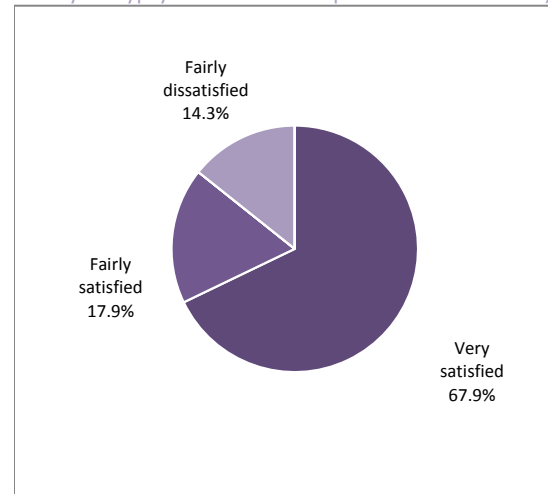
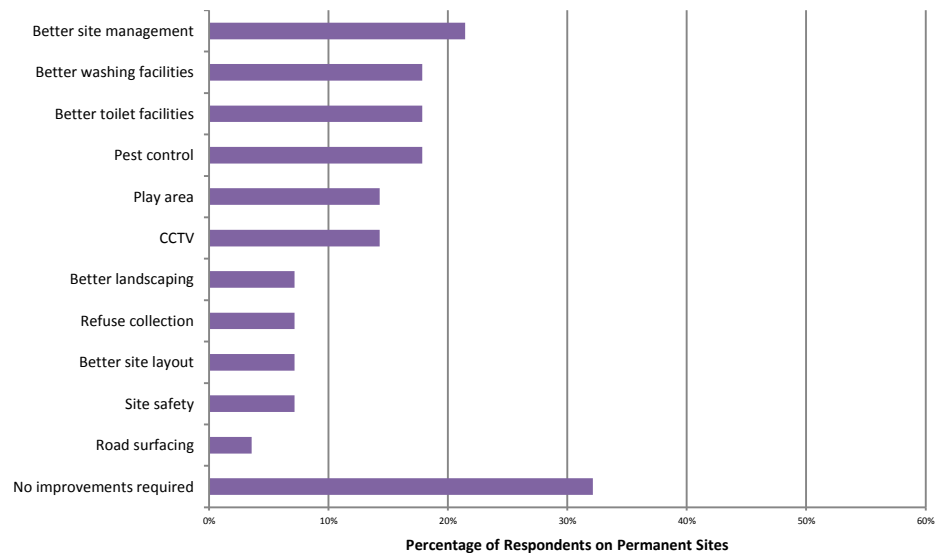


Figure 12  
Improvements Which Respondents Would Like to See on Their Site, by all Respondents on Permanent Sites (Source: Survey of Gypsy and Traveller Population On-site 2012)



## 8. Future Site Provision

### Site Provision

- 8.1 This section focuses on the extra site provision which is required in Neath Port Talbot currently and over the next 15 years to cover the period for the Local Development Plan (LDP). It should be noted that as with any projection the further into the future the data is projected the less accurate the data becomes. Therefore, the Authority could provide for the short to medium need within the LDP and closely monitor the situation for the latter period of the Local Plan.
- 8.2 This section concentrates not only upon the total extra provision which is required in the area, but whether this provision should be in the form of public or private sites, is there a need for any transit site/emergency stopping place provision.
- 8.3 The Welsh Government published guidance in March 2006 on conducting 'Local Housing Market Assessments' which contains an appendix on conducting Gypsy and Traveller studies. This contains an illustrated example on how to calculate the current and future need for residential site pitches. The key factor in this methodology is to compare the predicted amount of extra site space which will become available with a prediction of the need for extra space on sites. This section will follow the recommended approach suggested by Welsh Government.

### Current Site Provision

- 8.4 The first stage of assessing need in the Welsh Government methodology is to identify the current number of authorised pitches. As noted earlier there are two sites in Neath Port Talbot with a total pitch capacity of 54. Previously there were 56 pitches in Neath Port Talbot with an extra 2 pitches in use on the Briton Ferry site that have subsequently become decommissioned.

### Space Available on Sites

- 8.5 The second stage of the Welsh Government methodology is to assess how much space is or will become available on existing sites. The main ways in which space is/will be freed are:
- Current empty pitches;
  - New sites or site extensions which are likely to gain planning permission;
  - Migration away from the area;
  - Movement to bricks and mortar;
  - Dissolution of households.

- 8.6 In the context of this study there are currently no empty pitches, no likely site extensions or new sites and no planned movements to bricks and mortar.
- 8.7 However, the age profile of the existing households implies that there are likely to be a small number of dissolutions due to death in the next 15 years. It is also the case that a small number of households are planning to leave their existing sites in the next three years to new sites outside of Neath Port Talbot. This is projected to translate into 5 pitches being freed through dissolution and another 15 being freed through households leaving the area.

### **Additional Site Provision**

- 8.8 The third stage of the Welsh Government guidance is to assess how many households are likely to be seeking pitches in the area. Page 173 of the guidance notes that the groups of people who are likely to be seeking pitches will include those:
- seeking permanent site accommodation in the area
  - on unauthorised encampments
  - on unauthorised developments for which planning permission is not expected
  - currently overcrowded
  - new households expected to arrive from elsewhere
  - new family formations expected to arise from within existing households
  - in housing but with a need for site accommodation

### **Current Planning Applications**

- 8.9 Neath Port Talbot County Council currently have no outstanding planning applications for a new site in the area.

### **Current Unauthorised Developments and Encampments**

- 8.10 As noted earlier, Neath Port Talbot has little recorded history of unauthorised encampments or developments. In 2011 the Council won a planning appeal against the development of a private site at Seven Sisters. Apart from this site, there have also been occasional unauthorised encampments in the spring and summer months which have typically only been for a brief period of time.

### **In-migration from Other Sources**

- 8.11 The most complicated area for a survey such as this is to estimate how many households will require accommodation from outside the area in the next 15 years. Movement patterns for households who travel are clearly difficult to predict, particularly over a 15 year timeframe. The sensitivity in predicting longer term migration and travel movements imply that producing estimate over a shorter time frame and then

monitoring the situation in the future may be more reliable. For this reason this study has produced estimate of need over 5 and 10 year period, as well as for 15 years.

- 8.12 The household survey indicates that most households are long-term residents in the area, but a small number are more recent arrivals. On the basis of a continuation of recent trends and the existing letting policy this would amount to around 15 households moving to the area in the next 15 years. The key point about this figure is that it matches the number of projected out-migrants from Neath Port Talbot. Therefore, there is no net migration because for every one household being accommodated in the area, another household is projected to be leaving to move to another area. Therefore, we have made an allowance of 15 pitches required for in-migrant households in the next 15 years at a rate of one per annum. New gypsy and traveller sites are being provided within the adjoining Authorities of Swansea and Carmarthenshire (Llanelli). Whilst it cannot be accurately assumed that new provision within these adjoining areas will reduce migration into NPT, it is another reason to provide for the short to medium term need and closely monitor the situation.

### **New Household Formation**

- 8.13 Welsh Government recognises that an important group for future pitch provision will be older children who form their own households. The survey of the Gypsy and Traveller population in Neath Port Talbot found that no households contained members who were expected to form new households in the next two years.
- 8.14 However, given the age profile of the Gypsy and Traveller population of Neath Port Talbot, with a quarter of the population aged between 5 and 11 years, it is likely many of these current children will form households in the next 15 years. The age profile indicates the on-site Gypsy and Traveller population is likely to grow by around 45% in the next 15 years, which equates to around 25 more pitches being required. This figure is consistent with the observed long-term growth rate of 3% per annum in the number of Gypsy and Traveller households across England and Wales.
- 8.15 While some children from the sites are likely to leave Neath Port Talbot in the future, a figure of 25 additional pitches allows for 50% of children currently on-site to form their own household in Neath Port Talbot. Given most households will form with two adults this will allow space for 50% of children to form in Neath Port Talbot, often with partners from outside the area, while other current children will form households in the future in areas outside of Neath Port Talbot

### **Overcrowding**

- 8.16 Welsh Government guidance recommends that households which are overcrowded and where their current pitch is too small to accommodate another caravan or trailer should be considered as needing an additional pitch.
- 8.17 This survey has identified no households who would like more caravans or trailer because their current accommodation was too small. The household survey identified only one household with more than 5 members so there is little evidence of overcrowding on the sites.

## Bricks and Mortar

- 8.18 The survey of Gypsies and Travellers included no surveys with anyone living in bricks and mortar and no one was looking to leave the existing sites for bricks and mortar. Therefore, there is no evidence that there is likely to be a significant number of moves in either direction between sites and bricks and mortar.

## Overall Needs

- 8.19 The estimated extra pitch provision that is required in the next 15 years for Neath Port Talbot will be 20 additional pitches. As noted this assumes that the current letting policy for the sites in the borough continues. However, we would note that while a significant part of the need is generated by household formation from within the existing sites, much is also generated by in-migrant households to the area. Although, if the new sites are being provided to accommodate a small number of unauthorised encampments, this could potentially reduce the number of in-migrants to the NPT area.
- 8.20 It should be noted that this need could potentially be met in neighbouring areas along the M4 such as Swansea, Bridgend or Carmarthenshire. However, while Swansea and Carmarthenshire are seeking to provide new sites these would be for local households and would not help to address the needs being generated within Neath Port Talbot.

Figure 13

Extra Pitches Which are Required in Neath Port Talbot in the Next 15 years

Reason for Requirement/Vacancy	Gross Requirement	Supply	Net Requirement
<b>Current unauthorised developments or encampments</b>	0	-	0
<b>Migration from elsewhere</b>	15	-	15
<b>New household formation</b>	25	-	25
<b>Movement from bricks and mortar</b>	0	0	0
<b>Currently overcrowded and require to move</b>	0	0	0
<b>Additional supply from household dissolution</b>	-	5	(5)
<b>Additional supply from out-migration</b>	-	15	(15)
<b>Additional supply from empty pitches</b>	-	0	(0)
<b>Additional supply new sites</b>	-	0	(0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>

## Transit/Emergency Stopping Site Provision

- 8.21 Discussions with stakeholders indicate that a small number of unauthorised encampments occur in Neath Port Talbot. However, these encampments appear to be only periodic and there is no clear evidence of sufficient travelling to justify development of a permanent transit site. Therefore, this study concludes that there is no identified need for a transit site or emergency stopping place in Neath Port Talbot.

## Showmen

- 8.22 As noted earlier, Neath Port Talbot currently contains no resident Showman population, but does attract Showmen to work at fairs in the area. There is no evidence of provision being necessary for Showmen in

the future, but it is still important for Neath Port Talbot to have planning policies in place in the event of someone seeking to develop a Showmen's site in the area.

## Public Sites

- 8.23 The evidence presented above shows that there is likely to be an on-going need to provide further Gypsy and Travellers sites for the foreseeable future, and that this provision will need to be on public sites. As noted above there is the potential to meet these needs in areas such as Swansea, Bridgend and Carmarthenshire, but there are currently no plans for sites in neighbouring authorities to contain any provision to help to meet the Neath Port Talbot's requirements.
- 8.24 Of the 20 pitches which are required in the period 2012-2027, 4 are required in the period 2012-2017, 7 in the period 2018-2022 and 9 in the period 2023-2027. The model assumes that in-migration and out-migration balance over time so all of the net growth is due to changes in the existing population. The variation between the time periods is due to the age profile of the existing population containing fewer children who are likely to form households in the near future. However, if the two new sites (Swansea & Llanelli) are providing for a small number of unauthorised encampments, this could potentially reduce the number of in-migrants to the Neath Port Talbot area.
- 8.25 However, as noted earlier, the further into the future the data is projected the less accurate it becomes. Therefore, rather than cover the full period of the LDP, the Authority could provide for the short to medium need and closely monitor the situation for the latter period of the Local Plan. If Neath Port Talbot were to only look at the next 10 years, the requirement would be for 11 pitches in the timeframe. The future requirements would then need to be monitored in a similar manner as with other housing needs, with an assessment to be undertaken around every 5 years. In the immediate future, Neath Port Talbot should also monitor unauthorised encampments in the authority and treat any growth in numbers as a potential sign that there is unmet need for pitch provision.

## Site Conditions and Management

- 8.26 The vast majority of respondents to the survey were satisfied with their current sites. However, many did highlight potential site improvements they would wish to see. However, in many cases these improvements would require considerable investment and the finances to undertake this work are not available to the site managers.

## Private Sites

- 8.27 Welsh Government guidance indicates that local authorities should set fair, reasonable, realistic and effective criteria for allowing the development of Gypsy and Traveller sites. In particular, they should also offer positive guidance which focuses on the criteria under which a private Gypsy and Traveller site will be granted planning permission.
- 8.28 Local need does not have to be proven for private sites. All private site applications should be judged by the same criteria. Therefore, it is important for Neath Port Talbot to have clear criteria based policies to assess any private site applications which may arise.

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## 9. Conclusions

### Introduction

- 9.1 This chapter brings together the evidence presented earlier in the report to provide some key policy conclusions for Neath Port Talbot.

### Current and Future Need

- 9.2 Based upon the evidence presented in the preceding chapters, the estimated extra pitch provision that is required in the next 15 years for Neath Port Talbot will be 20 additional pitches on public sites. However, rather than cover the full period of the LDP, the Authority could provide for the short to medium need and closely monitor the situation for the latter period of the Local Plan. If Neath Port Talbot were to only look at the next 10 years, the requirement would be for 11 pitches in the timeframe.
- 9.3 It should be noted that this need could be met in neighbouring areas along the M4 such as Swansea, Bridgend or Carmarthenshire. However, while Swansea and Carmarthenshire are seeking to provide new sites these would be for local households and would not help to address the needs being generated within Neath Port Talbot. Although, due to these two new sites, migration from these areas into Neath Port Talbot may reduce. This is a further reason which would warrant making provision for the short-medium need whilst closely monitoring the situation. The requirement also assumes that current pitch letting policies continue implying that a number of households will arrive from outside the area.
- 9.4 While unauthorised encampments do arise in Neath Port Talbot there is no clear evidence of sufficient travelling through the area to justify the development of a permanent transit site.

### Showmen

- 9.5 Neath Port Talbot currently contains no resident Showman population. There are no known current plans to develop a Showman site in the borough.