

How many caravans will be on a Gypsy and Traveller Site?

There is no set definition for a Gypsy and Traveller residential pitch. In the same way as the settled community, gypsies and travellers require various accommodation sizes, depending on the number of family members.

'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide' (CLG, 2008) does however state that:

"As a general guide, it is possible to specify that an average family pitch must be capable of accommodating an amenity building, a large trailer and touring caravan, (or two trailers) drying space for clothes, a lockable shed (for bicycles, wheelchair storage etc), parking space for two vehicles and a small garden area.

Smaller pitches must be able to accommodate at least an amenity building, a large trailer, drying space for clothes and parking for at least one vehicle).

Where space permits the inclusion of a garden or play space on each pitch is recommended." (pp. 40-41)

What is a transit site?

Transit sites are permanent sites intended for temporary use by residents. The length of stay generally varies between 28 days and three months.

What does a transit site consist of?

As transit sites are not intended to be used as a permanent base, the site requirements are different to those of permanent sites.

In terms of transit pitches, 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide' (CLG, 2008) states:

Size of pitch – It is important to ensure that wherever possible each pitch is of a size sufficient to accommodate two touring caravans, two parking spaces and private amenities.

Private amenities – It has been found that the majority of Gypsies and Travellers prefer private amenities on each pitch including a toilet, wash basin and shower with hot and cold water supply. An illustration of a simple fixed utility building for a transit site is at Annex B.8).

Depending on the degree of usage, consideration could be given to providing portable facilities on a transit site to meet these needs. Where transit sites are empty for lengthy periods there is a risk of vandalism to facilities and it may be preferable for these to be removed until the site is reoccupied. In adopting this approach, it is sensible to ensure that permanent waste and water pipe work is in place for facilities to be easily reinstalled.

How is a transit site managed?

The sites will either have an on-site warden or a warden will be present each day to monitor Travellers coming & leaving, ensuring that occupants sign up to a proper licence agreement, setting out the terms and conditions for taking a pitch, paying a licence fee and running costs. The warden will also ensure that the terms of the agreement are being adhered to and the site is clean, tidy and trouble free. The pitches will be residential only and business activities will not be allowed.

A transit site can be run by either privately or by the local authority.

How long can families stay on a transit site?

The maximum period a family can stay is 3 months, after which time notice to terminate will be served and if necessary enforcement action will be taken to move the Traveller on.

Owing to the nature of Traveller life, it is expected that Travellers will wish to move on a lot quicker than that. However there may be cases where Travellers will wish to stay for the full 3 months.

If there is a need to find permanent accommodation for any particular family, the site manager and Travellers Liaison Service will work with other agencies to find a solution.

Why do we need to allocate sites for Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Show Persons?

It is national guidance that we must provide sites for Gypsy and Travellers. This is set out in the Housing Act 2004, and Circular 01/06 and Circular 04/07. The East Midlands Regional Plan sets out the number of pitches that the Borough Council must provide.

How did the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) reach their conclusion on the number of pitches?

The East Midlands Regional Plan says that we must provide 42 permanent residential pitches and 10 pitches for a transit site. This derived from the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTAA) (2007) (this must be produced inline with the Housing Act 2004).

Since the report was published 3 pitches have been granted planning permission taking the figure down to 39.

Why are HBBC providing more pitches than neighbouring authorities?

The distribution of proposed additional pitches is derived from the GTAA that makes an assessment of unmet need and proposes figures accordingly. HBBC have not been required to provide the highest provision requirements within Leicestershire. The table below sets out the requirements within Leicester and Leicestershire as contained within the East Midlands Regional Plan Proposed Changes July 2008.

Three Cities Sub Area – Leicester and Leicestershire

Local Authority	Pitches
Leicester	39 permanent residential 20 transit pitches 5 plots for travelling show persons
Blaby	26 permanent residential 10 transit pitches 3 plots for travelling show persons
Charnwood	11 permanent residential 10 transit pitches 9 plots for travelling show persons
Harborough	30 permanent residential 10 transit pitches 29 plots for travelling show persons
Hinckley & Bosworth	42 permanent residential 10 transit pitches 3 plots for travelling show persons
Melton	8 permanent residential 10 transit pitches 0 plots for travelling show persons
North-West Leicestershire	43 permanent residential 20 transit pitches 10 plots for travelling show persons
Oadby & Wigston	1 permanent residential 0 transit pitches 0 plots for travelling show persons

Source: Figures contained within: the East Midlands Regional Plan Proposed Changes July 2008; Appendix 2, page 200.

Have representations been made to EMRA regarding the allocations from HBBC?

The Borough Council have made representations to the Secretary of State on both the Draft East Midlands Regional Plan (2006) and the Secretary of States proposed changes to the Draft Regional Plan (2008). These are available from the Government Office for the East Midlands.

What will happen if we do not provide any pitches?

If we do not provide sites this will have a number of ramifications:

- If sites are not allocated it will be difficult to refuse planning permission in unsuitable locations and more difficult to defend at appeal as we are not providing sufficient sites for Gypsy and Travellers inline with the Regional Plan.
- It will be more difficult to move travellers on from unauthorised sites as there is nowhere for them to go.

What are the benefits of allocating sites?

- Sites will be in more sustainable locations specified by the Borough Council
- The Borough Council will have greater evidence to refuse planning permission in less desirable places
- It will be easier to move travellers on from illegal sites. For instance, they can be moved to a transit site
- Permanent sites would also provide a sizable increase in council tax income (42 x band A/B council tax £40k+ revenue) instead of enforcement bills and clean up costs.

Will house values drop if a Gypsy and Traveller Site is allocated?

There is no evidence regarding the effect of permanent or transit sites on property prices. An independent study in Scotland by the Planning Exchange and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that although there were some claims that house prices would be affected, these proved hard to establish.

The study said a new home being built within 50m of the boundary of one site suggested the impact on the local housing market had been minimal.

Experiences in Leicestershire and other local authority areas do not evidence a reduction in property values.

Once a site is established and providing it is well managed, the fears of residents about the negative impact on their area were not borne out. In area which is subject to regular incidents of unauthorised traveller encampments provision of official sites could improve the situation.

Do local crime rates change?

Figures from Leicestershire constabulary do not suggest any change in the reports of crime around new and established sites, there may well be a criminal element to the Travelling population but this is a minority which is in proportion to the wider population.

If Gypsy and Travellers do not travel anymore why are sites needed?

Gypsy and Travellers have a long history of living in tents and caravans which has become an integral part of their culture most families will still take their caravan away for a few weeks of the year visiting relatives or attending horse fairs.

Why do Gypsy and Travellers not pay Council Tax?

Most Gypsies and Travellers pay their taxes. They pay council tax and licence fees on settled sites.

What are Travelling Showperson Pitches?

'Travelling Show people's Sites – A Planning Focus: Model Standard Package' was issued by the Showman's Guild of Great Britain in September 2007 and contains good practice information on the requirements of sites for travelling show people.

Regarding the land use characterisation of pitches, the document states:

‘Show people’s sites do not neatly fit into any definition of any one land use category. The sites combine a residential use, attained by the siting of their mobile caravans, with a commercial use, attained by storing and maintaining fairground equipment.’

The document highlights the need for a pitch to contain an area for the siting of mobile homes, caravans and parking; a recreational area; storage and maintenance area; and associated drainage and refuse facilities.