

Executive summary

The study

1. The Housing Act 2004 placed a duty upon local authorities to produce assessments of accommodation need for Gypsies and Travellers. In 2005/2006, DCA Research completed the *Ashford, Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment* for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council as part of a wider assessment for West Kent. This assessment provided an overview of the accommodation and related needs and experiences of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople population across Tonbridge and Malling.
2. In October 2012 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council commissioned the Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford to produce an updated Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment. The primary purpose of this assessment was to provide up to date information and data regarding the needs and requirements of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities. This report presents the projection of pitch requirements for the period 2012 – 2028.
3. The assessment was undertaken by conducting a review of the following data sources:
 - Previous assessments of need and information submitted through the previous regional planning process;
 - The policy and guidance context;
 - Census 2011 data
 - The bi-annual Caravan Count;
 - Information from the local authority with regards to pitch provision and supply;
 - Information from key stakeholders; and
 - A survey of fifty-six Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople households.
4. From the estimation of a base population of 102 households in Tonbridge and Malling, we consulted with 56 resident households; 55% of the estimated resident Gypsy and Traveller community across Tonbridge and Malling. We believe that the sample is as representative as can be reasonably expected given the relatively hidden nature of the population and the timescale available for the consultation period. The fieldwork took place during a two week period in the middle of October 2012. The base date used in this assessment is 26th October 2012.

Local accommodation provision

5. There is no one source of information about the size of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople population across Tonbridge and Malling. Our best estimate in relation to the resident population is that there are at least 380 individuals or 102 households in Tonbridge and Malling. The population was found across the following accommodation types:

- There are **two socially rented sites** across the study area. These sites currently accommodate 24 households
- There are **two private sites with permanent planning permission and two private sites with temporary planning permission** across the study area. These sites currently accommodate five households.
- There are two sites, formally unauthorised, deemed to be **lawful** or tolerated which accommodate an estimated **seven households**.
- There are **seven unauthorised developments** across the study area. These sites currently accommodate ten households
- It is estimated that there are at least 52 **households living in bricks and mortar accommodation** in Tonbridge and Malling.
- There is one Travelling Showpeople Site in Tonbridge and Malling with a total of **three households**.
- At the time of the survey one Travelling Showpeople household was interviewed by phone claiming to be living on unauthorised encampments in the form of lorry parks, retail parks and car parks in the borough. The council are unable to verify the exact location of this family at the time of the survey.

Characteristics of local Gypsies and Travellers

6. The survey of Gypsies and Travellers identified some of the important characteristics of the local population.
 - Although the average household size over the whole sample is four, this varied between different accommodation types; for example, the average household size for those in bricks and mortar was 4.5, compared to 3.2 on unauthorised development sites, 3.7 on the council run sites, 3.2 on the private developments with planning permission and 3.3 on the Travelling Showpeople Yard.
 - The majority of Gypsies and Travellers on all site types have strong and longstanding local connections. This is particularly true of those living in bricks and mortar, on the council sites, the authorised private sites and the Travelling Showpeople site. Those on unauthorised developments on private land and unauthorised encampments had variable levels of local connection, with some having permanent bases elsewhere. Conversely, those living on Hoath Wood have strong local connections and live a relatively settled lifestyle.
 - The local population is largely Romany Gypsies (80%), with a smaller number of Travelling Showmen and Irish Travellers. Interestingly, a number of respondents living in bricks and mortar accommodation were Travelling Showpeople.
 - The local population are likely not to travel or only travel for one to two weeks per year.

Accommodation need and supply

7. There are no signs that the growth in the Gypsy and Traveller population will slow significantly. Research from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has indicated that around 6,000 additional pitches for Gypsies and Travellers are immediately required to meet the current shortage of accommodation within England.¹
8. This study has taken a thorough assessment of the need arising from all accommodation types present at the time of the survey. As such this assessment of need should be regarded as a reasonable and robust assessment of need upon which to base planning decisions going forward. Total net need for Gypsies and Traveller pitches are presented in Table (i) below. Pitches developed after 26th October 2012 contributes to meeting these requirements.

Table (i): Summary of Net Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation need (2012 - 2028)

	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Need Total (No. of pitches)
Current authorised/lawful residential provision (pitches)	36
Residential need 2012 - 2017 (pitches)	4
Residential need 2017 –2022 (pitches)	7
Residential need 2022 –2027 (pitches)	8
Residential need 2027 –2028 (pitches)	2
Residential need 2012/13 –2027/28 (pitches)	21

9. It is recommended that this assessment of accommodation need is repeated in due course (circa five years) to ensure it remains as accurate as possible.
10. Numerical transit requirements have not been provided, although an indication of how provision for short-stay households could be made is detailed in the main report.
11. It is recommended that the authority supports the commissioning of a cross-boundary assessment of the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople. This will allow the authorities across the South East to plan and identify need arising in certain boroughs which could be more sustainably met in others.

¹ http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/13assessing_local_housing_authorities_progress.pdf.
Assessing local housing authorities' progress in meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities in England.