

Cambridge Sub-region Traveller Needs Assessment

Interim 5-year Accommodation Needs Assessment (as at 26/11/05) South Cambridgeshire

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1. This assessment is PROVISIONAL pending discussions with client on methodology and assumptions, and still awaiting the official release of ODPM guidance (now postponed yet again). We have drawn upon the methodology in the Birmingham study (Niner 2002) and emerging ODPM guidance (the latter not available for the first draft). Our assumptions are set out below, and differ somewhat from those in the first draft report (the figures in which should now be regarded as superseded). The results of the exercise are set out below in Table 1 for each district in the study area. **We would emphasize that the assumptions stated below (while consistent with emerging ODPM guidance) are yet to be discussed with the clients, which is now an absolute priority.**
2. **Caravans, families and pitches** The usually accepted measure of need is the family pitch (interpreted as the equivalent of a household in general housing forecasts), but this needs to be treated with caution. The number of caravans on a family pitch may vary (our survey found an average of 1.5, but it ranges between one and three), and the size of a caravan may vary significantly. While official count data requires a record of families as well as caravans, we regard the family data as unreliable and less robust than our survey findings. Translating the caravan counts into equivalent pitch numbers by districts has involved us making some adjustments based upon local knowledge. We also recommend that future pitch sizes on long-stay sites should be sufficient to accommodate three caravans (including one mobile home) rather than the two usually applied according to past official guidance; this may affect the estimates of pitch requirements below.

Assumption 1: Current supply

3. The figures represent both council and private authorised accommodation, derived from schedules of sites provided by councils, supplemented by the six-monthly count returns where schedules were not available. Niner and ODPM guidance add to these supply figures estimates for unused and vacant pitches, families expressing a wish to live in housing (which assumes that such housing is available), and any programmed new provision. Niner also adjusted 'to reflect the division between residential and transit pitches'. We have cross-checked our figures against these approaches, but found minimal need to adjust our figures. For instance, given the lack of any transit provision in our study area, we have assumed full occupancy, interpreting any under-occupation in counts as temporary absence. Niner also allowed for current unused sites/pitches being brought back into use, but we have not assumed that, since we are informed that closed sites and pitches will not be re-opened. We have, however, included the proposed new emergency stopping site in Cambridge City.

Assumption 2: Families in unauthorised caravans

4. The usually preferred measure (recognised in case law) of shortfall is unauthorised caravans (converted into pitches) as recorded in the six-monthly counts. We have applied the average (January and July figures) of the last 3 years of accounts, adjusted by our survey findings to reflect the balance between those on their own sites (the majority of unauthorised) and those on the roadside (who may or may not be seeking accommodation in the area). ODPM guidance suggests adding an estimate of those expected to arrive from elsewhere, but we find particularly problematic, especially in an area which has already experienced high in-migration in recent years, and have made no additional allowance.

Assumption 3: Overcrowding

5. To allow for overcrowding (which is linked to hidden or suppressed households), we have followed Niner and ODPM assumed that 10% of council pitches were over-occupied, but we have arrived at a rather higher figure (15-25%) based upon a cautious application of our survey results on caravan occupancy levels, stated preferences, and higher family sizes in the Irish Traveller caravan population. This is consistent with reducing average caravan occupancy from 3 towards 2 persons (while acknowledging cultural preferences and proportions of larger mobile homes).

Assumption 4: Preferences for caravans/housing

6. Niner assumed that, of Gypsies in housing, 1-5% wanted a pitch rather than a house, but our survey produced a much higher preference rate (about 39% overall, with local variations), from which we subtracted the percentage of survey respondents in caravans wanting housing to arrive at a cautious figure of 25% of housed families, derived from TES school data. (Note: Gypsies/Travellers in housing who prefer to be in caravans would represent a 'best-value' gain, since caravan sites are cheaper (about half the capital cost) than houses to build, and housing stock can be released.

Assumption 5: Natural increase

7. A 3% growth rate over 5 years is applied by ODPM and Niner, and we regard this as reasonable, given the demographic profile of the population. We have applied the same rate to our estimate in Table 2 of the total Gypsy/Traveller population in five years (both housed and in caravans), and have made the cautious assumption (as did Niner) that 70% of them would need long-stay caravan pitches.
8. We make certain other qualifications:
- No distinction between English Gypsies, Irish Travellers and others.
 - No split between private and public sectors.
 - No re-allocation of pitches between districts (although we make recommendations)
 - No separate estimates of long-stay and transit pitches (although, based upon our survey findings, we would propose a ratio of two long-stay to one transit pitch).

Table 1: District Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs 2005-2010 (ranked and rounded)

	South Cambridgeshire	Cambridge Sub-Region Total
Supply: (Assumption 1)	220-230	529-751
Demand: Unauthorized families (Assumption 2)	80-90	293-323
Demand: Overcrowding (Assumption 3)	45-80	108-162
Demand: Housing transfer (Assumption 4)	10-15	157-212
Demand: Family formation 2005-2010 (Assumption 5)	34-37	152-167
Total demand (2-5):	170-220	710-864

9. Table 2 is our current estimate (revised from the first draft report) of the total Gypsy/Traveller population in the study area, present and projected forward 5 years at 3% per annum). We derive the housed population from TES school roll data (applying assumptions stated in the first draft report). There are substantial numbers of other housed Gypsies/Travellers (estimated about two thousand in the Fen districts), but we have limited our figures to those derived from TES data.

Table 2. Estimated Gypsy/Traveller population in study area districts, ranked and rounded

	South Cambridgeshire	Cambridge Sub-Region Total
Caravans	425	1535
Equivalent Families	285	1025
Estimated housed families	20-40	495-600
Estimated total population 2005	1220-1300	6080-6620
Total families 2010 @3%	305-325	1520-1655
Family formation 2005-2010	49-53	

Survey

10. We attach the distribution of completed survey questionnaires as at 26 November. Reaching the agreed quota of 350 has been delayed by several factors: some refusals to participate in the survey (causing abortive visits), the use of part-time interviewers (justified by the need to involve Gypsy/Traveller interviewers), difficulties in reaching roadside and housed Gypsies/Travellers, and by management time diverted by client requests for additional work not included in the contract.

	South Cambridgeshire	Cambridge Sub-Region Total
% distribution of caravans	31	100
No. completed interviews	69	275
% distribution of interviews	25	99