

**Accommodation Needs of Gypsies, Travellers, Travelling
Showpeople, Boat Dwellers and Bargees**

Fenland District Council, May 2025

MH Planning

One Voice 4 Travellers

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Executive Summary

1. This Accommodation Needs of Gypsies, Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, Bargee Travellers, and other Caravan and Houseboat Dwellers report was commissioned by Fenland District Council to inform the review of the Fenland Local Plan, together with future decisions over planning applications and appeals. While the results of the 2013 Fenland Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Update were discussed at meetings with a community focus group, it is the first interview-based needs assessment to be carried out in Fenland since 2006.
2. It is among the first, if not the first, accommodation assessment to take account of the revised definition of Gypsies and Travellers for planning purposes at Annex 1 to Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024.
3. Reflecting the long established and substantial Gypsy and Traveller community in Fenland, the report has a strong emphasis on that community and how their needs can be met. It is also the first needs assessment to identify the needs of the boat dwelling community in Fenland.
4. Compared with most other Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessments, the study is notable both for the large number of households interviewed, 289, and for the number we interviewed who were living in housing, 173. As well as Travellers living in housing, we interviewed 39 households on local authority Traveller sites, 70 on private Traveller sites, 4 on residential caravan sites, and 3 on touring caravan sites, together with 2 Travelling Showpeople and 14 bargees and boat residents.
5. The numbers of Gypsies and Travellers interviewed in housing and on local authority and private sites represent large enough samples to be able to estimate needs for the whole population of Gypsies and Travellers in those types of accommodation.
6. The responses from individuals within the communities are complemented by interviews with a range of prominent members of the travelling communities, people who work with the travelling communities, and organizations in the wider area.

7. We believe that there are currently the equivalent of 317 Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Fenland, 72 on local authority sites and 245 on private sites.
8. Table 1 shows that there is a net need for 66 residential pitches 2024/25 to 2038/39.
9. We provide assessments of need over three time periods: immediate needs for pitches for the first five years, 2024/25 to 2028/29; medium term needs for the five years, 2029/30 to 2033/34 and longer-term needs for the five years, 2034/35 to 2038/39.

Table 1: Net Need for Additional Pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, 2024/25 to 2038/39

	Gypsies & Travellers meeting the PPfTS definition, 2024
Current number of pitches, 2024	317
Total numbers of pitches needed by 2038/39	383
Immediate needs 2024/25 to 2028/29, net	47 pitches
Medium term needs 2029/30 to 2033/34, net	8 pitches
Longer terms needs 2034/35 to 2038/39, net	11 pitches
Total need 2024/25 to 2038/39, net	66 pitches

10. The figures in Table 1 represent ‘net need’ taking account of expected turnover of pitches on local authority sites.
11. The assessment suggests a significant level of need in the first five years, followed by lower need in the following ten years. This is because the approach of the study assumes all current and short-term needs will be met by

2028/29 and that any subsequent needs would be restricted to additional needs arising from growth in numbers of households.

12. Demand for residential moorings within marinas and on the navigable waterways is increasing. We make a number of suggestions about how this demand could be accommodated, and improved facilities provided for boat dwellers and leisure boaters.
13. We have not identified any current need from Travelling Showpeople in Fenland.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report was commissioned by Fenland District Council to provide the evidence about the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, Bargee Travellers and other caravan and house-boat dwellers to inform the review of the Fenland Local Plan and future decisions over planning applications and appeals.
- 1.2 It addresses the needs for permanent and transit residential accommodation of Gypsies (including English, Scottish, Welsh and Romany Gypsies), Irish Travellers, New Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople. It provides guidance on how the accommodation needs and services required by Bargee Travellers and boat dwellers can be addressed.
- 1.3 Reflecting the preference of those communities (and the confirmation by the courts that Romany Gypsies and Irish and Scottish Travellers are ethnic groups protected under equality legislation), we use capital letters to refer to Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and Bargee Travellers. The exception is when referring to those who meet the technical definition of gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople for planning purposes in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, who only constitute a proportion of those with Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity or of the Travelling Showpeople community.
- 1.4 The work was intended to provide an evidence base to enable the Council to comply with the requirements towards Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and boat dwellers in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPfTS) 2015, (as amended December 2023), and section 124 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.
- 1.5 As we were in the process of finalising this report, in December 2024 the Government published revised versions of the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. The new version of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites introduced a revised definition of Gypsy and Traveller for planning purposes.
- 1.6 We have been able to review the results from the surveys of Travellers to provide assessments of need based on the new definition, which means that the report will be among the first in the country, which takes account of the new definition. The new definition has had the effect of increasing the numbers in need of Traveller accommodation.

- 1.7 Necessarily, reflecting the substantial, long-established Gypsy and Traveller, particularly English or Romany Gypsy, community in Fenland much of this report concentrates on that community. It also looks at the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople, and for the first time boat dwellers. We also interviewed two families with a new traveller background who were living in houses in Fenland.
- 1.8 It builds on and responds to:
- the previous Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments (GTANAs), which covered Fenland (those of 2006, 2011 and the 2013 Update);
 - Census and other data sources; and
 - Fenland's history – see Chapter 4. The Importance of Fenland for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 1.9 The principal source of information has been face to face interviews with members of the travelling communities, together with interviews with well-known members of the Travelling communities, people who work with them and a range of local organisations. Annex 1 provides a list of stakeholder organisations we interviewed or who provided written responses.
- 1.10 Reflecting the requirement for local planning authorities to identify a 5 year supply of deliverable sites, and a supply of deliverable sites or broad locations for growth for years 6 to 10 and where possible years 11-15, PPfTS para 10, the report provides estimates of needs for three time periods, the five years 2024/25 to 2028/29 and the ten years 2028/29 to 2038/39, split into two five year periods of a medium term and a longer term.
- 1.11 The study has been carried out by a team led by Dr Janie Codona and Shirley Barrett of One Voice 4 Travellers and Michael Hargreaves of MH Planning.¹
- 1.12 Nearly all the interviews were carried out by Janie and Shirley and their team of trained interviewers, who themselves come from a Romany Gypsy background.
- 1.13 As well as factual data, we have included a number of quotations from stakeholders and from the people we interviewed. The quotations about their

¹ Details about the research team's experience are provided at Annex 6.

lives, the accommodation they occupy, and that they are seeking give a sense from people's own words of how the lives of Gypsies are changing, and of the diversity within the Gypsy and Traveller communities and.

- 1.14 We have sought to identify need from harder to reach sources. We completed 173 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers living in housing. We are not aware of another GTANA which interviewed so many housed Travellers, and our report establishes that housed residents will generate a significant proportion of the need for pitches.
- 1.15 Touring caravan sites and residential mobile home parks are found in locations across the district. While the numbers we interviewed on them were small, the responses confirm some Gypsies and Travellers make use of such sites.
- 1.16 Although we have identified some need to move to Fenland, para 9.18 refers, we suspect that what we have been able to identify may be an underestimate, and that the actual level of net-migration of Gypsy people to Fenland may be higher than we identify.

2. Legal and Policy Requirements

- 2.1 This study aims to establish the need for appropriate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, Bargee Travellers and house-boat dwellers. This raises some legal and policy complexities.

National Planning Policy Framework, 2024

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied, para 1.
- 2.3 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, para 7. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective, para 8. The highlighted words confirm that the provision of sufficient homes is central to the social objective of the NPPF:

'to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being', para 8 b.

- 2.4 Para 61 and 63 of the NPPF specify:

61. *To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. The overall aim should be to meet as much of an area's identified housing need as possible, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.*
63. *Within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning*

policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing (including Social Rent); families with children; looked after children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers^{2 28}; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, 2024

2.5 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPfTS) provides policy guidance for development for both Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, which it jointly refers to as 'travellers'.

2.6 This study addresses the following requirements of PPfTS:

(Para 3) The Government's overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community;

(Para 4) To help achieve this, Government's aims in respect of traveller sites are:

a. that local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning

b. to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites

c. to encourage local planning authorities to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale

e. to promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot

² Footnote 28 to the NPPF states: Planning Policy for Traveller Sites sets out how travellers' housing needs should be assessed for those covered by the definition in Annex 1 of that document.

provide their own sites;

f. that plan-making and decision-taking should aim to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and make enforcement more effective;

g. for local planning authorities to ensure that their Local Plan includes fair, realistic and inclusive policies;

h. to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply;

j. to enable provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure; and

k. for local planning authorities to have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment.

(Para 7) In assembling the evidence base necessary to support their planning approach, local planning authorities should:

- a) pay particular attention to early and effective community engagement with both settled and traveller communities (including discussing travellers' accommodation needs with travellers themselves, their representative bodies and local support groups)*
- b) cooperate with travellers, their representative bodies and local support groups; other local authorities and relevant interest groups to prepare and maintain an up-to-date understanding of the likely permanent and transit accommodation needs of their areas over the lifespan of their development plan, working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities*
- c) use a robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs to inform the preparation of local plans and make planning decisions.*

(Para 9) Local planning authorities should set pitch targets for

gypsies and travellers as defined in Annex 1 and plot targets for travelling showpeople as defined in Annex 1 which address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of travellers in their area, working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities.

(Para 10) Local planning authorities should, in producing their Local Plan:

- a) identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against their locally set targets*
- b) identify a supply of specific, developable sites, or broad locations for growth, for years 6 to 10 and, where possible, for years 11-15*

Definitions of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople for Planning Purposes

- 2.7 The Glossary at Annex 1 to Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024 provides the definitions of gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople for planning purposes.
- 2.8 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024 introduced a revised definition of Gypsies and Travellers, with the addition of persons *with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan*. The revised definition is: *'Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.'*
- 2.9 the definition of Travelling Showpeople was unaltered and is: *'Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to*

travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.'

Nomadic Habit of Life

2.10 The above definitions mean that the concept of '*nomadic habit of life*' is central to the definition of gypsies and travellers for planning purposes, but is not itself defined in PPfTS.

2.11 The definition has its roots in s.127 of the Highways Act 1959, which defined a Gypsy as a '*person of nomadic habit of life*'. The definition of a Gypsy with a nomadic habit of life evolved through a sequence of case law decisions, including:

- Greenwich v Powell, 1989, which established that someone could be a Gypsy if they had a permanent residence, and travelled only seasonally;
- R v Shropshire CC ex parte Bungay, 1990, which established that someone could remain a Gypsy if they did not travel, provided the travelling was only suspended, not abandoned;
- In R v S Hams DC ex parte Gibbs, 1994 the Court of Appeal required an economic purpose to the nomadism. According to one of the judges: '*..the definition of 'Gypsies' imports the requirement that there should be some recognizable connection between the wandering or travelling and the means whereby the persons concerned make or seek their livelihood. Persons or individuals who move from place to place merely as the fancy may take them and without any connection between the movement and their means of livelihood fall outside these statutory definitions;*
- In Maidstone v Secretary of State & Dunn, 1996 a Romani Gypsy who bred horses and travelled to horse fairs where he bought and sold horses and who remained away from his permanent site for up to two months of the year at least partly in connection with trading horses was entitled to be a Gypsy;.
- There were then a series of court cases relating to people who had ceased travelling because of health and childcare responsibilities. They suggested such people did not lose Gypsy status, but it was not clear cut.

2.12 The further evolution of the definition since 2006 is described at paras 3.8 to 3.14 below.

Housing & Planning Act, 2016 and Draft Guidance on the Review of Housing Needs: Caravans and Houseboats

- 2.13 S.124 of the Housing & Planning Act, 2016 required local housing authorities to assess the accommodation needs of people residing in or resorting to their district with respect to the provision of sites for caravans and the mooring of houseboats.
- 2.14 The March 2016 Department of Communities and Local Government Draft Guidance on the Review of Housing Needs: Caravans and Houseboats specifies that the review of needs should include all those who need to live in a caravan or houseboat whatever their race or origin. It includes, but is not restricted to, bargees, Romany Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, new travellers and travelling show people. The guidance notes that the evidence should cover caravan and houseboat dwelling households, but also people living in 'bricks and mortar' dwellings whose existing accommodation is overcrowded or unsuitable and that 'unsuitable' in this context can include unsuitability by virtue of a person's cultural preference not to live in bricks-and-mortar accommodation.
- 2.15 This meant that prior to the definition change introduced in December 2024 needs assessments were required to identify need for accommodation from people under two distinct legislative requirements:
- Gypsies and Travellers with a nomadic habit of life and Travelling Showpeople through Planning Policy for Traveller Sites; and
 - Those needing to live in a caravan or houseboat (but excluding Gypsies and Travellers with a nomadic habit of life and Travelling Showpeople) under S.124 of the 2016 Housing & Planning Act.
- 2.16 The effect of the change in definition of gypsies and travellers introduced in December 2024 is that the needs of Gypsies and Travellers with a nomadic habit of life and other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan and of Travelling Showpeople are to be assessed through Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, while those needing to live in a houseboat are to be assessed under S.124 of the 2016 Housing & Planning Act.

3. The Changing Legislative and Policy Background for Gypsies and Travellers

- 3.1 Inadequate provision of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and limitations on the traditional nomadic way of life have been on-going issues for Gypsies and Travellers throughout the post war period. Agricultural employment, which had previously allowed many Traveller families to move from job to job around the country and provided an income, fell with a resultant impact on Travellers' prosperity and their ability to travel. The way the comprehensive control over the use of land introduced through the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was implemented by local authorities made it difficult for Travellers to get planning permission to live on land while many stopping places traditionally used by Gypsies were closed off, and the rate of closure of stopping places increased following the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act of 1960.
- 3.2 This created an accommodation crisis, a crisis which has never been properly resolved. In recognition that the old way of life was coming to an end and that there was a need for land for sites, the 1968 Caravan Sites Act imposed a duty on local authorities to provide sites. The Act empowered the Secretary of State to make designation orders for areas where he was satisfied there was adequate accommodation, or on grounds of expediency. By 1994 a third of local authorities had achieved designation, which gave them both exemption from making further provision and additional powers to use against unauthorised encampment. Nearly all existing public sites in England were built during the 1970s and 1980s when the duty to provide sites was in force.
- 3.3 The shortage of accommodation resulted in many families having to consider whether to move into bricks and mortar housing, for many people, certainly originally, against their wishes. As our survey brings out, while many Gypsies and Travellers have adjusted to and favour housed accommodation, a significant number, including some of those living in housing, have an aversion to, or are uncomfortable with housed accommodation and want to live on sites.
- 3.4 The 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act repealed most of the 1968 Act. It abolished the duty on local authorities to provide sites, discontinued Government grants for sites, and made it a civil offence to camp on land

without the owner's consent, and a criminal offence if they failed to move when directed to do so. Circular 1/94, Gypsy Sites and Planning expected local authorities to make land available for sites, and that Gypsies and Travellers would provide accommodation for themselves through private sites. However, very little land was made available and, in many cases, when families acquired land, planning permission was refused.

- 3.5 The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act led to a growing shortfall in accommodation and increased conflicts over unauthorised development as Travellers were forced to occupy land without planning permission. Concerns about the accommodation shortage and unauthorised encampment led in February 2006 to the publication of Circular 1/06 *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites*.
- 3.6 The objectives of Circular 1/06 included reducing the number of unauthorised encampments and developments and the conflict they cause, whilst significantly increasing the numbers of sites. It introduced a revised definition of Gypsy for planning purposes, which included a recognition that people could cease travelling for reasons of education, health or old age: *'For the purposes of this circular gypsies and travellers means Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.'*
- 3.7 Circular 1/06 introduced a three-stage process for planning to meet accommodation needs: local authorities assessing needs through Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments (GTANAs); regional planning bodies defining targets for additional accommodation for each local planning authority area through their Regional Strategies; and local planning authorities determining how those targets were to be met locally.
- 3.8 In the years after February 2006, while many planning applications continued to be refused, in the light of Circular 1/06, a higher proportion were allowed on appeal than was previously the case. However, there was very little progress by local authorities in planning for sites, and much of the energy went into

assessing needs and putting Gypsy & Traveller regional strategies in place.

- 3.9 Following the change of Government in 2010 Regional Planning Bodies were abolished and all regional strategies revoked. Circular 1/06 was withdrawn and replaced by Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPfTS). PPfTS, March 2012 retained the Circular 1/06 definition of gypsy and traveller. It placed the responsibility for assessing needs and planning for provision on local planning authorities, but the guidance on how to assess needs was withdrawn.
- 3.10 The second edition of PPfTS published in August 2015 changed the planning definitions of gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople by removing the words 'or permanently'. This meant that to be defined as having a nomadic habit of life people could only cease travelling on a temporary basis. This change had the effect of substantially reducing the numbers who met the definition, by 73% according to a 2019 research report.³
- 3.11 The Police Act 2022⁴ granted police the powers to fine, arrest, imprison and seize the vehicles and caravans of Gypsies and Travellers on roadside camps.
- 3.12 Through the Lisa Smith judgement of October 2023⁵ the Court of Appeal held, that in the circumstances of Lisa Smith's family, the amendment to the definition with the deletion of the word 'permanently', was unlawful on the basis that it discriminated against those who wanted to live in a caravan and who because of old age or ill health had ceased to travel, and that that discrimination was inextricably linked to their ethnicity.
- 3.13 In the light of the Lisa Smith judgement, the December 2023 revision of PPfTS 2015 reinstated the words '*or permanently*' into the definition of Gypsy and Traveller for planning purposes, that is the definition returned to what it had been between 2006 and 2015.

³ Gypsy and Traveller Sites: The revised planning definitions impact on assessing accommodation needs, Equality and Human Rights Commission, September 2019

⁴ The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, 2022

⁵ Lisa Smith v Sec of State for Levelling Up, North West Leicestershire DC and others, CA-2021-001741.

3.14 The December 2024 version of PPfTS introduced a revised definition of Gypsies and Travellers with the addition to the definition of persons ‘*with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan*’.

The Impact of Changing Policy and Legislation on Caravan Numbers

3.15 The twice-yearly counts of Gypsy and Traveller caravans carried out by local authorities for the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government and the Welsh Government have often been criticized,⁶ but they give a clear overall impression of how caravan (as opposed to bricks and mortar) accommodation has changed for Gypsies and Travellers over the last forty-five years. Table 2 gives the headline numbers from the Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Counts for England at selected dates. It brings out how changing policy and legislation has impacted on the provision of accommodation.

Table 2, Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation, England 1979 – 2024, Selected Dates

		Caravans on unauthorized sites (Travellers’ land) and unauthorized encampments (land not owned by Travellers)	Caravans on social rented sites	Caravans on authorized private sites	Total Caravans
Jan 1979	The years after the 1968 Caravan Sites Act	4,176 (50%)	2,988 (36%)	1,194 (14%)	8,358
Jan 1994	Criminal Justice & Order Act	3,838 (30%)	5,912 (45%)	3,271 (25%)	13,021
July 2006	C 1/06	3,994 (24%)	6,560 (40%)	5,815 (36%)	16,369
July 2010	Abolition of Regional Strategies	3,636 (20%)	6,862 (38%)	7,636 (42%)	18,134
Jan 2016	PPfTS, 2015	2,806 (13%)	7,046 (33%)	11,454 (54%)	21,306

⁶ Among the criticisms are that different councils collect the data in different ways, and that they are snap shots in time, which do not include unauthorised sites that occur on other dates, and do not include caravans which may be away.

Jan 2024	PPfTS, 2023	3,658 (14%)	6,631 (25%)	16,343 (61%)	26,632
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- 3.16 The first count in January 1979, some 10 years after the 1968 Act, recorded 8,358 caravans. 4,176, or 50%, were on unauthorized sites or encampments (which because the use is unauthorized, and has no security is a measure of accommodation stress), just under 3,000, 36% were on social rented sites, and only 1,194 or 14% were on authorized private sites.
- 3.17 By the time of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in 1994 total numbers of caravans had increased to over 13,000. There had been a fall in numbers on unauthorized sites to 3,838 (30%) reflecting the significant increase on social rented sites (5,912, 45%) and the increased numbers on private sites (3,271 or 25%).
- 3.18 In the 12 years between the Criminal Justice and Order Act in 1994 and publication of C1/06 in 2006, numbers on social rented sites had increased slowly from 5,912 (45%) to 6,560 (40%), and had increased significantly on private sites from 3,271 (25%) to 5,815 (36%), but there had been a small increase in numbers on unauthorized sites from 3,838 (30%) to 3,994 (24%).
- 3.19 In the four years between C1/06 and the abolition of regional strategies in 2010 overall caravan numbers increased to 18,134, with a fall in numbers on unauthorized sites to 3,636 (20%), a continuing slow growth in numbers on social rented sites to 6,862 (38%) and a faster growth in numbers on private sites up to 7,636 (42%), which for the first time exceeded numbers on social rented sites.
- 3.20 In between 2010 and January 2016, following publication of the 2015 version of PPfTS, there had been very little extra provision on social rented sites, up to 7,046, but down to 33% as a proportion of caravan numbers, a continuing increase in numbers on private sites, up to 11,454 (54%), while numbers on unauthorized sites continued to fall to 2,806 (13%).
- 3.21 In the years after PPfTS 2015 numbers on private sites continued to grow, but at a slower rate, reflecting the impact on planning decisions of the more restrictive planning definition of Gypsies and Travellers, while numbers on social rented sites actually fell. One of the reasons was that a number of

Councils in other parts of the country had disposed of their sites, contributing to pressures to move to areas like Fenland. One of the people we interviewed felt compelled to leave a site that had been sold to a private operator, and the family moved to Fenland. One of the consequences of the decline in social rented sites has been that after years of falling, numbers on unauthorized sites had increased to 3,658, and that occurred despite the increasingly harsh penalties against unauthorized encampment.

- 3.22 To summarize the national picture, over the longer term there has been a major increase in numbers of caravans on private sites, numbers on social rented sites increased quickly, then more slowly and have subsequently fallen back, while numbers on unauthorized sites and encampments fell, but have subsequently increased again.

4. The Importance of Fenland for Gypsies and Travellers

- 4.1 Fenland District, together with the low lying, agricultural parts of the districts of Boston, East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Peterborough and South Holland, which together make up the Fens, are among the most important areas in England for Gypsy people, and for Romany Gypsies in particular.
- 4.2 While the most deprived of the 317 lower tier local authorities in England are urban areas in the North of England,⁷ for a more rural area in the South of England, as the 51st most deprived local authority area Fenland suffers from significant deprivation. For deprivation related to education Fenland was the third most deprived nationally of the 317. Within the East of England, Fenland is the third most deprived local authority after Great Yarmouth and Tendring, and for deprivation related to health the fourth most deprived after Tendring, Norwich and Great Yarmouth.
- 4.3 For the first time the 2011 Census recorded numbers of Gypsies and Travellers separately. In 2011 467 people out of 95,262 in Fenland (0.49%) chose to identify as White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller, and in 2021 582 out of 100,471 (0.58%). However, the numbers of people choosing to self-identify in this way through the censuses are believed to be very small relative to the actual size of the Gypsy and Traveller population. For instance, based on education data, in the Cambridge sub-Region Traveller Needs Assessment, 2006 Home and Greenfields estimated the 2005 Gypsy and Traveller population in Fenland as 2,851, and numbers have increased since 2005. Among the reasons suggested for this under-enumeration are the nomadic nature of the population, a cultural distrust of authority, limited literacy, people's nervousness about disclosing their identity, together with the fact that, for the 2021 census, most of the information was gathered on-line. Other data sources confirm that the real numbers are significantly higher.
- 4.4 With that caveat, based on numbers identifying as Gypsy or Irish Traveller in the 2021 Census, Fenland is possibly the district in England with the third highest **proportion** of Gypsies.

⁷ The most deprived based on the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation Score were in order Blackpool, Knowsley, Liverpool, Hull and Middlesbrough

- 4.5 Within Fenland, there is a particularly large concentration of Gypsy people in Wisbech and the surrounding villages like Elm, Murrow and Wisbech St Mary. The sense that Wisbech and area immediate surroundings are a nationally important centre for Gypsy people is underlined by the fact that the area to north-east and east of Wisbech, including Walsoken (effectively a suburb of Wisbech), and the villages of Marshland St James, and Upwell (each with a significant Traveller community) are in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council area, and not Fenland.
- 4.6 The importance of the Fens for Gypsy people has its roots in the area's agricultural importance. Gypsies from all over the country used to come here for the harvest and periods of strong demand for agricultural labour, and there was a tradition of camping on farmland during the harvest and, in some cases, over the winter.
- 4.7 Fenland District Council was active in developing six local authority sites, which were opened between 1979 and 1994. Together they provide 66 permanent and 6 transit pitches. Of the six, five are in the villages and settlements around Wisbech, the sixth is on the edge of Chatteris.
- 4.8 Land values have historically not been the highest in Fenland, and over time some Gypsies and Travellers were able to acquire land, and subsequently to gain planning permission to live on the land. This particularly applies to the villages around Wisbech. Whereas, around the other Fenland towns like Chatteris and March, the fen landscape is more open, with large landholdings and limited opportunities for people to acquire the smaller parcels of land which Gypsies often seek, the villages around Wisbech are characterised by orchards, nurseries, and market gardens with significant numbers of small landholdings. It was often these which Romany families were able to acquire when landowners retired or sold off small parcels of land. This has meant that the Gypsy community in and around Wisbech has significant land holdings, on which over time people have been able to develop private, mainly family, sites.
- 4.9 While significant numbers of people live on the local authority sites and on private sites, at the same time the continuing shortage of pitch accommodation (and some people's preference for housing) has resulted in a substantial

community in bricks and mortar housing in Fenland (62% of those identifying as White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller in the 2021 Census) and there are Gypsy people living in local authority, owner-occupied, and private rented housing.

- 4.10 While much agricultural work is now undertaken by workers from overseas and local employment opportunities are limited, nonetheless for the following reasons Fenland continues to be an area which Gypsy people are aware of and want to move to (or move back to):
- relatively lower land and rental costs;
 - the availability of Gypsy run and focussed services and facilities;
 - family connections and familiarity with the area;
 - the difficulties in finding accommodation in around London and around Cambridge because of high land values (and Travellers selling this land for high prices), Green Belt policy, and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation being occupied by non-Gypsies, leads people to seek accommodation in areas such as Fenland;
 - the Covid pandemic, which led some people to want live in a more rural area; and
 - the fact that the public agencies have sometimes been less anti Gypsy, compared with other areas.
- 4.11 Whereas in the past Fenland was an almost exclusively Romany Gypsy area⁸, numbers of Travellers of Irish origin have increased in recent years. Among the reasons for this are the failure to make adequate provision in areas with a significant Irish Traveller population, such as around London, combined with the extent of Gypsy land ownership in Fenland and the availability of land for sale within the community.

⁸ Of the 79 households interviewed in Fenland in the 2006 GTAA, only one was an Irish Traveller.

5. Fenland: Changing Counts of Caravans and Assessments of Needs

The Caravan Counts

- 5.1 In a similar way to the national picture discussed above at paras 3.15 – 3.22, the twice-yearly caravan counts of Gypsy and Traveller caravans provide a history of how caravan (as opposed to bricks and mortar) accommodation has changed for Gypsies and Travellers in Fenland over the last forty-five years.
- 5.2 While numbers went up and down from count to count in Fenland overall numbers increased from around 200 caravans at the beginning of the 1990s to between 450 and 500 between 2003 and 2005. In their 2006 Assessment⁹ Home and Greenfields commented:
- ‘This increase is mostly attributable to a rapid growth in both private and unauthorised caravan numbers, perhaps linked to the opening or upgrading of council sites, but also to the availability of relatively cheap land, an established local Gypsy population, and good road access.’*
- 5.3 Numbers then went up and down in the range 350 to 500 between 2006 and 2015. They then increased to between 520 and 580 between 2016 and 2020, and have increased again to between 550 and 620 in the counts since the Covid pandemic.
- 5.4 While overall numbers have grown, the capacity of the local authority sites has not increased for some time. While numbers on the sites have gone up and down, since 2005 there has consistently been an average of 150 caravans on the local authority sites.
- 5.5 In common with the national position, the most striking feature of the counts has been the major increase in caravans on private sites. Numbers on authorized private sites went up from around 80 in the late 1990s to around 220 in 2005 and to 400 in 2024. This increase is due to individual site owners being granted planning permission or lawful development certificates, in some

⁹ Cambridge Sub-Region Traveller Needs Assessment, 2006

cases on sites which were previously unauthorised. The growth in numbers hides the fact that one significant site has been lost from solely Gypsy occupancy to a residential caravan park (although some Gypsy people are still living there).¹⁰

Cambridge Sub-Region Traveller Needs Assessment, 2006

- 5.6 The Cambridge Sub-Region Traveller Needs Assessment, May 2006 was commissioned by the local authorities from a team led by Robert Home and Margaret Greenfields. It was developed in parallel with the draft proposals which became Circular 1/06 and the draft guidance on preparing Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessments.
- 5.7 The survey interviewed 79 Gypsies and Travellers in Fenland, including 24 on Council sites, 23 on private authorized sites and 25 in housing, leaving a balance of 7, who may have been on unauthorized sites and encampments.
- 5.8 The study identified an immediate need for 160 - 205 pitches in Fenland, 2005 to 2010. Of that need:
- 90 -100 pitches were for the occupants of unauthorized development and encampments;
 - 15- 20 pitches were to address overcrowding;
 - 15 were for transfer from housing; and
 - 40 -70 were for family formation, that is for the needs of young people forming new households.
- 5.9 However, the 2006 study overestimated the need in Fenland in the sense that most of the 90 -100 pitches for the occupants of unauthorized development and encampments were for the occupants of unauthorized development which were tolerated, no enforcement action would have been taken against them, and many will have become lawful through the passage of time.

Cambridge Sub-Regional Accommodation Needs Assessment, 2011

¹⁰ This is a more significant issue in high land value areas like Cambridge and in and around London, and adds to pressures for people to move to areas to like Fenland. It is one of the risks to be aware of in planning for the future.

- 5.10 In the light of the abolition of Regional Strategies and emerging Government policy,¹¹ the Cambridgeshire authorities commissioned a new needs assessment, the Cambridge Sub-Regional Accommodation Needs Assessment, October 2011. It was developed by the research team at Cambridgeshire County Council. It did not involve any interviews with Travellers and provided assessments of need based on assumptions derived from available data sources. It assumed there would be net movement from pitches to housing, rather than the other way round, and that nearly all the need could be catered for by the turnover of existing pitches, an approach strongly condemned in subsequent appeal decisions. In Fenland it concluded there was a need for two additional pitches between 2011 and 2031.

Fenland Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Update, 2013

- 5.11 In response to anxieties about the realism of its figures for Fenland, Fenland Council commissioned a review of the 2011 GTANA, the Fenland GTANA Update, November 2013, which was again carried out by the County Council research team. It updated the modelling based on numbers of unauthorized pitches from the Caravan Counts, and the results were discussed at three focus group meetings of Gypsies and Travellers facilitated by the Gypsy Media Company, which were attended by a good cross section of the community, and contributed to developing the study's findings. The report concluded there would be a need for 139 additional pitches between 2013 and 2031, but that 121 pitches would become available through pitch turnover, and that there was a net need for 18 additional pitches, which could be accommodated on sites with unimplemented planning permissions.
- 5.12 In practice, 47 additional pitches have been approved in the 10 years after 2013.¹² The findings of our study suggest there is still significant unmet need, which implies that the 2013 assessment may have under-estimated needs. Two possible reasons for this were the failure to take account of net in-

¹¹ Draft Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, July 2011

¹² Fenland Monitoring Report 2022-23 Table 6.

migration, and the assumption that most need could be met through pitch turnover.

6. Methodology: Carrying out the Study

- 6.1 The approach followed in this study has been developed informed by:
- The legal and policy requirements which the study has been commissioned to address - see Chapter 3, Legal and Policy Requirements and Definitions;
 - Familiarity with the area and with the available information about its traveling communities – see Chapter 4, The Importance of Fenland for Gypsies and Travellers and
 - Familiarity with the guidance on the production of assessments, notably the withdrawn Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Guidance, DCLG, October 2007, and the Draft guidance to local housing authorities on the periodical review of housing needs: Caravans and Houseboats, DCLG, March 2016; and
 - Familiarity with the assessments developed by other consultants and researchers.
- 6.2 Central to the methodology were interviews with Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, and bargees and boat dwellers based on schedules of questions,¹³ together with other sources of data – census, caravan counts, waiting lists etc, and informed by the views about the context from stakeholders.
- 6.3 In the central role given to the responses to interviews, the study's methodology follows that advocated in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Guidance, DCLG, October 2007, and the Best Practice for Assessing the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers, Friends Families and Travellers and others, June 2016. The approach is much closer to that of the Cambridge Sub-Region Traveller Needs Assessment, 2006 than to the Sub-regional Accommodation Needs Assessment, 2011, and the Fenland Update 2013, both of which developed their assessments based on secondary data sources, although the 2013 Update did include a number of meetings with a focus group from the Traveller community.
- 6.4 The study consisted of three stages:

¹³ That for Gypsies and Travellers is at Annex 2.

1. Preparation;
2. Field work;
3. Translating the results from the interviews into estimates of need

Stage 1, Preparation

- 6.5 Among the main tasks in the preliminary preparation stage were:
- Reviewing the background information;
 - Developing the questionnaires, which would form the centre of interviews;
 - Carrying out pilot interviews with selected interviewees in order to identify weaknesses in the questionnaires; and
 - Identifying an appropriately wide range of partner organisations to interview to complement and put in wider context the information provided by individual interviewees.

Stage 2, Fieldwork

Interviews with Stakeholders and Community Organisations

- 6.6 Through a combination of face to face and telephone interviews carried out between October 2023 and January 2024, One Voice 4 Travellers and MH Planning spoke to people from a range of backgrounds to help understand the context to the lives of the Traveller community in Fenland. Organizations fell into the following headings: (A full list of organisations is at Annex 1.)
- Fenland District Council officers and officers of Cambridgeshire County Council Traveller Education and Highways¹⁴;
 - Local authorities in the surrounding area;
 - The managers of the Fenland local authority sites which provide accommodation;
 - Planning agents operating in the area, together with a research firm developing a Traveller needs assessments for adjoining local authorities;
 - Well-known members of the Gypsy community together with those providing community development support to them; and

¹⁴ Highways were interviewed because of their responsibility for unauthorised encampment on highways land.

- Organizations involved in the waterways.

Interviews with Travellers

- 6.7 The numbers involved meant it was not realistic to interview everyone. Instead, within the time constraints, we aimed to get large enough samples to be able to draw conclusions for the whole Gypsy population.
- 6.8 Interviews with Travellers were carried out between November 2023 and March 2024, except for the boat dwellers who were interviewed in a number of stages, the last being in autumn 2024. Generally carrying out interviews in the winter has proven to be good practice on the basis that many Travellers choose to spend the winter at their home or a winter base while more people are away working or travelling during the summer.
- 6.9 A number of factors helped ensure a good level of response:
- People's familiarity with the community development work done locally by the One Voice 4 Travellers team;
 - Use of informal oral networks, which remain strong among Traveller communities, to spread awareness about the study; and
 - Making use of services used by Gypsy people, including two drop-in sessions at a community centre in Wisbech.
- 6.10 Interviewers visited all the local authority and private sites, returning a second time to carry out the interviews when people were not at home.
- 6.11 Interviews were based on a schedule of questions. The schedule of Questions for Gypsies and Travellers living on Sites is at Annex 2. There were related schedules of questions for housed residents, boat dwellers and stakeholders.
- 6.12 Interviewees were asked whether they were content for the interviews to be recorded, and in most cases, this is what happened. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and in this report we have included a number of quotes from people that help amplify points made in their responses to the questions.
- 6.13 The interview team used the approach known as snowballing sampling in which interviewees are asked to identify other potential interviewees. This approach is particularly useful in reaching difficult to access

communities, and was used successfully in the original 2006 Assessment. It was particularly relevant in regard to housed Gypsies and Travellers, for the reason that, unlike on sites where it can reasonably be assumed people are from a Gypsy background, within areas of housing this is not the case, and some people do not choose to broadcast their identity. Operating in this way, the interview team were able to go from house to house occupied by Gypsy people.

- 6.14 Interviewers stressed that information would be treated in strict confidence. They indicated that the information would potentially be helpful to the community, but were careful not to raise people's expectations, and made it clear there could be no guarantee of improved provision.
- 6.15 We completed the following numbers of interviews:
- 175 interviews with housed Travellers, including two people with a new traveller background;¹⁵
 - 39 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers living on local authority sites;
 - 70 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers living on private sites;
 - 4 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers living on residential caravan sites;
 - 3 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers staying on touring caravan sites;
 - 4 interviews with Travelling Showpeople (of which 2 related to people living just outside Fenland); and
 - 14 interviews with bargees and boat residents.

Stage 3: Translating the Results into Assessments of Need

Gypsies and Travellers

- 6.16 Chapter 9, Need for Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers explains how we have used the results from the interviews and other data to generate assessments of need for accommodation for the Gypsy and Traveller community in Fenland.

¹⁵ The analysis is based on 173 interviews, on the basis that the home bases of two of the interviewees were just outside Fenland.

- 6.17 Two central issues in developing the needs assessments were whether people were in need of pitch accommodation either currently, or within the next five years, and whether they met the definition of Gypsy and Traveller for planning purposes in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024.
- 6.18 To determine whether people were in need of accommodation currently or in the next five years, we used information about household size and ages, selected comments from the interview recordings, and the responses to the following interview questions:
- What accommodation have you got here?
 - Do you have enough space here for your family's needs?
 - Are you overcrowded?
 - Will you or your family need more accommodation in the next 5 years? Why is that?
 - How many different new homes will they need? And when would they need their own place? And for each of them, what type of accommodation would they want: a place on a Council site, on a private site or a house?
- 6.19 The initial analysis of whether people were in need of accommodation currently or in the next five years, that is to 2029/30, was carried out by MH Planning, with the results verified by One Voice 4 Travellers.
- 6.20 In the work done before the December 2024 change in definition, we had determined whether people came within the definition of Gypsies and Travellers at Annex 1 to Planning Policy for Travellers, as it was between December 2023 and December 2024. We did this based on appropriate comments from the recordings of the interviews combined with the responses to the following questions in the interview schedule:
- Do any your family living here travel regularly? (By this we mean go away for a time to different places, mainly to find work, and not travelling on a daily basis);
 - If so, who?
 - How much of the year are they away travelling?
 - How much of the year are they away travelling?

- Why do they travel? *Interviewer, indicate any that apply* Finding work; Holidays; Visiting family; Visiting Fairs; Others (please specify);
- If they travel to find work, what type of work do they do?
- If you or your family do not travel (for a period of time to find work), why is that?
- If you or your family do not travel much, would you like to travel more in the future? And for what reason?

6.21 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024 changed the definition by adding '*all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan*', which meant that in addition to those in need of accommodation with a nomadic habit of life, we needed to include those in need of accommodation with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan.

6.22 Of those we had identified as **not** following a nomadic habit of life under the December 2023 definition, we treated them as meeting the new definition if they were living in caravans. This approach was adopted on the basis that since they were occupying caravans it would be difficult to claim that they did not have a cultural tradition of nomadism or caravan living. The approach was adopted in regard to all those residents in caravans: those on the local authority sites, the private sites, on residential and touring caravan sites, those in need because of occupying unauthorized development, together with those we identified as seeking to move to Fenland to occupy pitch accommodation.

6.23 In regard to Gypsies and Travellers living in housing and in need of accommodation but who did not meet the 2023 definition, we did not treat them as meeting the new definition just because they indicated a preference for site dwelling. Rather, we made a judgement on whether they came within the definition based on the responses to the interview questions and the transcriptions of the interviews taking account of such factors as a history of caravan dwelling, a dislike of housing, or a significant motivation to live on sites.

Travelling Showpeople and Boat Dwellers

6.24 Chapters 11 and 12 consider the needs of Travelling Showpeople and boat dwellers. We did not find evidence of unmet needs from Travelling Showpeople. Demand for residential moorings within marinas and on the navigable waterways is increasing. At paras 12.31 -12.34 we make a number of suggestions about how this demand can be accommodated, and improved facilities provided for boat dwellers and leisure boaters, including by:

- Allowing people to stay longer on transit moorings;
- Including Local Plan policies towards residential moorings and marinas;
- Restoring and upgrading the moorings along the West End Park and town centre frontages of the River Nene in March;
- Encouraging greater residential use of the moorings linked to the residential properties on the north side of the river in March; and
- Through a potential new marina within the proposed Fens Reservoir site adjacent to the Forty Foot Drain.

7. Interviews with Community Organisations and Stakeholders

7.1 The responses are considered under three headings:

- firstly, the views of prominent members of the Gypsy and Traveller community, and of those working with the community;
- secondly, from public agencies working in Fenland and professionals working with Gypsies and Travellers; and
- thirdly, from neighbouring local authorities.

We include a number of quotations, which articulate and sum up the opinions people expressed.

Interviews with members of the Gypsy and Traveller Communities and Organisations working with them

7.2 The views of members of the Gypsy and Traveller community, and of people working closely with Gypsies and Travellers, most themselves of Gypsy origin, focussed on issues related to the accommodation shortage, to how the accommodation shortage is linked to other issues in people's lives, to problems in bricks and mortar housing, and to the erosion of the nomadic way of life.

7.3 In different ways everyone stressed the shortage of accommodation, and its impact on people's lives.

'All the sites are full, well the good ones usually are, especially the council sites, and many who need pitches have no money to buy a site, and those who do own a site that has planning permission will not sell, because they know how hard they had to fight to get planning in the first place. That's why we have those doubling up, living in gardens, staying on private sites that are already up to the maximum allowed, and living on land hidden away.'

'Having no permanent address, and no photo ID, you cannot access support such as healthcare, and services. Those who have no permanent accommodation are prevented from registering with a GP, and there are problems getting children back in school due to being away travelling. There is not enough housing, so waiting lists are long, and accommodation is not

often suited to larger families; people end up renting and all the things that that can add to their troubles. Having stable employment is impossible if you do not have a permanent address to put on applications, having stability in home life is vital for families, especially as often only one parent can work. Issues such as a single parent, those fleeing abuse, can mean no history of being a good rent payer, or no idea how systems work when having to go on benefits, claim housing benefits or council tax so huge debts mount up.'

7.4 Some accommodation is occupied by non-Gypsies:

'We know there are sites with non-Travellers living on them, private site owners renting pitches to get an income, and one site in Fenland changed to a residential park, so one less Gypsy site.'

'There are non-Gypsy people occupying some of the sites in Fenland and always have been. I lived on a site for a while and there were a quarter of the residents who were Gorger/Gorgio¹⁶ people.'

7.5 Sites have been sold to Gypsies from outside of Fenland:

'There are not a lot of encampments in Fenland, and many families create issues by selling to families from outside of Fenland. OK, for the seller, but extended family and those staying on the site find they have no place to stay.'

7.6 People make use of residential park home sites to find a home, but there are problems:

'More and more are moving onto these residential sites to get a stable place to live. Sometimes it is not their first choice, but it is better than living roadside. They can have difficulties from other residents realising they are Travellers and being prejudiced against them.'

7.7 The cost of land and the cost and uncertainty of getting planning permission are issues:

¹⁶ Gorger/Gorgio: a person who is not Romani, a non-Gypsy.

‘There is no land to rent or buy at a low cost; planning can be expensive, and it takes years to get permission.’

‘Private sites have helped meet the needs of some families, but not all people can afford to buy or develop a site, and it is not always possible for those who can get hold of land to afford help from a planner and to get planning for the land. At the end there is the risk of being evicted, and of losing all their savings spent on the land in the first place.’

7.8 Some people have difficulties in bricks and mortar housing:

‘Living in housing can affect mental health when you are not used to living in bricks and mortar and not being able to see family.’

‘Illegal evictions from housing have increased; families have no money for a deposit, are not able to get full-time employment, so they work cash-in-hand, are on benefits so unable to go to estate agents/reputable company to rent a home. These families seek out private landlords, and poorer housing, with issues such as dampness, mould, lack of repairs, and no tenancy agreement, just to get a home. They are then open to being illegally evicted at a moment's notice.’

‘Lots of families have issues with neighbours, due to keeping a caravan on the front lawn or driveway, neighbours kick up a fuss as realise they are travellers living next door. They have to hide their identity to live in peace.’

7.9 There was concern about the powers against encampment and the erosion of the way of life:

‘Not being able to stop anywhere is a problem, and not having a place to put a trailer stops people from travelling. A lot of families will pull on missions and conventions because it gives them a chance to travel, but some can't even do this because, if they buy a caravan, they can't store it when they go home.’

‘The new law that came into force that enables the Police to seize the transient Gypsy community's belongings has had a major impact on roadside camping. Some Gypsy people feel that they are having their culture and way of life

taken away and abolished which makes it harder to live their lives the way they have done for generations.'

'Travelling is becoming a thing of the past, only holidays, some young people move around from family site to family site or pay rent to another Traveller, most look to holiday parks in the summer as a place to stay.'

Interviews with Public Agencies and Professionals working in Fenland

- 7.10 Comments from public agencies, including Fenland Council officers, and planning professionals advising Gypsies and Travellers principally related to the local authority sites, the demand to move to Fenland, issues with the planning system, and encampment on highway land.
- 7.11 Resources are not keeping up with the need for maintenance on the local authority sites. There are issues with accommodating larger mobile homes, which impact on the safety distances between caravans. Some older residents want to move to flats or bungalows, which has the potential to free up pitches for younger families.
- 7.12 There is still a lot of land owned by Gypsy people in Fenland and continuing pressure to move to the area, paying prices for land that local people cannot afford. This then relates to economic issues for Gypsy people, given the limited employment opportunities and low wages. For Travellers moving into housing there are budgeting issues with the range of expenses, which people are not used to.
- 7.13 In terms of planning, one view was that applications were up because of people moving to the area, another that they are down, while much increased in the neighbouring West Norfolk marshland.
- 7.14 If planning applications are within or close to settlements, there can be local opposition, but outside settlements there are objections related to access to services and flood risk. Generally smaller family sites of around 4 to 6 pitches work well, and some needs can be met by extending existing sites. Given the

tendency for sites with permission to be sold to non-locals, there is a case for the wider use of conditions limiting occupation to named residents.

- 7.15 A number of stakeholders expressed concerns with under-resourcing of planning enforcement.
- 7.16 While Fenland has the only transit site in Cambridgeshire, through the interview responses a significant number of people expressed the view that there is further need for well-run transit sites managed by people from within the community, both in Fenland and more widely. Some families are responding to the accommodation shortage by moving to park home sites, thereby freeing up pitches for their children and grandchildren.
- 7.17 Unauthorised camping on highway land has fallen significantly post Covid. Many Fenland roads have wide verges so some camping can be tolerated.

Interviews with Local Authorities and Professionals in the area around Fenland

- 7.18 We interviewed a number of planners, a housing officer and a Gypsy and Traveller liaison officer from neighbouring local authorities (East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, King's Lynn West Norfolk, Peterborough, and South Cambridgeshire), as well as Cambridgeshire County Council's highways enforcement officer. We also spoke to two planning agents working in the area and the research company carrying out a Traveller needs assessment for other parts of Cambridgeshire.
- 7.19 Issues of relevance to Fenland that came out of the discussions included:
- The low-lying north-eastern part of Huntingdonshire and those parts of Kings Lynn West Norfolk north and east of Wisbech share many of the characteristics of Fenland with significant Gypsy and Traveller populations and Traveller site ownership. In recent years they have been characterised by net in-migration, increases in both unauthorised development and planning applications, as well as a tension between the sites Travellers are able to acquire and flood risk;
 - In other parts of Cambridgeshire closer to Cambridge (with higher land prices and extensive Green Belt) there are few planning applications,

and an increasing commercialisation of sites with Gypsies and Travellers forced to leave and pitches occupied by non-Gypsies which can be more profitable for the site owners;

- There is a particular concentration of private Traveller sites in the Fen Road, Chesterton area of Cambridge. Many are occupied by non-Gypsies. Sites are overcrowded with implications for health and safety and fire risk;
- This is forcing people into housing; and
- There has been a marked reduction in unauthorised encampments post Covid.

8. Interviews with Gypsies and Travellers

- 8.1 We completed 39 interviews with people living on local authority sites, 70 on private sites, and 175 interviews with Travellers living in housing (and discounted two, because the respondents lived just outside Fenland, giving 173 interviews). The interviews with Travellers living in housing included two with people from a new traveller background. We also completed 4 interviews with people resident on residential mobile home sites, and 3 on touring caravan sites.
- 8.2 The Table at Annex 3 records the results from the interviews. In the following paragraphs we highlight some of the main findings, with some of the issues that emerged illustrated with quotations from interviewees.

Response by Gender, Annex 3 Row 3

- 8.3 152 out of the 173 interviewees in housing were women (72%), with similar but slightly lower proportions in the local authority site interviews (67%) and private site interviews (69%).

Health and Caring, Annex 3 Rows 4 & 5

- 8.4 In response to the question about whether they or a member of their household was disabled or had health issues, a strikingly high proportion of respondents indicated they or someone in their household was disabled or in poor health. This was particularly the case for the local authority sites with 16 out of 39 interviewees (41%) reporting health issues. The proportions among housed residents (32%) and on private sites (29%) were lower, but still strikingly high.
- 8.5 Reflecting the strong traditions of caring for members of the family among Gypsy people, 32% of those in housing, and 30% of those on private sites stated that they or a member of their households acted in a caring role. Numbers were slightly lower on the local authority sites (25%).

Location, Annex 3 Row 6

- 8.6 There was a strong geographical concentration of people we interviewed in Wisbech and the surrounding villages like Elm, Friday Bridge, Murrow and Wisbech St Mary. Of those interviewed 79% of local authority site residents, 74% of those on private sites and 73% of housed Travellers were in Wisbech and neighbourhood. The other respondents principally lived in and around the other towns and major villages in Fenland: on the local authority site in Chatteris; on private sites particularly in and around March, Wimblington and Doddington; and in housing particularly in and around Chatteris, Manea, March, Wimblington and Doddington.

Household Size, Age Structure, and Time in Accommodation, Annex 3 Rows 7-10

- 8.7 Average household size was smaller on the Council sites, 3.15 people, compared with 3.79 in housing and 3.86 on private sites.
- 8.8 The local authority sites were characterised by: a higher proportion of older people, 17% 46 - 59 and 11% 60 plus; a higher proportion of small households, 21% 1 person and 33% 2 person; and many people who had been on the sites a long time, 31% for more than ten years. There were also a lot of children on the local authority sites: 34% under 10 and 20% 11 to 18; and many families who had not been on the sites long, 33% for under a year. This suggests people on the local authority sites tended to fall into two categories, older people who have been resident a long time, and people with young children who have recently moved onto the sites.
- 8.9 The private sites were characterised by: a relatively large number of children, 32% under 10; significant numbers of medium to large families, 19% 5 and 21% 6 person; and significant numbers who had not been on the sites long: 21% less than a year and 40% 1 to 5 years. At the same time 21% had been there at least 10 years.
- 8.10 There were fewer children in housing, 19% under 10; fewer older people, only 5% over 60; and more young and middle-aged adults, 21% 19 to 30 and 20% 31 to 45. A significant number had been in housing a considerable period: 37% 5 to 10 years, and 22% for at least 10 years.

Where People Previously Lived, Annex 3 Row 11

- 8.11 In regard to where people had previously lived, the responses from people on the local authority and private sites were similar. For both there was an emphasis on local connections, 31% came from Fenland in both cases, rather more from elsewhere in Cambridgeshire for the local authority sites, 15% compared with 7% on private sites. The rest, 57% for the local authority sites and 61% for private sites had previously lived elsewhere in the UK, including nomadic or not stated. For more detail see Annex 3 Row 11.
- 8.12 The position for people in housing was different. Only 7% were from Fenland, 20% were from Cambridge, Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, and 63% from elsewhere, including nomadic or not stated, including a strikingly high 36% who had previously lived in London and the South-East. This may represent Gypsy people choosing to leave, or being forced out of areas with particularly high land prices and planning constraints which make it difficult for Travellers to obtain planning permission, and moving to housing in Fenland.
- 8.13 Interviewees identified both the pressures for Travellers to move to Fenland from other areas, and the pull factors to move to Fenland:
- 'We had to buy a bit of land as we were forced off the site in --- when the council sold it off.'*
- 'We came from Yorkshire when my eldest got married and his wife was having a bad time with her first baby and her mum could not help so we talked to the other children and all agreed, so we came here. We both grew up coming to the Fens for the fruit picking, so it was like coming home to us.'*
- 'Accommodation is going to become even more scarce, especially sites/stopping places/temporary stopovers/pitches/land, as prices will rise even here in Fenland sooner or later. I have been on the roads for years, been about all over the Country, but settled here. It is OK - a lot of Travellers are moving this way, driven out of London and big cities, land more affordable, but road connections is not as good as other areas, but it is better. Fenland has always been a place linked with Travellers and Gypsies. It was good for work. Then people moved as property maintenance was less viable work, but now Gypsy and Travellers are settling; they are working in all sorts of jobs, so I living here is as good as anywhere. Some will move away again, but more and more are settling here.'*

Tenure, Over-crowding and Dislike of Bricks and Mortar Housing, Annex 3 Rows 12 – 14

- 8.14 In terms of tenure, all of those on the local authority sites were renting.
- 8.15 A substantial 21% of people in housing were owner-occupiers. The rest were renting, but in most cases, it was unclear whether they were in social housing or were renting privately.
- 8.16 Ownership of private sites was much higher. 59% of people indicated they were owner-occupiers, 36% were living with or renting from family, and only 6% were renting privately. The situation in Fenland differs from some other areas where a significant proportion of private sites are bigger with pitches sub-let to other Gypsies. The Fenland situation where much of the supply is of smaller family-owned sites reflects the preference of many Gypsies and Travellers for owner occupied sites. Owner occupied sites give people security over their accommodation, and mean they are able to pass the property on to their children, both of which are important to many Gypsies.
- 8.17 23% of people on the Local Authority sites and 20% of those in housing stated that they felt over-crowded. In both cases the numbers correlate well with the percentages of households with 6 or more members.
- 8.18 Perceptions of over-crowding were much lower at 11% on the private sites. This may reflect the fact that pitches on private sites tend to be larger and that on their own land, people can respond to overcrowding by bringing on another touring caravan or upgrading a mobile for a larger model.
- 8.19 Expressions of dislike or distrust of living in bricks and mortar housing was higher on the local authority sites (33%) and private sites (22%), but was still significant among people in housing, 12%, and numerically this was a large group – 21 households. These figures reflect responses where at least one person in a household expressed or was reported to have reservations about living in housing. In practice, there were many cases where attitudes differed within a household.

Attitudes to living in Housing and on Sites

- 8.20 People expressed strong views about the relative merits of housing and living on sites. Many had experienced both. Some found housing claustrophobic or missed the sociability of the sites:

'We tried a house, nearly sent me mad, I won't even go in a chalet, I like to think I can move away tomorrow if I wanted.'

'I went into a house once and had to move out. I could not stand being enclosed in four walls. My wife did not mind, but for me it would be better back on the roadside.'

'I'm lonely in this house. I miss the mornings on the site when all the women are doing the place up and shouting at each other.'

'I was born and brought up in bricks and mortar but would never go back; so much freedom living in a chalet in your own place; it is so confined in a house with no close neighbours. Everyone is a stranger; Travellers always say hello and chat, and I feel much better mentally after moving here.'

- 8.21 Others saw the advantages of bricks and mortar:

'I don't like the house, but I look after my old dad who lives nearby in a bungalow so it's best.'

'At first, we were a bit like will we like it being in a house, but now we love it here, I and the little one go up here to a group and I have a chat whilst all the children play, he joined the darts team at the pub. We were talking the other night and neither of us wanted to go back to a Trailer.'

'It's easy to look back and when you were all pulled up and the sun was shining, but the reality was you were pulled up on some old layby not knowing when you were going to get the Police down to move you on and up to your eyes in mud.'

- 8.22 Compared with other areas of the country where Travellers in housing report isolation among non-Gypsies, there are streets in Fenland where many of the residents are Travellers:

'I like the house, the children like the school, the neighbours are alright and there are other travellers in the houses around here, and that's important to me and a lot of us. I suppose that for years we have lived together when doing the fieldwork but that's not happening. I don't like the council sites and we don't have the money to own our place now, so the house is a good way.'

- 8.23 There were families where the husband and wife had different views, with more of the women tending to favour housing, and more of the men living in caravans and travelling:

'We been here a few years now but still keep saying we just trying it out, I think saying that gives us options because we're not saying we're staying or leaving we could do with a bigger place and my husband's not happy, If he had his way we'd be up in that layby just up here going off for work and coming back.... All our families kept saying to us was that we would miss being on the site. But I tell you what, I don't mind that now we're in a house all the people living around me don't know every single thing we do'

Land and Planning, Annex 3 Row 15

- 8.24 There were marked differences in how people answered the question had they tried to get land and planning permission. 82% of local authority site residents had not, 7% did not reply, and only 3% said yes, with 5% indicating they were planning to. Housed residents were similar to local authority residents. 66% had not tried to buy land or get permission, 3% did not reply, 9% had tried, 19% had tried but had sold the land, and 2% indicated they were planning to buy land and get permission.
- 8.25 The situation on private site was different. 39% had bought land and sought planning permission, 3% had tried, but it unsuccessfully, 16% stated that their family had got permission, or they had been left the land, 9% had bought land with permission, and 1% were planning to.
- 8.26 Underlying these responses are a range of factors. People move between the different accommodation options according to their circumstances at different stages of their lives. While some people prefer housing, others hate it. For many, perhaps most people, the preference is for private sites under their ownership and control, and that is the preferred option, whether or not they follow a nomadic habit of life. However, while many aspire to live on private sites, for many that is not achievable.
- 'We used to travel about, but now people want to get a bit of ground and just live there in peace. We are old and need to have the safety of a permanent home, and company, we have that here' (private site resident).*

'We moved from my family's place in --- as his parents said we could have their yard if we agreed to care for them when they were older' (private site resident).

'We have moved around this area since we have been together, been on sites (mostly Traveller owned, in houses and back out again) and lived roadside. We moved on here because his cousin owns it, and it gives me a chance to put the children in school.' (private site resident)

'We were on the roadside at first when we married, then moved onto a Traveller man's yard, but the rent was too much, so we found a privately rented house where we could claim housing benefits to help pay the rent. We hated it; children hated it, so we moved off back onto the roadside. We have bought several places in the past, but all failed to get passed. We bought this place, and only us so put the chalet on and have been here since' (private site resident)

- 8.27 Land with and without planning permission changes hands within the community. Some are content to live in housing and to rent out the land they own:

'We did buy some land and still have it. We rent it out and it gives us a bit of money' (housed resident).

- 8.28 While the preference of many, perhaps most, Travellers is for private sites, the costs of seeking planning permission and the perception that planning decisions are random and based on discrimination, are barriers:

'Planning is hard to get, and not many good planners, especially those for Travellers who cannot read and do not understand legal stuff, makes it even more difficult' (private site resident).

'We have never had the money to buy a place with permission, and buying any bit of ground is risky, could leave you with nothing' (Council site resident).

- 8.29 We would suggest that the fact that few on the local authority sites have been involved in land acquisition and planning may be an indicator that they tend to be a poorer group.

- 8.30 People on private sites were generally the most content. They experience the least over-crowding, and that many of them have been involved in land

acquisition and seeking planning permission, suggests they have more resources than local authority site residents and housed Travellers.

- 8.31 The residents of housing are more diverse. Many are content, others are not. A significant number commented about the cost of land and planning being the barrier, which made them choose housing:

'The trouble with buying land and getting a licence to live on it is alright all the time things are going well, but when they start with the meeting or that meeting saying they don't want you there, then we think why bother we're alright in this house' (housed resident).

'We don't have land and could never afford it, but if we could have done, we would have. I think any of us (GRT) would want that but only a few can do that because only a few have the money' (housed resident).

Travelling and Work, Annex 3 Row 16

- 8.32 A higher proportion of people on sites stated that they travelled, by which Gypsy people generally understand to mean to travel for work. For people on private sites 50% travelled for reasons including work, 3% for other reasons, and 47% did not travel or did not reply. For the local authority sites 46% travelled for reasons including work, 5% for other reasons, and 49% did not travel or did not reply. The position for housed residents was significantly different: 9% indicated that they travelled for reasons including work, 26% for other reasons, and 65% did not travel or did not reply.

- 8.33 In terms of the work people do while travelling, the main activities mentioned were: tree work; roofing; jet washing, driveways, fencing; property maintenance and decorating, trading at fairs and car-boot sales; and *'whatever we can pick up'*. There was an emphasis on working as part of the family:
- 'I help the boys out a bit in the summer.'*

- 8.34 At the same time, some people are doing non-traditional work:
- 'I work in a care home as a cleaner; my husband is a gardener at the same care home'* (private site resident);
- 'We love being in the house, it's better than the place we had in For us, we got jobs here. It's the life we want. We do still have the Trailer but are thinking of selling it'* (housed resident).

Gypsy and Traveller Status for Planning, Annex 3 Rows 17 & 18

- 8.35 Between December 2023 and December 2024 the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites definition of Gypsy and Traveller required establishing whether someone lives a nomadic life in the sense of travelling for a proportion of the time for purposes which include economic activity. For people not currently following such a way of life the definition involved considering whether they previously lived in such a way, the reasons for giving up that way of life, and their future intentions.
- 8.36 Based on the 2023 definition, we assessed 22 of those interviewed on the social rented sites (56%), 43 on the private sites (61%), and 40 in housing (23%) as following a nomadic habit of life, Annex 3 Row 17. The others: 39% on private sites, 44% on social rented sites, and 77% in housing either did not have Gypsy status, or did not provide adequate information for us to conclude they retained a nomadic habit of life.
- 8.37 As explained at paras 6.21 and 6.22, of those we had identified as not following a nomadic habit of life under the December 2023 definition, if they were currently living in caravans, we treated them as meeting the December 2024 definition. This approach was adopted because, without further detailed interviews, since they were occupying caravans it would be difficult to claim they did not have a cultural tradition of nomadism or caravan living. That meant that we identified 100% of those on the local authority and private sites as meeting the new definition, Annex 3 Row 17.
- 8.38 As explained at para 6.23, in regard to Gypsies and Travellers living in housing who did not meet the 2023 definition, we did not treat them as meeting the new definition just because they indicated a preference for site dwelling. Rather, we made a judgement on whether they came within the definition based on such factors as whether they kept a caravan on the drive, and previous caravan dwelling. On the basis, we found that 54 households in housing (31%) met the definition, whereas 119 (69%) either did not have Gypsy status, or did not provide adequate information to conclude they retained a cultural tradition of nomadism or living in a caravan, Annex 3 Row 18.

Transit Accommodation, Annex 3 Row 21¹⁷

- 8.40 Even though Fenland is the only district in Cambridgeshire which provides a transit site, among those interviewed there was wide-spread acknowledgement of the need for more transit accommodation, which was recognised by 20% of people in housing, 41% of those on the Council sites and 30% on private sites. The issue figured significantly in interview responses:

'I have two youngsters and an older son who will needs a pitch. Only allowed 2 trailers and it means we are overcrowded.... My son would move onto a transit site if there was one, as he is getting married.'

'It is a good idea to have one, as I think there are some families who would travel more if these types of sites were available.'

'We have to go to holiday parks, there are no transit sites about. Where do they expect people to pull? My family had to get where they could when I was ill a couple of years back, it is needed.'

- 8.41 The responses do not provide the evidence for a specific target for the number of transit pitches required. Rather, a way forward on transit provision is suggested at paras 10.10 and 10.11.

¹⁷ Annex 4 provides definitions of Transit Sites and Temporary Stopping Places.

9. Need for Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers

- 9.1 A primary purpose of this report is to assess the need for permanent and transit pitch accommodation from Gypsies and Travellers who meet the definition of gypsies and travellers in Annex 1 to Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024.
- 9.2 Annex 1 to Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024 defines Gypsies and Travellers as:
'Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.' persons of nomadic habit of life'.
At paras 2.7 – 2.12, and 3.9 – 3.14 above we summarise what that means and how the definition has changed in recent years.
- 9.3 Annex 1 to Planning Policy for Traveller Sites defines pitch as a 'pitch' on a 'gypsy and traveller site'. Annex 4 gives further consideration to what is meant by a pitch and the type of accommodation it may provide.
- 9.4 Although the survey work was carried out on the basis of the definition of Gypsies and Travellers in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, August 2015, as amended December 2023, as explained at paras 6.21 – 6.23 we have been able to review the findings so the report provides an assessment of the need for accommodation based on the revised definition in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024.
- 9.5 The interviews with Gypsies and Travellers were the primary source of information used to develop the assessments of needs, together with information from such other sources as census information, caravan counts and waiting lists.
- 9.6 The report provides assessments of need by Gypsies and Travellers for pitch accommodation over three time periods:

- immediate needs for pitches for the first five years, 2024/25 to 2028/29; and
- medium term needs, 2029/30 to 2033/34
- longer terms needs, 2034/35 to 2038/39

9.7 The assessments involve a three-step process:

- Step 1, Table 3 identifies net need for accommodation for the five years, 2024/25 to 2028/29 based on those we interviewed, and other available sources of information;
- Step 2, Table 4 uses the results from those we interviewed to estimate net need from the whole population of Gypsies and Travellers in Fenland, 2024/25 to 2028/29; and
- Step 3, Table 5 provides an assessment of need for additional pitches for the 10 years 2029/30 to 2038/39, divided into two five-year periods of a medium term and longer term.

9.8 Based on the interviews and other sources of information, Tables 3 and 4 identify **gross need** for pitches, 2024/25 to 2028/29 from Gypsies and Travellers who met the December 2024 definition from the following sources:

- Households who are over-crowded or doubled up;
- Households who are staying temporarily on transit sites;
- Households in housing with an aversion to bricks and mortar housing;
- New household formation;
- Unauthorized Development;
- Residential caravan and touring caravan sites; and
- Migration to Fenland (including people living roadside).

9.9 Assessments of **net need for pitches** in Tables 3 and 4 are based on **gross need minus the expected supply** of existing pitches that become vacant and available for occupation from the following potential sources of supply:

- Vacated pitches on local authority sites;
- Vacated pitches on private sites; and
- Migration from Fenland.

9.10 Paragraphs 9.11 – 9.23 explain the basis on which we have identified each of the elements of need and supply.

Step 1 - Need for and Supply of Pitches 2024/25 to 2028/29 - Interviewed Population

Sources of Need

- 9.11 **Overcrowded or Doubled Up** Tables 3 and 4, rows 1, 5 and 8 were based on the interview responses, and identify households that were doubled up or considered themselves overcrowded and that were seeking pitch (as opposed to bricks and mortar) accommodation. To avoid double-counting it does not include cases where the overcrowding would be addressed by the older children forming a new household and occupying a pitch.
- 9.12 **New household formation** Tables 3 and 4, rows 2, 6 and 10 were based on interview responses to the questions about whether members of the household will need accommodation within the next five years. In some cases, we discounted what they said, based on the young age of the children they were referring to. We multiplied the number of such expressions of need to develop new households by 0.5 on the basis that new households will generally be created by two individuals coming together. While many Gypsies and Travellers marry young, this approach is likely to overestimate household creation because not everyone will form new households when they are young in this way. For that reason, we have followed the approach of the Cambridge Sub-Regional GTANA, 2011 (Step 'e', page 25) and the Fenland GTANA Update, 2013 (page 17) by reducing the figure for such households by 10% because of some young people not forming a family.
- 9.13 We looked carefully at expressions of need for pitch accommodation from young people in housing. We took account of such factors as travelling for work, experience of caravan dwelling, applying to the waiting list for a pitch, and establishing whether the indication was from the young people themselves, and not just their parents, before including them within need for pitches.
- 9.14 **From Transit Accommodation** Tables 3 and 4, rows 3 relate to households seeking permanent pitches who were staying on transit pitches for a temporary period and seeking permanent pitch accommodation.

- 9.15 **Aversion to Bricks and Mortar** Tables 3 and 4, rows 9 are taken from the interview responses, and consist of households that were seeking to move from housing to pitch accommodation because of an aversion to living in bricks and mortar housing. In a number of cases people expressed ambivalent attitudes about accommodation in housing, or there were differences within couples. We have made a judgment in such cases and only included households where there was an unambiguous indication of needing to move out of housing to a pitch because of intolerance of bricks and mortar. Where it was a young person in need who expressed aversion, their needs were included under new household formation.
- 9.16 **Unauthorized Development** Tables 3 and 4, rows 13: We have included numbers of caravans from the average of the last six caravan counts (January 2022 to July 2024) that represent either unauthorized encampments or non-tolerated unauthorized development. We have not included tolerated unauthorized development in the assessment of need. This approach is justified in Fenland on the basis the Council has tolerated a proportion of unauthorized development, and because many such sites are beyond the period when enforcement action can be taken against them.
- 9.17 **Residential Caravan and Touring Caravan Sites** Tables 3 and 4, rows 14: The interviews with 4 residents of residential caravan sites and 3 residents of touring caravan sites identified a current need for 2 permanent pitches. Others interviewed were seeking housing, or in the case of some residential site occupants, were content with their accommodation.
- 9.18 **Migration to Fenland**, Tables 3 and 4, rows 15: Comments from stakeholders and from Traveller interviewed stressed the continuing demand to move to Fenland. However, getting firm evidence is difficult. We identified need from two households through interviews with close family members resident on the local authority sites but where the family's existing pitch was already fully occupied, which meant those households could not be accommodated. Information from the managers of the local authority sites about the register of applicants for pitches in July 2024 identified a desire to move to Fenland from 6 households from outside Fenland (2 from Peterborough and 4 from outside Cambridgeshire) together with 2 living

roadside with no address provided. We have taken a pragmatic approach. We have not included those with addresses outside Fenland on the basis that they should be included in the needs assessment for the area where they are resident, and because such people may be on a number of waiting lists. However, we have included the two households who are living roadside.

Sources of Supply

- 9.19 The above sources suggest a gross need for 31 pitches, 2024/25 to 2028/29. The gross needs will be reduced by the supply from existing pitches that are likely to be vacated and become available for occupation.
- 9.20 **Pitches on Local Authority Sites** The manager of the local authority sites provided information that in the seven calendar years 2017 to 2023, 34 pitches were vacated and relet, an average of just under 5 per year. Of those who vacated pitches, the occupants of seven had died, one resident with dementia had moved in with family, two had gained planning permission for private pitches, six had moved to private sites, three had moved into houses, fourteen had left without providing information about where they were going, and one was evicted. Since it is likely that all these factors will remain relevant, we have made the assumption that five pitches a year, that is 25 for the five years 2024/25 to 2028/29, will be available through relets, Tables 3 and 4, rows 18.
- 9.21 **Pitches on Private Sites** While we have included an allowance for provision from the relets of vacated pitches on the local authority sites, we have not included an allowance for relets of pitches on private sites. This is for a number of reasons. Turnover from people moving house is not included as a source of supply in assessments of general housing needs. It does not add to provision and can be seen as merely a recognition that people move around. Where in the past, Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments have made assumptions about provision from turnover on private sites, that approach has been strongly criticised in appeal decisions. While some pitches may become available for reletting, this is likely to be at a low level. Families tend to manage accommodation on private sites as a resource within the family. If a pitch occupant dies, whereas on the local authority sites the pitch will become available, on private sites the pitches tend to be retained within

the family. A pitch may be earmarked for a son or daughter and lent or rented out to friends or relatives until required by the family. Similarly, if a pitch becomes available, it may be offered to family members moving to, or back to Fenland, in which case it would represent migration to Fenland.

9.22 **Migration from Fenland** We have not identified any intention to move from Fenland, which would add to the supply of pitches. Through the interviews we identified four households on local authority sites and two in housing who expressed a clear intention to move elsewhere from Fenland. The housed families will not free up pitch accommodation. On the basis that the availability of those pitches was already accounted for in the assumption about pitch turnover on local authority sites, assuming that those families will free up pitches on the local authority sites would lead to double counting.

9.23 This means that the only likely source of supply is the 5 pitches a year or 25 pitches 2024/25 – 2028/29 through turnover on the local authority sites. Compared with the gross need for 31 pitches, Table 3, row 17, there will be a net need for 6 pitches 2024/25 – 2028/29 from the interviewed population, Table 3 row 19.

Table 3: Step 1 - Need for and Supply of Pitches 2024/25 to 2028/29
- Interviewed Population

		Pitch needs
	Local Authority Sites	
1.	Overcrowded or doubled up	1
2.	New household formation	8 x 0.5 x 0.9 = 3.6
3.	From transit accommodation	4
4.	Total local authority sites	8.6 pitches
	Private Sites	
5.	Overcrowded or doubled up	1
6.	New household formation	11 x 0.5 x 0.9 = 5.0
7.	Total private sites	6 pitches
	Housed Travellers	
8.	Overcrowded or doubled up	2
9.	Aversion to bricks & mortar	2
10.	New household formation	12 x 0.5 x 0.9 = 5.4
12.	Total housed Travellers	9.4 pitches
	Other sources of need	
13.	Unauthorized Development	1
14.	Residential Caravan and Touring Caravan Sites	2
15.	Migration to Fenland	2
16.	People living roadside	2
17.	Total need from other sources	7 pitches
17.	Gross Total need	8.6 + 6 + 9.4 + 7 = 31 pitches
18.	Supply from Relets of Vacated Pitches (5 Pitches a Year on the Local Authority Sites)	25 pitches
19.	Net Need (Gross Need minus Supply from Relets)	31 - 25 = 6 pitches

Step 2 - Calculated Need for Pitches 2024/25 to 2028/29 - Whole Gypsy and Traveller Population

- 9.24 We have used the assessments of need for pitches, 2024/25 to 2028/29 from the interviewed population as the basis from which to develop estimates of the level of need from the whole Gypsy and Traveller population. We can do this with respect to those in housing, and on local authority and private sites because the samples interviewed were large enough to provide appropriately accurate estimates about the need from the whole of that community, if we know the total size of that community and the number of pitches they occupy.

Pitch Numbers in Fenland

- 9.25 There are 72 pitches on the local authority sites, 64 on the five sites managed directly by the local authority, and 8 (six transit and two permanent) on a site which is managed separately.
- 9.26 For reasons of confidentiality, we were not provided with detailed information about numbers and addresses of private pitches. We assessed the numbers of such pitches from a combination of information about planning applications and appeals and from aerial photographs on the Google Maps, Google Earth Pro and Grid Reference Finder websites. In this way we identified 184 pitches but believe this may be an underestimate. Reflecting this uncertainty, we approached the issue through the caravan counts.
- 9.27 Based on the six most recent counts (January 2022 to July 2024) there was an average of 417 caravans on either authorised private or unauthorised tolerated pitches. Based on an average of 1.7 caravans per pitch¹⁸ this gives the equivalent of 245 pitches.

¹⁸ Home and Greenfields in 2006 found an average of 1.7 caravans per pitch. That 1.7 is a figure of an appropriate scale is confirmed by such studies as: 1.3 in Cornwall (2015) (<https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1255&context=sc-research>); 1.7 in Sevenoaks (2012) (<https://salford-repository.worktribe.com/preview/1495630/FINAL%20report%20Sevenoaks%20GTAA%20March%202012.pdf>); and 1.6 in Somerset (2011) by Jo Richardson and based on Niner (2009) (<https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/623499/1/Somerset%20GTAA%202010>).

The Size of Fenland's Gypsy and Traveller Population

9.28 467 out of 95,262 people in Fenland in the 2011 census (0.49%) chose to identify as White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller, and 582 out of 100,471 in the 2021 Census (0.58%). For the reasons at para 4.3 these numbers are believed to underestimate the Gypsy population and other information confirms that the real numbers are likely to be much higher.

9.29 In the 2006 Cambridgeshire GTANA Home and Greenfields estimated the Gypsy and Traveller population as **2,851** in 2005. Their estimate was based on the interpretation of education data.

9.30 We have estimated Fenland's 2024 Gypsy and Traveller population as **3,155**. We arrived at this figure as follows:

- In our survey the 39 local authority pitches were occupied by 123 people. Given there are 72 local authority pitches that suggests the population on the LA sites is $72 / 39 \times 123 = \mathbf{227}$;
- 245 private pitches (the basis of that figure is explained at para 9.28), and average household size from our survey of 3.86, gives a population of **945** on private sites;
- Allowing for **14** people on the known residential caravan sites and **13** on touring caravan sites;
- Together $227 + 945 + 14 + 13$ gives a total of 1,199 people living in caravans on sites;
- But we know from the 2021 Census that 62% of G&Ts in Fenland are living in housing; ¹⁹
- If we then assume that the 1,199 living on sites represent 38% of the whole population that suggests a total population of $100 / 38 \times 1,199 = \mathbf{3,155}$; and
- On the basis of our survey finding of average household size of 3.79 1,956 residents in housing would equate to 516 households.

9.31 Relative to the Home and Greenfields population figure of 2,851 for 2005, the estimated 2024 figure of 3,155 is of a similar scale, but possibly too low. For

¹⁹ 62% in housing is a credible figure for Fenland, given that the national figure is 68%, and that is an average figure which includes urban areas and areas of Green Belt and high land value where developing sites is more challenging than in Fenland.

instance, based on the 1.75% annual growth in households at para 9.41, Home and Greenfield's figure of 2,851 in 2005 would be 3,763 in 2021 and 3,964 in 2024. Among the reasons for believing the figure of 3,155 may be too low are that this calculation is based on the six last caravan counts, which we believe may be too low given that there are many small private sites, or sites in other uses on which caravans are sited, including land to the rear of individual residential properties, which may not be included.

- 9.32 To summarise: we have developed an estimate for the total Gypsy and Traveller population in 2024 of 3,155 of which:
- 227 (7%) are on local authority sites, made up of 72 households at an average household size of 3.15;
 - 945 (30%) are on private sites, made up of 245 households at an average of household size of 3.86; and
 - 1,965 (62%) are in housing, consisting of some 516 households at an average of household size of 3.79.
- 9.33 By multiplying the results from the interviews by the total numbers of households in para 9.31 (72 on local authority sites, 245 on private sites and 516 in housing) and dividing them by the numbers of households interviewed (39 for local authority sites, 70 for private sites and 173 for housing) we have developed assessments of whole population need, Table 4, rows 4, 7 and 12, that is for 16 pitches from those on local authority sites, 21 on private sites and 28 in housing.²⁰
- 9.34 The multipliers for local authority sites are therefore $8.6 \times 72/39 = 16$, for private sites $6 \times 245/70 = 21$, and for housing $9.4 \times 516/173 = 28$.
- 9.35 For unauthorized development, row 13 the figure is derived from the Caravan Counts and hence will not increase. In regard to need from Residential Caravan and Touring Caravan Sites, row 14, Migration to Fenland, row 15, and People Living Roadside, row 16, we do not have a robust basis to translate the information we have to generate figures for the whole Gypsy and

²⁰ In all cases we have rounded the resulting figures to the nearest whole number, so that for instance in Table 4, Row 4 we have calculated whole population need for the local authority sites as $8.6 \times 72/39 = 15.877$ to three decimal places, but we have recorded the result as 16.

Traveller population. For this reason, the Step 2 estimates do not include an allowance for increased needs from these sources.

- 9.36 Table 4 shows that the gross need for the whole Gypsy and Traveller population, 2024/25 to 2028/29, is for 72 pitches, 47 net.
- 9.37 Tables 3 and 4 provide information about the sources of the need for pitch accommodation. In Table 3, of the gross need for accommodation, 2024/25 to 2028/29, i.e. before factoring in the supply from relets, 8.6 of the need for 31 pitches (29%) was from the local authority sites, 6 (20%) was from private sites, 9.4 (31%) was from housed residents, and 7 (23%) was from other sources of need (unauthorized development, residential or touring caravan park, in-migration and people living roadside).
- 9.38 In Table 4, of the gross need for accommodation, 2024/25 to 2028/29, 16 of the need for 72 pitches (22%) was from the local authority sites, 21 (29%) was from private sites, 28 (39%) was from housed residents, and 7 (10%) was from other sources of need. This points to one of the conclusions of the current study. Much of the need for pitch accommodation is from housed residents. Of the 2024/25 to 2028/29 gross need, 39% of those needing pitch accommodation were from housing.

Table 4: Step 2 - Calculated Need for and Supply of Pitches 2024/25 to 2028/29 - Whole Gypsy and Traveller Population

		Step 1: Pitch needs, households meeting the PPfTS definition - interviewed population	Step 2: Pitch needs, households meeting the PPfTS definition, calculated - whole Gypsy and Traveller population
	Local Authority Sites		
1.	Overcrowded or doubled up	1	
2.	New household formation	$8 \times 0.5 \times 0.9 = 3.6$	
3.	From transit accommodation	4	
4.	Total local authority sites	8.6 pitches	16 pitches*
	Private Sites		
5.	Overcrowded or doubled up	1	
6.	New household formation	$11 \times 0.5 \times 0.9 = 5.0$	
7.	Total private sites	6 pitches	21 pitches*
	Housed Travellers		
8.	Overcrowded or doubled up	2	
9.	Aversion to bricks & mortar	2	
10.	New household formation	$12 \times 0.5 \times 0.9 = 5.4$	
12.	Total housed Travellers	9.4 pitches	28 pitches*
	Other sources of need		
13.	Unauthorized Development	1	1
14.	Residential Caravan or Touring Caravan Sites	2	2
15.	Migration to Fenland	2	2
16.	People living roadside	2	2
17.	Total need from other sources	7 pitches	7 pitches
17.	Gross Total Need	$8.6 + 6 + 9.4 + 7 = 31$ pitches	$16 + 21 + 28 + 7 = 72$ pitches
18.	Supply from vacated pitches (relets of 5 pitches a year on the local authority sites)	25	25
19.	Net Total need (Gross minus Supply from relets)	$31 - 25 = 6$ pitches	$72 - 25 = 47$ pitches

*See paras 9.33 and 9.34 for workings

Step 3 - Need for Pitches 2029/30 to 2038/39

- 9.39 From the assessment of needs for accommodation for the five years to 2028/29 we have developed a forecast of need for additional pitches in the subsequent 10 years.
- 9.40 On the basis of the need for a net additional 47 pitches, 2024/25 to 2028/29 if we assume that all those needs are met by 2028/29, there would be the equivalent of 364 residential pitches in Fenland in 2028/29.²¹
- 9.41 Meeting all current needs by 2028/29 would mean that subsequent needs would be restricted to additional needs arising through the growth in the numbers of households.²² The research team did not have the resources or expertise to undertake local population modelling. In these circumstances, we have made use of the Technical Note on Household Formation and Growth Rates produced by Opinion Research Service (ORS).²³
- 9.42 We discussed with ORS the applicability of their finding at para 19 of their technical note that *'the best available evidence suggests the net annual Gypsy and Traveller household growth rate is 1.50% per annum.'* The Technical Note makes clear that the growth rate may vary dependent on the age structure of the population. The 1.5% household growth figure that ORS generally favour is based on 36% of the population being under 18. In our interviews 42% of those we interviewed were under 18. On that basis we agreed with ORS's representative that it would be appropriate to assume a higher annual household growth rate of 1.75% per year.
- 9.43 Table 5 shows that on the basis of 1.75% annual growth in numbers of households, there would be a gross need for 33 additional pitches for the five years 2029/30 to 2033/34. This equates to a net need for 8 pitches, assuming the availability of 5 pitches a year through relets on the local authority sites.

²¹ That is 72 pitches on local authority sites, 245 on private sites and 47 pitches to meet needs to 2028/29.

²² In practice, sites may not be delivered at the rate required to provide 47 additional pitches by 2028/29. If this did occur, it would leave a higher number to be delivered in the years after 2028/29.

²³ Which is included, for instance, at Appendix G to the King's Lynn West Norfolk GTAA, ORS, June 2023

There would then be the need for a further 36 pitches gross, 11 net, in the years between 2034/35 and 2038/39, implying that the total number of pitches needed would be 383 in 2038/39.

Table 5: Need for Pitches - 2029/30 to 2038/39

Year	Total pitches	Total Pitches Needed - Gross	5 Year Increase-Gross	Total pitches Needed - Net	5 Year Increase - Net
2028/29	364				
2034/35		397	33 pitches	372	8 pitches
2038/39		433	36 pitches	383	11 pitches

9.44 We would stress that these assessments of longer-term needs involve more uncertainty than the assessments for the first five years. They are dependent on a number of assumptions, including the following:

- Provision of additional accommodation adequate to meet current needs being provided by 2028/29;
- No loss from the existing supply of Traveller sites to other types of accommodation;
- 5 pitches a year becoming available through relets on the local authority sites;
- 1.75% annual increase in numbers of households; and
- No net in-migration of Gypsies to Fenland (beyond that already factored into needs 2024/25 to 2028/29, para 9.17).

This suggests monitoring will be important, not least of the level of relets on the local authority sites.

Need for Housing

9.45 While not a requirement from the study, the responses to the interview questions provide information about need from Gypsies and Travellers for accommodation in bricks and mortar housing, see Annex 3, Row 20.

- 9.46 As well as need for pitches, those on the local authority sites identified a need for 3 bungalows or flats and 5 flats or houses, those on private sites identified a need for 6 houses or flats, and those in housing identified a need for 9 houses and a bungalow. Much of the need from local authority sites was from older residents wanting to move into warmer accommodation closer to town.
- 9.47 This brings out that the relationships between the different sources of accommodation and the Gypsy way of life are complex. The children of people living in houses are more likely to favour housing, but not all of them, and, just as some of those who continue to follow nomadic lives want housing, some of those who are not nomadic, want pitches.

10. Gypsies and Travellers: Policy Implications

- 10.1 Gypsies and Travellers are recognised as among the most prejudiced against and deprived communities in Britain.²⁴ While many in the settled community also suffer deprivation in various ways, without adequate accommodation it will be difficult to address the education, health, life expectancy and other disadvantages experienced by many Gypsies and Travellers.
- 10.2 Fenland has a good record in making provision for Gypsies and Travellers, and the accommodation situation for Gypsy people in Fenland is better than in many other areas. When funds were available for site provision, the Council was proactive in developing sites. Unlike many councils, it has provided a transit site, and planning permission has recently been granted for a privately provided transit site. There is a reasonable supply of local authority pitches, an active market in private site development, and a supply of social rented, privately rented and owner-occupied housing, which provides accommodation for many Gypsy people. While the quality of some of the private rented accommodation is not good and some people are unhappy in bricks and mortar, others are content with the homes they occupy. We also suspect the significant number of residential park home sites have an important role in providing accommodation.
- 10.3 However, the availability of land and accommodation in Fenland combined with the failure of many areas to make provision for Gypsies and Travelers generates demand for Travellers from other areas to move to Fenland, which adds to pressures on rent levels and land prices, makes it more difficult for local Travellers to compete for employment, and puts pressure on the Council to approve further planning permission for sites.

Local Plan Policy

- 10.4 In terms of Local Plan policy we would recommend:
- ensuring Gypsy and Traveller sites are not lost to other uses and are retained for that purpose. We would encourage the Council to consider

²⁴ See England's Most Deprived Groups: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, Equality and Human Rights Commission, March 2021⁶ and Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities, House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, March 2019

how appropriately worded conditions can reduce the risk of this occurring;

- including site allocations, which fully reflect the requirements of PPfTS policies 10a) and 10b);
- investigates options for additional and extended sites through future housing land availability assessments and as part of the development of the new Local Plan;
- including criteria-based policies which take a positive approach to proposals for small, self-provided private sites (which reflect the preference of many Gypsy people), and are more cautious about permitting large private sites, (where the risk of pitches being lost to non-Travellers can be greater); and
- recognising the role of residential park home sites in contributing to provision for Gypsy people.

10.5 A number of respondents stressed how expensive and onerous the planning application and appeal system can be for Gypsies, although similar complaints are made by the settled population. There is potential to reduce these costs by encouraging people to promote potential new private sites and extensions to existing sites through the Local Plan review call for sites, which would allow sites to be allocated through the Plan meaning the planning application process should be easier.

Local authority provision

10.6 Based on our findings, subject to the cost implications and negotiation with social housing providers, we would suggest that priorities in regard to the local authority sites should be less about significantly increasing the number of pitches but should focus on:

- Ensuring good quality maintenance;
- Developing an additional site, or reshaping existing ones with the objective of providing a small number of larger pitches which can accommodate large and extended families, thereby freeing up overcrowded pitches for others; and
- Enabling older site residents to move to bungalows or flats, thereby freeing up pitches for younger families.

- 10.7 When new social housing is developed, we can also see merit in developing a pilot scheme which responds to the comments from a housed Traveller we interviewed:

'I think that the government should look and see if some houses can be traveller-friendly, like making sure the toilet is well away from the kitchen, having a shed in the front garden where the men can work on cars, and make it so you can have family turn up and put the trailer (caravan) in the drive, things like that.'

Transit Accommodation

- 10.8 The availability of transit accommodation where people can stay for a time while travelling through or temporarily visiting an area is seen by Gypsy people as important for maintaining the nomadic way of life and their cultural identity. As indicated at para 8.40 and Annex 3, Row 21, among those interviewed, there was wide-spread acknowledgement of the need for more transit accommodation.
- 10.9 Transit accommodation can be provided in a range of ways, including through transit sites and negotiated stopping places, which are defined at Annex 4. Touring caravan sites which welcome Gypsies can also contribute.
- 10.10 Given that Fenland is the only district in Cambridgeshire that provides a transit site and that it has also recently granted planning permission for a privately provided 8 pitch transit site, at this stage we do not see the need for a target for transit pitches. However, we would recommend that the Council makes clear its support for transit accommodation by including policy in the Local Plan review, which is supportive of proposals for private transit sites. We would also encourage the Council to support people developing capacity within private sites in advance of family needs and using them as transit accommodation for friends and family in the interim. Such an approach can meet people's needs for places to stop and contribute to meeting transit needs.

- 10.11 Given the post-Covid fall in unauthorised encampment and the recognition by Cambridgeshire Highways that some of the roads in the Fens have wide verges where people can park for a limited time in the case of an emergency or the need for a short stopover, we do not see an urgent need for negotiated stopping place provision in Fenland.

11. Travelling Showpeople

- 11.1 Travelling Showpeople are a distinct community, who are nomadic in the sense of taking fair-ground rides and stalls to fairs and carnivals across the country. Their land requirements for plots and yards need to accommodate their needs to store and maintain equipment in addition to residential accommodation. Because of the size of some fairground equipment their land requirements can sometimes be extensive.
- 11.2 With the publication of the original version of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPfTS) in 2012 planning guidance on Travelling Showpeople, which had previously been addressed separately through C04/07, Planning for Travelling Showpeople, was included together with Gypsies and Travellers. Paragraphs 2.7 – 2.9 above summarise the planning policy requirements for Travelling Showpeople, including at para 2.9 how they are defined for planning purposes in the December 2024 revision of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites.
- 11.3 The Travelling Showpeople community in Fenland is small. There are more substantial communities in East Cambridgeshire. The Cambridgeshire GTANA of 2011 and the Fenland Update of 2013 both identified two active Travelling Showpeople families in Fenland. They indicated that no additional plots were required for additional plots in Fenland to 2031.
- 11.4 At the pilot stage of the current study we interviewed members of two families, who are based just outside of Fenland, and in the main study we interviewed members of the two families based in Fenland. They did not identify any current accommodation needs.

12. Boat Dwellers and Bargees

- 12.1 This study is the first time an assessment has been undertaken of the requirement under s.124 of the 2016 Housing and Planning Act to assess the need for accommodation for those in Fenland with need to live in a houseboat.

Waterways, Facilities and Boat Dwellers

- 12.2 Fenland is crossed by a network of rivers and watercourses. Those which are navigable are shown in the Middle Level Commissioners' map at Figure 1.

Among the most important of the navigable waterways are:

- the River Nene from the Wash through Wisbech which then links to Peterborough, Northampton and beyond;
- the navigable waterways managed by the Middle Level Commissioners, which include the Twenty Foot River, the Old River Nene and Whittlesey Dyke.

To the east of Fenland at Salter's Lode Lock, boats from the River Nene and Middle Level Commissioners' system can access the Rivers Great Ouse and Cam, and from there can travel to Ely, King's Lynn, Cambridge and beyond.

- 12.3 While, reflecting the area's agricultural importance, the waterways in the Fens were developed and primarily function for land drainage, flood protection and irrigation, they also have significant roles for leisure and holiday boating, and for those living in boats on the waterways.
- 12.4 The Middle Level Commissioners are responsible for flood protection, drainage and navigation across a substantial area of the Fens. In their role as a Navigation Authority, they have responsibilities within bespoke legislation and also have byelaws to enable the regulation of the navigable waterways.
- 12.5 There is no approach in place to survey boat numbers across the Middle Level navigation, and boaters move in and out of the system regularly. However, a reasonable estimate is that there may be around 80 households living on boats in their area (most of which is in Fenland, but also extending into Huntingdonshire, Peterborough, and Kings Lynn West Norfolk). Of the 80 around 55 households are living in Fenland, with most of the rest in the Ramsey area of Huntingdonshire, focussed around Bill Fen Marina. The Commissioners distinguish between around 65 households who have well

maintained boats, licences, and insurance, and around 15 who they perceive as living more marginal lives on boats which may not be insured or properly river-worthy.

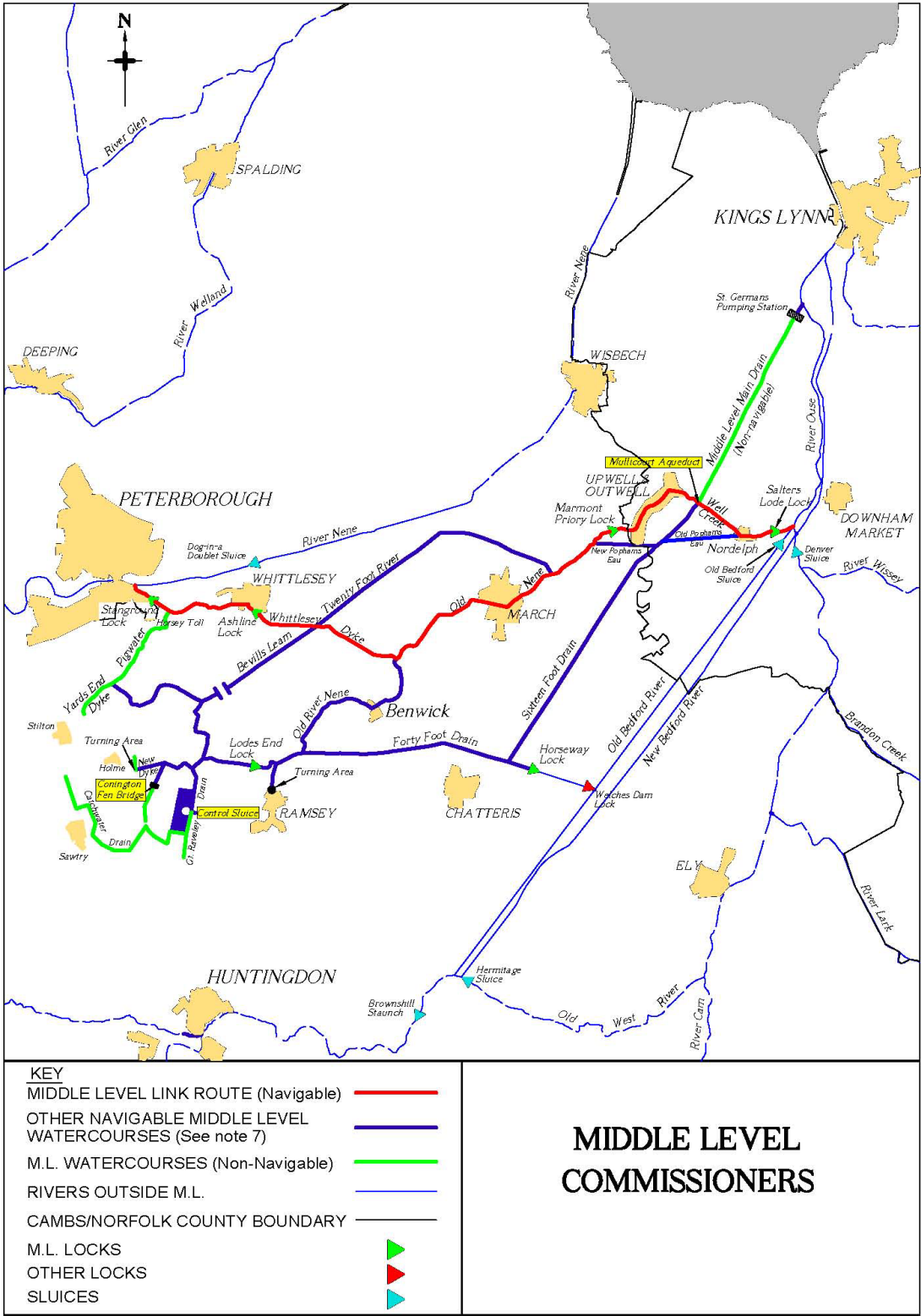


Figure 1, Middle Level Commissioners Navigation Map

- 12.6 Within Fenland, the town of March, with the Old Nene River running through the town centre, is particularly important for boat dwellers and recreational boaters. There is a substantial marina at Fox's boatyard on the outskirts of March to the west of the by-pass, and a smaller one four kilometres west of the town at Flood's Ferry. There are around ten private moorings on the river frontage of the Old Nene River to the west of the Isle of Ely Way / March By-pass, and a number of boats moored in unofficial locations along the river to the west of March. There are Fenland District Council owned public moorings in the vicinity of March town bridge, and former moorings within West End Park which have been closed by the Council because of bank failure. There are around eight privately rented moorings to the east of the railway bridge at Mallard Way, and around three - six boats moored unofficially at Creek Fen to the east of the town near the junction with the Twenty Foot River. A notable feature within March is the number of residential properties on the north side of the river, both east and west of the town bridge along Nene Parade and West End, which have river frontage and private moorings. We were told that a couple of these may provide residential moorings.
- 12.7 There are services for taking on fresh water, refuse disposal and for emptying toilet waste adjacent to March town bridge, at Fox's boatyard, and to the west of the town at Knight's Bridge Marina, Floods Ferry. People tied up at moorings in the town are also able to access the services and facilities in March town centre. The private moorings at Mallard Way provide water, electricity, a facility for emptying toilet waste, an amenity block with washing machines, and wheely bins for the tenants.
- 12.8 Within Fenland, services for boat users outside of the March area are limited. However, there are public freshwater points in Whittlesey and on Well Creek, with plans being developed for additional points at Stanground and Slaters Lode Lock.

Stakeholder Interviews

- 12.9 We spoke to or received interview responses from representatives of the Middle Level Commissioners, the two marinas in Fenland, the owner of the private moorings at Mallard Way, the Environment Agency, the National Bargee Travellers Association, and the FDC officer responsible for Leisure Services. Officers in adjoining council areas also confirmed that there was

more authorised residential occupation of the marinas in their areas than is the case in Fenland.

- 12.10 There was general agreement that there was a shortage of moorings, particularly of well managed residential moorings:
‘Numbers have increased because of high housing costs and because of people are reassessing their ways of life post Covid.’
‘Most people are attracted to boat life to avoid expense, with house prices rising and there are many travelling people on boats, and more and more people living on the river. Another boatyard would be good, potentially socially rented.’
‘The number of unauthorised moorings has increased as people have been forced onto boats though family breakdown and economic hardship that are not fit for purpose, and then they are unable to comply with licencing and mooring requirements. Some of these boats have serious safety issues.’
‘Lots of people travel around Fenland, pitching up where they can and staying on unregistered parts of the river.’
- 12.11 Representatives of Fox’s boatyard confirmed that their planning permission does not allow for residential use. In practice people can stay 10 months a year, while travelling for two months. The representative of Knight’s Bridge Marina at Flood’s Farm stressed the leisure focus of their business.
- 12.12 Much of the demand is for river moorings, rather than marinas. This is because of the cost of the marinas and because marinas are experienced as congested and do not provide the quiet environment and water quality of the open river that attracts people to the river way of life.
- 12.13 New river moorings (and alterations or renewal of existing) and associated bankside infrastructure needs the formal consent from the Middle Level Commissioners to ensure there is no detriment to the efficient operation of the Middle Level drainage and flood protection system and the environment.
- 12.14 The National Bargee Travellers Association expressed the views that:
‘Boat dwellers are seen like Gypsies’;
[Within Fenland] *‘there is nowhere to moor, only a place where you can moor for 24 or 48 hours, and people are hounded out of those moorings’;* and

'What is needed are permanent moorings with planning consent for residential use for 10 months, and temporary moorings for 14 -56 days'.

12.15 On facilities we were told:

'Currently the only public and commercial pump-out locations for foul water on the network are both located in March. The only public fresh water points are in March. More widespread basic facilities across the network are required.'

Boat Dweller and Bargee Interviews

12.16 We interviewed thirteen boat dwelling households and a fourteenth who was in the process of doing up a boat, which he and his partner will move to, once it is fitted out. From the interviews, boat dwellers in Fenland tend to be either younger adults, or middle aged and retired, with fewer people in between. Of those we interviewed, six were aged between mid 20s and late 30s, two were late 30s to mid 50s, and six were mid 50s to 60s.

12.17 11 of the 14 households were couples, and three single males. One couple had a child, and another two children at secondary school.

12.18 Of the fourteen people interviewed, one woman was from a Romany Gypsy background and her partner from a bargee background. One woman had lived on a boat when she was young until her family moved into a house, and when she and her husband retired, they bought a boat and moved on to it. One man had lived on boats and used boats since childhood. One couple had lived on boats for 19 years.

12.19 Most, if not all, of the people had lived in housing at various times of their lives, including a couple who had moved from running a pub. One man had bought a boat because he could not afford to buy a house after his divorce. One couple commented:

'We moved into a barge from a house due to the high cost of rent, debt, and inability to heat our home. We live here permanently and find it is the only way to afford our home.'

12.20 One man was disabled, and he and his partner occupied a specially adapted boat. Four households contained people who identified health issues and two mental health issues. One person, who had lived on boats for many years, was looking to move into housing for health reasons and had approached the

Council about accommodation. Another couple stated that they could envisage a stage when they are older when they would want to move into housing. Another couple, who are moored along the river, envisaged that later they would need to move to a marina, or a bungalow in the country.

12.21 Of those we interviewed, two were based in Fox's Marina, six were moored on the river in the vicinity of Fox's Marina and the Middle Level Commissioners' office, one was moored on the river west of the town, two were at Mallard Way, two moored unofficially at Creek Fen, and one lived 'up river'.

12.22 Interviewees agreed that numbers wanting to live on the rivers had increased during and post Covid, and that numbers are continuing to grow. This was a reflection of the high costs of housing, but also the attractions of an alternative, more mobile way of life on the rivers in nature and the open air:

'Expense is the main factor for living on the river, but also peace and, tranquility.'

'Moving onto a barge saved me. I could not cope in the flat we lived in, and my mental health was suffering. Living on the water, I feel so much more relaxed and happy.'

'We live here and are pretty content. We travel only up the river in spring/summer, then free-stop to tie up where we can. We have solar panels, a gas cooker, and a wood burner, so we are reasonably self-sufficient.'

12.23 The shortage of residential moorings, and of moorings where people can tie up for more than 24 or 48 hours forces people to moor up where they are not supposed to.

: *'This is not about moving onto the water because you fancy a change, it's about preserving a life that has been around for generations.'*

'We did mainly tether upstream in winter, but found it hard to keep a low profile, and it is so hard to find good moorings anywhere, especially moorings that allow us to go away and return in the winter months.'

'Boat life is absolutely becoming more popular, and when people can't find a mooring, they resort to mooring illegally.'

12.24 There was support for more temporary moorings, for more residential moorings and for another boatyard, if possible, socially rented. Not everyone likes the marina. One man commented:

'I had 3 months at the boat yard and hated it, found it too cramped in, like sardines, nothing to look at, only other boats, and they charged a lot for what you get.'

12.25 As well as more moorings, there was a strong emphasis in people's comments on the need for better facilities. Generally, those with secure residential moorings, for instance at Mallard Way, were content, whereas life was more difficult for those without residential moorings. It is only in recent years that the Middle Level Commissioners have introduced charges for using their waterways. A number of people felt, given what they perceived as the high charges compared with other waterways, that the Commissioners were not providing appropriate good quality facilities for boaters. The Commissioners made a commitment within the passing of the Middle Level Act (2018) to ring-fence 25% of licence income and invest this in provision of facilities for boaters on the link route to meet Inland Waterways Association (IWA) standards.

12.26 The IWA's minimum standards for facilities are: water points, rubbish disposal points including recycling points, portable chemical toilet disposal points and electricity (shore power mains connection charging sites) at every 5 hours of cruising across most of the inland waterways system, including between waterways managed by neighbouring navigation authorities.

12.27 There is a need for better facilities for people without residential moorings or who cannot afford the marinas. Showers and washing machines were mentioned. Two interviewees complained about moorings in the town centre being covered by goose faeces, which is a health and safety issue, particularly in icy conditions. There was a recognition that the Middle Level Commissioners had removed a couple of unfit boats, but another derelict boat is blocking a needed mooring.

12.28 It is not an easy way of life, it involves significant costs, and like Gypsies and Travellers, the community is the subject of discrimination:

'We are looked down on.'

'I think like everything else, living on a boat is getting hard, all the trekking with wood for the fire, getting provisions on board and maintenance is hard work.... Winter time is bad as can be icy, slippery, muddy, and boat yards OK, but more about what they can earn than really care. Other boating holiday makers I

think see us as Water Travellers, we live here all the time, while they see it as a weekend retreat or holiday space.'

Boat Dwellers and Bargees: Conclusions and Policy Implications

12.29 High housing costs, together with people seeking an alternative way of life, are leading to increased demand to live on the rivers. For people able to cover the costs of boat acquisition, refurbishment, maintenance, and insurance, particularly for those with good practical maintenance skills, boat living can provide a way of living closer to nature and reducing housing costs. And accommodation provided in this way, can make a small contribution to addressing the housing crisis.

12.30 While there was a strong emphasis from both stakeholders and boat dwellers on the need for more moorings, the study does not suggest a specific target for additional pitches. There are a group of reasons for this:

- While there was one person from a bargee background, and a couple who had lived on boats for many years, by contrast with Gypsies and Travellers, most boat dwellers do not have a distinctive ethnic identity;
- Rather, people from a range of backgrounds are seeking to live on the waterways at different stages of their lives, and for a range of reasons;
- Some only choose to live on the waterways for a time. This is suggested by the way those interviewed tended to be either younger or of retirement age, with fewer in between; and
- On the basis, as we were told by a number of respondents, that the more moorings are provided, the more people will want to live in boats.

12.31 To support increased residential provision we would recommend a three-pronged approach: more flexible short / medium term moorings; more residential moorings; and enhanced facilities for those without secure moorings. Specifically, we would suggest that:

- consideration is given by the appropriate authorities to allow people to stay on transit moorings for longer periods. The National Bargee Travellers Association suggested for between 14 and 56 days;
- the Local Plan contains criteria-based policy for any new residential moorings and marinas;

- the Local Plan indicates it would not support marina development which is exclusively for leisure use, and would require proposals for new or extended marina development to include residential moorings;
- the Council reopens moorings along the West End Park frontage of the River Nene. This could start with a pilot scheme for the section where the moorings have been closed and could be gradually extended along the whole river frontage of the park, if successful,²⁵ ; and
- While many of them may be too narrow for residential moorings, we would recommend the Council considers how greater residential use of the moorings linked to the residential properties on the north side of the River Nene in March can be encouraged.

12.32 Within Fenland, given that the waterways mainly go through rural areas, it is probably correct for any residential provision to be located within or close to March, or other larger settlements such as Whittlesey, where people would be able to access boat services and other facilities.

12.33 In terms of facilities for boat dwellers, we would encourage the responsible authorities to consider how enhanced facilities, such as showers and washing machines, can be provided in March and Whittlesey and how the issue of keeping the town centre moorings clean can be addressed.

12.34 The proposed Fens Reservoir²⁶ between Chatteris, Doddington and Manea, provides an opportunity to provide improved and additional facilities. Construction of the reservoir could start in 2029 with the reservoir open to the public between 2039 and 2041. The emerging proposals include a possible site for a new marina, although details of the specific location, tenure, and delivery body have yet to be established. We would encourage the Council and Middle Level Commissioners to work with Anglian Water and the Cambridge Water Company to ensure the project provides additional and improved facilities for those wanting to live on boats, as well as for leisure boaters.

²⁵ A gentleman we spoke to in West Park made the point that overgrown vegetation currently restricts views of the river from within the park, and if the moorings were re-established, that the visibility of the river from within West Park would be enhanced.

²⁶ <https://fensreservoir.co.uk/>

Appendices

Annex 1: Stakeholder Organisations Interviewed or who Provided Written Responses

Traveller Health

Traveller Education

Guyhirn Light and Life Church (most of the congregation are Gypsies and Travellers)

Arc 4 Consultants

Peter Humphrey Associates, Planners

Rhochi Architecture and Design

Middle Level Commissioners

National Bargee Travellers Association

Floods Ferry Marina

Knightsbridge Marina

Borough Council of Kings Lynn West Norfolk

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways

Cambridgeshire County Council Traveller Education and Health

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Fenland District Council

Huntingdonshire District Council

Peterborough City Council

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Annex 2: Schedule of Questions for Gypsies and Travellers Living on Sites²⁷

Fenland District Council: Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Boat Dweller Accommodation Needs Assessment

Site
Family name
Date

Instructions to Interviewer:

- Put the questions in your own words, and in ways which the interviewee will understand.
- Record what people say.
- Skip questions which are clearly not relevant to the interviewee

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We have been asked by Fenland Council to prepare a Gypsy and Traveller Travelling Showpeople and Boat Dweller Accommodation Needs Assessment

The aim is to provide up to date information about people’s accommodation needs and help ensure enough accommodation is available for Gypsy people. To get good information we need to talk to as many people as we can.

Although up to date information will help, we cannot guarantee how much extra accommodation will be provided.

²⁷ There are related schedules of questions for: Gypsies and Travellers living in in bricks and mortar housing; Bargees and boat dwellers; Stakeholders; and Waterway stakeholders

You will not be able to tell who said what. The replies will only be used to make the case for more accommodation that meets the needs of travelling people in Fenland.

The interview will take up to 30 minutes.

1.2 Would it be OK if I recorded our interview? If not, I'm happy to take written notes.

1.3 How would you describe your family background or ethnicity?

2.0 **Thinking about your current accommodation**

2.1 Is this your main home? And if not, where is?

2.2 What accommodation have you got here?

Mobile homes -----; Touring caravans ----- ; Day rooms ----- ;
Other (please specify) -----.

(For mobile homes and touring caravans indicate how many - We will not pass this information to the Council in a way that they could identify the site.)

2.3 How long have you lived here?

2.4 Before you lived here, where did you live?

2.5 And why did you move here?

2.6 Have you ever lived in a house or flat? And would you want to live in a house or flat again?

2.7 And why did you leave?

2.8 Do you have enough space here for your family's needs?

Are you overcrowded?

- 2.9 What do you like about living here and what don't you like?
- 2.10 If there are things you don't like, how could it be improved?
- 2.11 Does anybody here need disabled friendly accommodation?

Only if it is a private site

- 2.12 Do your family own your pitch or do you rent it from someone else?
- 2.13 Does the site have planning permission? (We will not pass this information to the Council in a way that they could identify the site.)

3.0 Thinking about the people living on this pitch

- 3.1 Can you tell us about the people on your pitch and how they are related to you? We don't need to know their names.

It would be helpful to know roughly how old they are, and if they are in poor health or have a disability.

	Relation to respondent	Age: 0-10, 11-18, 19-30, 31–45, 46-59, 60+,	Sex M or F	Disabled or health issues (and any details?)
Person 1 (respondent)				
Person 2				
Person 3				
Person 4				
Person 5				
Person 6				
Person 7				
Person 8				
Person 9				

Person 10				
Person 11				

4.0 Thinking about your family’s future accommodation needs

- 4.1 Will you or your family need more accommodation in the next 5 years? Why is that?
- 4.2 How many different new homes will they need? And when would they need their own place?
- 4.3 And for each of them, what type of accommodation would they want: a place on a Council site, on a private site or a house?

And what would they need?

- 4.4 Have you ever tried to buy a site & not been able to?
Or tried to get planning permission for land & not been able to?
Why is that?

5.0 Thinking about travelling

- 5.1 Do any your family living here travel regularly? (By this we mean go away for a time to different places, mainly to find work, and not travelling on a daily basis.)
- 5.2 If so, who? *Interviewer, indicate one*

Men and boys All the family Other (please specify)

5.3 How much of the year are they away travelling?

5.4 Why do they travel? *Interviewer, indicate any that apply*

Finding work ----- Holidays ----- Visiting family -----
Visiting Fairs ----- Others (please specify) -----

5.5 If they travel to find work, what type of work do they do?

5.6 Have you or your family been moved on in the past year?

Only if they don't travel

5.7 If you or your family do not travel (for a period of time to find work), why is that? *Interviewer, indicate any that apply:*

Children at school ----- Poor health ----- Old age -----
We are settled now ----- Nowhere to stop ----- Difficult to get
work ----- Other (please specify) -----

5.8 If you or your family do not travel much, would you like to travel more in the future? And for what reason?

6.0 Anything Else?

6.1 Have you or your family had any problems in getting a good place to live?
Why was that?

6.2 Is there anything else you would like to say about accommodation problems for Gypsy people in the Fenland area?

Many thanks for talking to us. We hope this work will help make it easier to plan for the needs of Gypsy people.

Annex 3: Findings from the Gypsy and Traveller Interviews

1.		Local Authority Sites	Private Sites	Travellers in Housing	Residential Park Sites	Touring Caravan Sites
2.	Results based on:	39 interviews	70 interviews	173 completed interviews	4 interviews	3 interviews
3.	Gender	Female 26 (67%) Male 13 (33%)	Female 48 (69%) Male 22 (31%)	Female 152 (72%) Male 21 (28%)	Female 2 Male 2	Female 3
4.	Disability or health issues	16 (41%)	20 (29%)	55 (32%)	2	0
5.	Carer	10 (25%)	21 (30%)	56 (32%)		
6.	Where live	Wisbech & neighbourhood 31 (79%); Chatteris 8 (21%);	Wisbech & neighbourhood 52 (74%); Chatteris 2 (3%); Manea 1 (1%); March, Wimblington & Doddington 15 (21%).	Wisbech & neighbourhood 127 (70%); Chatteris 9 (5%); Manea 19 (11%); March, Wimblington & Doddington 16 (9%); Whittlesey 2 (1%).	Wisbech & neighbourhood 4 (100%)	Wisbech & neighbourhood 3 (100%)
7.	Household Size	1 8 (21%) 2 13 (33%) 3 2 (5%) 4 5 (13%) 5 6 (15%) 6 3 (8%) 7 1 (3%) 8+ 1 (3%)	1 11 (16%) 2 12 (17%) 3 7 (10%) 4 7 (10%) 5 13 (19%) 6 15 (21%) 7 2 (3%) 8+ 3 (4%)	1 11 (6%) 2 46 (27%) 3 28 (12%) 4 29 (17%) 5 28 (16%) 6 16 (9%) 7 7 (4%) 8+ 8 (5%)		

8.	Average Household Size	3.15	3.86 Overall 1,066 in 289 households – average 3.69 (includes caravan sites)	3.79 persons	1.75	3.66
9.	Age Structure	0-10 34 (27%) 11-18 24 (20%) 19-30 15 (12%) 31-45 15 (12%) 46-59 21 (17%) 60+ 14 (11%) 123 people	0-10 86 (32%) 11-18 43 (16%) 19-30 28 (10%) 31-45 52 (19%) 46-59 30 (11%) 60+ 31 (11%) 270 people	0-10 122 (19%) 11-18 137 (21%) 19-30 135 (21%) 31-45 131 (20%) 46-59 95 (14%) 60+ 35 (5%) 655 people	0-10 1 31-45 3 46-59 2 60+ 1 7 people	0-10 4 11-18 1 19-30 3 31-45 1 46-59 2 12 people
10.	How long have you lived here?	Under 1 year 13 (33%) 1-5 years 9 (23%) 5-10 years 2 (5%) 10+ years 12 (31%) Not stated 3 (8%)	Under 1 year 15 (21%) 1-5 years 28 (40%) 5-10 years 6 (9%) 10+ years 15 (21%) Not stated 6 (9%)	Under 1 year 6 (3%) 1-5 years 63 (36%) 5-10 years 64 (37%) 10 years + 38 (22%) Not stated 2 (1%)		
11.	Where lived before?	Fenland 12 (31%); Cambridge, Cambs & P'boro 6 (15%); Lincs, Norfolk, Suffolk 3 (8%); London & South East 5 (13%); Beds, Berks, Bucks, Oxfordshire 4 (10%); Rest of UK 7 (18%); Nomadic 2 (5%);	Fenland 22 (31%); Cambridge, Cambs & P'boro 5 (7%); Lincs, Norfolk, Suffolk 8 (11%); London & South East 9 (13%); Beds, Berks, Bucks, Oxfordshire 10 (14%); Rest of UK 9 (13%); Nomadic 5 (7%); Not stated 2 (3%).	Fenland 12 (7%); Cambridge, Cambs & P'boro 34 (20%); Lincs, Norfolk, Suffolk 18 (10%); London & South East 63 (36%); Beds, Berks, Bucks, Oxfordshire 19 (11%); Rest of UK 18 (10%); Ireland, Europe 3 (2%); Nomadic, homeless 4 (2%);	Fenland, Norfolk, Peterborough, Roadside 1 each	Lincolnshire 2, Scotland 1

		Not stated 1 (3%).		Not stated 2 (1%).		
12.	Tenure	Social rented 100%	Owner-occupied 41 (59%) Staying /living with / renting from family 25 (36%) Privately rented 4 (6%)	Owner-occupied 36 (21%) Social rented 5 (3%) Privately rented 5 (3%) Rented unspecified 122 (71%) Not stated / clear 5 (3%)		
13.	Overcrowded	9 (23%), and 6 doubled up	8 (11%)	35 (20%)	0	1
14.	Dislike of bricks & mortar	13 (33%)	15 (22%)	21 (12%)	0	0
15.	Tried to get land, planning permission	Yes 1 (3%) Planning to 2 (5%) No 32 (82%) Not stated 3 (7%)	Yes 27 (39%) Yes but not successful 2 (3%) Family got permission / had land left 11 (16%) Bought with permission 6 (9%) Planning to 1 (1%) No 20 (29%) Not stated 3 (4%)	Yes 16 (9%) Yes, but sold 33 (19%) No, but planning to 3 (2%) No 115 (66%) Did not reply 6 (3%)	No 4	No 1 No, but planning to 2
16.	Travelling	Travel for reasons including work 18 (46%); Travel for other reasons 2 (5%); No or no reply 19 (48%).	Travel for reasons including work 35 (50%); Travel for other reasons 2 (3%); No or no reply 33 (47%)	Travel for reasons including work 16 (9%); Travel for other reasons 45 (26%); Do not travel 112 (65%).	Travel for reasons including work 1	Travel for reasons including work 3
17.	Gypsy Status, December 2023 definition	22 have (56%); 17 do not, or not enough information (44%);	43 have (61%); 37 do not, or not enough information (39%)	40 households have (23%); 133 do not, or not enough information (77%). .	1 has 1 does not, or not enough	3 have
18.	Gypsy Status, December 2024 definition	39 have (100%)	70 have (100%)	54 households have (31%); 119 do not, or not enough information (69%)	2 have	3 have

19.	Need for pitch accommodation 2024/25 – 2029/30, those with Gypsy status, 2024 definition	8.6 pitches	6 pitches	9.4 pitches		2 pitches
20.	Need for housed accommodation 2024/25 – 2029/30, those with Gypsy status, 2024 definition	3 bungalows or flats 5 houses or flats	6 houses or flats	9 houses or flats 1 bungalow	1 flat or house	1 house
21.	Recognise need for Transit accommodation	35 (20%)	16 (41%)	24 (30%)	3	3

Annex 4: Gypsy and Traveller Pitches, Transit Sites, Negotiated Stopping Places and Travelling Show-people Sites, Definitions

1. Para 5 of the Glossary to PPFTS states: *‘For the purposes of this planning policy, “pitch” means a pitch on a “gypsy and traveller” site and “plot” means a pitch on a “travelling showpeople” site (often called a “yard”). This terminology differentiates between residential pitches for “gypsies and travellers” and mixed-use plots for “travelling showpeople”, which may / will need to incorporate space or to be split to allow for the storage of equipment.’.*
2. The Fenland Monitoring Reports use a closely related definition, defining a Gypsy and Traveller pitch as *‘as an area of land demarked for use as accommodation for a single Gypsy and Traveller household, sometimes including extended families which may require space, within one pitch, to provide for more than one caravan’.*²⁸
3. The withdrawn Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide ²⁹ equates a permanent pitch with the accommodation required by an individual household, para 7.2, and that is implicit in how the term is generally used. The Good Practice Guide suggested, para 7.12, that a pitch should be capable of accommodating an amenity building, a large trailer [ie a mobile home] and touring caravan, a shed, parking space for two vehicles and a small garden area. It noted that families vary in size, and some may need larger pitches with room for 1 or 2 additional touring caravans for teenage children, or larger mobile homes, and some smaller. In practice the pitches that come forward through planning applications vary substantially in size.
4. Transit sites are not intended to provide for permanent occupation, but to provide a place where people can stop for a time while travelling. In practice the shortage of accommodation means people may want to stay on transit pitches for a considerable period. This particularly applies to nomadic

²⁸ The withdrawn Core output Indicators for regional planning, Department of Communities and Local Government - Update 2/ 2008

²⁹ Department of Communities and Local Government, May 2008

households seeking accommodation over the winter months, (while in the summer they travel). The Designing Sites Good Practice Guide indicates that a transit site should be sufficient to accommodate 2 touring caravans, 2 parking spaces and toilet / shower / washbasin facilities.

5. Negotiated stopping places is an approach through which local authorities identify a specific piece of land for Gypsies and Travellers to stay for a defined temporary maximum period. The local authority may provide services such as water, refuse disposal and sanitation, and the Gypsies and Travellers agree to certain conditions, relating to issues such as noise and leaving the site clean and tidy.

Annex 5: Bibliography

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Annex 6: The Research Team

1. One Voice 4 Travellers is a grassroots community organisation that has worked with and supported members of the Gypsy and Traveller community since 2005. It has built a reputation within East Anglia and nationally with Gypsy and Travellers and service providers, including in regard to such issues as domestic abuse, and the health and accommodation needs of Gypsy people. Janie Codona and Shirley Barratt are One Voice 4 Travellers Project Leaders on the Fenland Accommodation Needs Assessment
2. Dr Janie Codona is a Romany Gypsy who was born roadside and has lived in Fenland for many years. She lives on her family-owned site near Wisbech. Her experience includes being a community development worker within the Gypsy and Traveller community, advocacy lead for Ormiston Children and Family Trust, and Manager of the Ormiston Gypsy and Traveller Initiative. She completed a research doctorate that considered Traveller accommodation as part of her research thesis. Janie is a former Commissioner for Racial Equality Commissioner and member of the Government's Task Force on Accommodation and Housing for Gypsy and Travellers. She has a qualification in Traveller Site Management and has experience managing sites. She has extensive experience carrying out research projects within the Gypsy and Traveller community.
3. Shirley Barrett comes from a traditional Romany background. She lived roadside until her family moved into housing when she was sixteen. She has extensive experience as a lecturer, tutor and researcher. She is studying for a doctorate, which looks at the experience of isolation from and integration within the wider community of Gypsies living in bricks and mortar housing.
4. Michael Hargreaves BA BTP MRTPI is a town planner with many years' experience working for local authorities and for central government, where he was Head of Regional Planning for the East of England. After leaving the Civil Service in 2010 he established Michael Hargreaves Planning (now MH Planning) as a planning consultancy specialising in Gypsy and Traveller planning issues.

