

# **Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment Update**

**Somerset Local Planning Authorities**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 De Montfort University in partnership with John Bloxsom was commissioned by Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council (hereafter referred to as the ‘Somerset Local Planning Authorities’ unless individually named) to undertake an update to the Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in 2010. The 2010 GTAA included some detailed qualitative findings as a result of 157 surveys with Gypsies and Travellers, three focus groups and also meetings with key officers from Local Planning Authorities across Somerset. It is very important to note that this update does not replace the findings from the 2010 GTAA which are still extant, but instead it should be seen as an update addendum to that study and it provides pitch requirement figures, as requested by the Somerset Local Planning Authorities for the update, through the plan period up to 2032.
- 1.2 This update report sets out a current estimation of the Gypsy and Traveller population in Somerset, along with discussion on waiting lists on site, management of the sites in Somerset, progress of delivery against stated need in the 2010 GTAA and ideas from telephone interviews, meetings and site visits on future management and delivery.
- 1.3 The methodology for this update report is mostly based on a desk-top analysis of data provided by the Local Planning Authorities and available online with regard to caravan counts, planning applications and planning policies. Site visits were undertaken on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013 accompanied by an employee of Somerset Travellers Ltd. Some face-to-face interviews were undertaken with key contacts in Local Planning Authorities, as well as telephone interviews (see Appendix B). A largely desk-based methodology is appropriate in this instance because the 2010 GTAA (published in January 2011) was based on 157 surveys as well as focus group and other primary data. This information is recent and sufficiently robust to allow for an update to cover the plan period to 2032.

## 2.0 POPULATION ESTIMATE

2.1 The GTAA 2010 methodology required a number of calculations to be undertaken which draw upon an estimate of the Gypsy and Traveller population as a whole. The Study Team has refreshed this by using the 2010 estimate and more recent CLG Caravan Counts (up to January 2013) as shown below:

Estimated Resident Gypsy and Traveller Population (Pitches/Households July 2013)						
	GTAA Refresh	Unauthorised Gypsy Owned "Tolerated" Sites <sup>1</sup>	Housed <sup>2</sup>	Social Rented Pitches <sup>3</sup>	ST Ltd Pitches <sup>4</sup>	Private Pitches <sup>5</sup>
Mendip	<b>160</b>	11	67	0	23	59
Sedgemoor	<b>91</b>	0	42	0	8	41
South Somerset	<b>78</b>	3	41	21	0	13
Taunton Deane	<b>108</b>	0	23	0	23	62
West Somerset	<b>31</b>	0	16	0	10	5
All	<b>468</b>	14	189	21	64	180

2.2 The estimate of the number of households relates to the residential Gypsy and Traveller population that normally live in the Study Area. The number of households shown as living in unauthorised developments and encampments includes tolerated encampments but does not count those that are 'not tolerated'. Study evidence is that tolerated encampments have local connections and are seeking to continue to live in the Study Area.

2.3 The table above separately identifies pitches managed by Somerset Travellers Ltd, to which Somerset County Council sites have been leased. The table, therefore, differs from the data shown in the CLG Caravan Count, which continues to count some of these as local authority provision, whilst others are no longer reported under that category.

<sup>1</sup> CLG Caravan Count January 2013. Caravan numbers on Unauthorised Gypsy Owned "Tolerated" Sites, divided by an estimate of 1.6 caravans per household.

<sup>2</sup> As estimated in GTAA 2010

<sup>3</sup> Local authority sites have been retained in South Somerset and all other sites formerly run by Somerset County Council transferred.

<sup>4</sup> Somerset Travellers Ltd which manages former County Council sites in Mendip, Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset. CLG continues to show only those in Mendip and Taunton Deane in its count of "sites provided by local authorities and Registered Providers".

<sup>5</sup> CLG Caravan Count January 2013. Caravan numbers divided by an estimate of 1.6 caravans per household

### 3.0 DELIVERY OF SITES TO DATE

3.1 The local planning authorities in the Study Area have reported 35 additional pitches as being approved against the requirement identified in the GTAA. As at 29 July 2013 these consist of:

<b>Permissions against the GTAA Requirement</b>		
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Application Reference</b>	<b>Pitches</b>
Mendip	2012/1859	1
	2012/0911	1
Sedgemoor	03/12/00004	1
	35/12/0001	1
	54/11/00008*	2*
	22/11/4*	4*
	14/12/16	2
South Somerset	06/03465/FUL	1
	09/02705/FUL	1
	09/4132/FUL	2
	10/03068/COU	1
	10/03055/FUL	2
	10/02764/FUL	1*
	10/02754/COU	1
	10/02427/FUL	1
	10/01458/FUL	1
11/01976/FUL	1	
Taunton Deane	06/10/0029	2
	44/10/0015	4*
	27/11/0018	3*
	30/12/0046	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>35</b>

\*These sites are reported as not occupied as at 30 June 2013.

3.2 At the time of writing there are applications concerning 15 pitches that are subject to local authority decision or appeal. These consist of two applications pending local authority decision and a further two pending appeal as follows:

<b>Pending decisions and appeals May 2013</b>		
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Application Reference</b>	<b>Pitches</b>
Mendip – pending LA decision	2012/2685	1
Mendip – pending appeal lodged	2012/1411	3
South Somerset – pending LA decision	13/01832/FUL	6
Taunton Deane - pending appeal lodged	14/12/0015	5

Total	15
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- 3.3 There are 11 pitches identified in data supplied to the Study Team by local planning authorities as being subject to temporary planning permissions due to expire in 2013 – 17. These are as follows:

<b>Temporary Permissions due to expire 2013 - 2017</b>			
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Site/Application Reference</b>	<b>Temporary Permission Expiry Date</b>	<b>Pitches</b>
Mendip	Moonacre, Meare	4 September 2013	1
	Ridge Lane, Shepton Mallet	30 November 2014	5
	Barrow Farm, North Wooton	13 July 2017	1
Taunton Deane	Woodside, North Curry	31 March 2015	4
<b>Total</b>			<b>11</b>

The reference to four pitches with temporary planning permission in South Somerset which appears in the CLG Count (January 2013) has been confirmed by the local authority to be in error and does not appear above.

- 3.4 The 35 pitches approved since 1 January 2011 are a contribution towards the requirement for an additional 130 residential pitches in the period 2010 – 15 as identified in the GTAA. There are 96 pitches to be delivered if that requirement were to be met as set out below. Additional pitches to meet the GTAA requirement are required in all authorities, except South Somerset, which has currently exceeded its requirement to 2015 by two pitches. These calculations do not take into account pending local authority decisions nor appeals yet to be determined. It should also be noted that the requirement will rise if temporary permissions due to expire are not made permanent.

<b>Comparison of GTAA requirement 2010 – 15 and Delivery to 29 July 2013</b>			
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>GTAA Requirement</b>	<b>Provision To Date</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Mendip	69	2	-67
Sedgemoor	24	10	-14
South Somerset	10	12	+2
Taunton Deane	25	11	-14
West Somerset	2	0	-2
All	130	35	-95

- 3.5 The unmet requirement to 2015 is carried forward to 2016 and beyond. The future requirement for 2016 – 20 therefore starts from an assumed base line that incorporates 130 pitches/families as having been added in 2010 – 2015. This assumes that the outstanding need of 95 against that requirement will be met or should be treated as if it had been met by 31 December 2015. It would negate the previous study if these figures were not carried forward. Any such omission would also reduce the relative requirement in those areas that had not successfully met their 2015 requirement compared to those that have done so.
- 3.6 It should also be noted that, in addition to new sites and additional pitches, it is important to protect existing sites including those that are not on Gypsy and Traveller owned land but which are tolerated or Gypsy and Traveller owned sites or managed sites that have an extant permission.

## **4.0 NEED IN FUTURE YEARS**

### **4.1 Future Periods**

The brief for the GTAA Refresh 2013 is to set out pitch requirements for the period to 2032. This has been done by applying:

- the estimate of the housed Gypsy and Traveller population used in the 2010 GTAA
- the refreshed estimate of the residential population on sites as at July 2013 as set out in section 2 of this report
- the recommended pitch numbers required in the period 2010 – 15 as set out in the 2010 GTAA.

Thereafter pitch requirements are set out in the following five-year periods; and for the final tranche in a two-year period:

2016 – 2020

2021 – 2025

2026 – 2030

2031 - 2032

The requirements shown in these future periods assume that the backlog previously identified would have been met and take account only of the estimated newly arising need in these periods. Pitch requirements in each year are provided from which the pitch requirement to 2032 can be shown or other variations as required.

### **4.2 Need in Future Years**

The study brief seeks information on the expected rate of household formation and advice on pitch requirements to 2032. The paragraphs below set out the basis on which, beyond the requirement identified in the initial period which addresses a backlog, GTAAs have applied an assumed rate of household growth of 3% per annum compound.

4.2.1 An assumed rate of household growth of 3% per annum compound for the later 5-year tranches appeared in the illustration contained in *Guidance on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments* (Communities and Local Government, 2007). The footnote to this illustration stated “The 3% family formation growth rate is used here as an example only. The appropriate rate for individual assessments will depend on the details identified in the local survey, information from agencies working directly with local Gypsy and Traveller communities, and trends identified from figures previously given for the caravan count” (p.25)

4.2.2 The Report on *Preparing Regional Spatial Strategy Reviews on Gypsies and Travellers by Regional Planning Bodies* (Communities and Local Government, 2007) stated “at present, the best assumption to be made for a period when

the current backlog of site need has been cleared is household growth rate of 3 percent a year compound. This would give an indication of long-term requirements and would counter any perception that Gypsy and Traveller need can be met on a once-and-for-all basis in a way that is not assumed for the settled community. Household growth should be monitored in order to form improved assumptions for the future” (Paragraph 3.3, p.42).

- 4.2.3 Household growth rates of 2 per cent and 3 per cent a year were previously suggested as appropriate in Niner, *Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England* (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003). The 2007 Regional Plans report also noted that in the Republic of Ireland a 4 per cent family growth rate assumed had proved very accurate between 1997 and 2004 (*Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998*, Ministry for Housing and Urban Renewal, 2004). Typically GTAAs carried out in England have taken a 3 per cent assumption as being reasonable. In this report a rate of growth of 3% per annum compound continues to be applied.
- 4.2.4 In respect of Showpeople evidence from the Showmen’s Guild suggests a growth rate of 1.5% should be assumed for travelling showpeople. This has been applied as the rate of household formation amongst Showpeople of 1.5% per annum compound. A recent study of the need for Showpeople plots applied an annual compound increase of 2% (Salford Infrastructure Delivery Plan, 2012 paragraph 3.5, February 2012). These approaches reflect the fact that social, economic and demographic patterns amongst Showpeople are distinct from those of Gypsies and Travellers.
- 4.2.6 Estimates of future housing need are set out below to 2032 as required by the client authorities. This is subject to the need to note that such estimates are more problematic than for the next 5 years since there may be significant changes in the population, lifestyles and preferences for location and accommodation types. It should also be noted that where the base level estimate population is low, for example as seen in West Somerset, then the recommended pitch numbers may be less robust for future years than in areas where there is a larger and better established Gypsy and Traveller population from which future growth and accommodation need are calculated.
- 4.2.7 There are also expected to be policy impacts arising from changes in provision, planning consent and enforcement, the management of unauthorised encampments and legislative changes. Our estimates for 2016 – 2032 do not take any such factors into account. They draw upon the previous findings for 2010 - 15 and have applied a less detailed approach based simply on estimated household growth.
- 4.2.8 The results are set out in tables below are based on the following assumptions:
- The number of pitches will be as at the beginning of the previous tranche plus the net additional pitch requirement in that tranche

- That the pitches identified as need in each tranche will have been provided and hence contribute to future household growth
- Temporary planning permissions in the first tranche do not count towards future household growth as they have already been counted as provision
- The number of the estimate housed Gypsy and Traveller population in the period 2010 – 2015 is assumed to be constant across the Study Area
- The assumed rate of household growth in 2016 – 2032 is 3% per annum compound as used in the illustration in CLG guidance
- That the need for sites amongst new households on sites is in line with the preferences and assumptions applied in calculation of the GTAA 2010
- That the need for sites amongst those in new households in houses is in line with preferences and assumptions applied in calculation of the GTAA 2010
- That the distribution of pitches and houses across the Study Area throughout the period is as in 2013 - subject to an assumption of growth having arisen in line with the needs identified in respect of each tranche
- That the proportion of household increase which requires a pitch is
  - 100% of growth on authorised sites are assumed to need pitches
  - 50% of growth from families in housing is assumed to need pitches

4.2.9 The methodology follows that used to calculate requirements for 2015 – 20 which appeared in the GTAA 2010. This refresh has reassessed that requirement in light of provision made to date and evidence collected in 2013. The main assumptions and methodology are, however, similar to those used previously. The requirement now identified is higher than previously estimated because there is an element of backlog in the first tranche.

<b>Additional Residential Pitch Requirements 2016 - 2020</b>						
	Study Area	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
<i>Baseline</i>						
Housed 2010 Estimate	189	67	42	41	23	16
Pitches 2013 Estimate	279	93	49	37	85	15
Recommended 2010 - 15	130	69	24	10	25	2
Further Additional Pitches				2		
Assumed total pitches 2015	409	162	73	49	110	17
<i>Plus Additional Households Formed</i>						
From housed families	25	9	5	5	3	2
From families on sites	50	21	8	6	14	1
<i>Giving Additional Pitch Requirement</i>						
From housed families (50%)	11	4	3	2	1	1
From families on sites	50	21	8	6	14	1
<b>Requirement 2016 - 2020</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Additional Residential Pitch Requirements in 2021 - 2025</b>						
	Study Area	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
<i>Baseline</i>						
Housed	200	71	45	43	24	17
Pitches 2015	409	162	73	47	110	17
Net Pitches Added 2016 -20	<b>61</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>
Total pitches 2020	470	187	84	53	125	19
<i>Additional Households Formed</i>						
From housed families	26	10	5	5	3	2
From families on sites	59	24	11	6	16	1
<i>Additional Pitch Requirement</i>						
From housed families (50%)	12	5	3	3	1	1
From families on sites	59	24	11	6	16	1
<b>Requirement 2021- 2025</b>						
	<b>71</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Additional Residential Pitch Requirements in 2026 – 2030</b>						
	Study Area	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
<i>Baseline</i>						
Housed	212	75	48	46	25	19
Pitches 2020	474	187	84	56	127	20
Net Pitches Added 2021- 25	<b>71</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>
Total pitches 2025	545	216	97	65	144	22
<i>Additional Households Formed</i>						
From housed families	30	12	6	6	3	3
From families on sites	70	28	12	8	19	2
<i>Additional Pitch Requirement</i>						
From housed families (50%)	15	6	3	3	2	1
From families on sites	70	28	12	8	19	2
<b>Requirement 2026- 2030</b>						
	<b>85</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>Additional Residential Pitch Requirements in 2031 – 2032 (2 year tranche)</b>						
	Study Area	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
<i>Baseline</i>						
Housed	227	81	51	49	27	20
Pitches 2025	546	213	95	65	152	22
Net Pitches Added 2026- 30	<b>85</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>
Total pitches 2030	631	247	110	76	173	25
<i>Additional Households Formed</i>						
From housed families	11	4	2	2	2	1
From families on sites	26	8	4	4	9	1
<i>Additional Pitch Requirement</i>						
From housed families (50%)	5	2	1	1	1	0
From families on sites	26	8	4	4	9	1
<b>Requirement 2031 - 2032</b>						
	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>

4.2.10 As previously the methodology used applies data on need at district level and draws upon the survey findings of this study. The resultant pitch calculations therefore reflect need where it arises following the existing distribution within the study area and reinforce existing settlement patterns. In practice determination of where need should be met involves a range of factors including capacity, resources, sustainability and policy choice around equity. Decisions on where need should be met are policy choices having regard to guidance, best practice, neighbourhood management considerations and site management considerations of optimum size.

4.2.11 There may also be scope for authorities to work together to best meet need through shared provision and the planning of site allocations across the study area. There are elements of the calculation which take into account need arising from occupants who will have previously been outside of the Study Area such as those in unauthorised encampments. In respect of these, the residential pitch requirement calculation only takes into account those who are estimated to give rise to the need for a residential site in the Study Area.

4.2.12 No separate allowance has been made for new households likely to arrive from elsewhere as, in line with other studies and practice of the Study Team, we have assumed that this can be expected to be balanced by pitches that become available when existing households move out of the study area. The need for transit provision has been calculated separately.

## **5.0 TRAVELLING PATTERNS IN AND OUT OF THE AREA**

- 5.1 The pitch requirements reflect the need arising in the Study Area. The literature notes, however, the difficulty in differentiating between those 'residing in' (and hence local to) an area those who 'resort to' (and are hence visiting) an area. The approach taken in this report is to assume that any changes in travelling patterns will be neutral in terms of their impact of pitch requirements. Information on cross boundary movement taken from published studies in adjacent areas is set out below.
- 5.2 The *Devon-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment* (2006) found that collaboration between local authorities could assist in tracking travelling groups as they move from one county to another. It commented that when travelling Gypsies and Travellers commonly go outside of Devon and, although some do stay in the South West region when traveling, the majority travel further afield [http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Gypsies\\_and\\_Travellers/Devon\\_GTAA.pdf](http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Gypsies_and_Travellers/Devon_GTAA.pdf). At the time of writing the Local Planning Authorities in Devon together with the Exmoor National Park Authority are commissioning a further study.
- 5.3 The *Dorset Traveller Accommodation Assessment* (2006) reported that 74% had travelled outside of Dorset. It identified two distinct travelling patterns with the Gypsy and Irish Traveller population being the most seasonally transient and the New Traveller population which seemed more stable throughout the year. It noted, however, that several small family groups of Gypsies and New Travellers move throughout Dorset and adjacent counties, staying at roadside locations, carrying out creative and traditional crafts, and having minimal impact on resident communities and the environment.  
<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=129873&filetype=pdf>
- 5.4 The Dorset GTAA is currently being updated by Opinion Research Consultancy (ORS). In an email exchange with a member of their research team on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013 the issue of cross-boundary travel patterns was discussed. It was suggested that: "In terms of Dorset there are no cross boundary issues in the dataset and none of the households in transit are from Somerset. We also have no evidence to suggest that anyone from these communities in Dorset wants to move to Somerset."
- 5.5 The *Wiltshire and Swindon Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment* (2006) stated that 73% of respondents in that area travel elsewhere in the South West and 76% travel elsewhere within the UK.  
[http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire\\_and\\_swindon\\_gypsy\\_and\\_traveller\\_accommodation\\_needs\\_assessment\\_2006\\_-\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire_and_swindon_gypsy_and_traveller_accommodation_needs_assessment_2006_-_final_report.pdf)

- 5.6 The *West of England Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment* (2007), a study area including North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset, found that 69% reported that they still travelled whilst a further 30% declined to answer that question. It refers to there being a “hardcore of fully nomadic travellers (including the majority of New Travellers interviewed and perhaps unsurprisingly all individuals on unauthorised encampments) a further respondents travelling for at least part of the year. It commented that Irish Travellers are more likely to be nomadic for a longer period of the year  
[http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Gypsies\\_and\\_Travellers/West\\_of\\_England\\_GTAA.pdf](http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Gypsies_and_Travellers/West_of_England_GTAA.pdf)
- 5.7 A South West GTAA Benchmarking report found that caravan numbers in the South West region were 40% higher when compared to national growth rates between 1979 and 2007, and especially over the period 1994 to 2007 (*Advice on RSS Review of Additional Pitch Requirements for Gypsies and Travellers in the South West*, South West Regional Assembly ,2008). It commented that this implies that the region ‘imported’ Gypsies and Travellers from other regions have accommodated some of the growth occurring in other regions, perhaps particularly the South East and West Midlands.  
[http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Gypsies\\_and\\_Travellers/GTAA\\_Review\\_Summary\\_Report.pdf](http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Gypsies_and_Travellers/GTAA_Review_Summary_Report.pdf)
- 5.8 In the original 2010 GTAA 157 respondents were asked about their patterns of travel within and out of Somerset. Not all respondents named places of travel but there is information in the 2010 GTAA that readers of this update should consult, particularly in the findings in section 4 of that report.
- 5.9 Exmoor National Park Authority acts as a planning authority in respect of two thirds of the park area which lies in West Somerset District. This covers the settlement areas of Allerford, Bridgetown, Brompton Regis, Cutcombe, Dunster, Exford, Exton, Luccombe, Luxborough, Monksilver, Porlock, Roadwater, Simonsbath, Timberscombe, Wheddon Cross, Winsford, Withypool and Wootton Courtenay. Data made available to the Study Team has not identified any sites or encampments in these areas.
- 5.10 The Draft Exmoor Local Plan (July 2013) discusses the needs of “Travelling Communities” <http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/about-us/meetings-agendas-reports/enpa-planning-committee/02-jul-2013/Draft-Exmoor-Local-Plan-for-consultation.pdf> p. 166 – 168. Draft Policy HC-S6 Travelling Communities sets out a criteria based policy to exceptionally permit small sites where “there is a proven local need for a site to accommodate affordable need of travelling communities who have proven local connection through employment, longstanding residency or family, in the parish or adjoining parish”. There is no data available to this Study Team in order to identify what proportion of the need arising in West Somerset District relates to that area covered by the National Park.

## 6.0 TRANSIT REQUIREMENTS

6.1 The 2010 GTAA identified a need for 100 transit pitches located as follows:

<b>Transit Pitch Requirement</b>	
Mendip	80
Sedgemoor	5
South Somerset	10
Taunton Deane	5
West Somerset	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

6.2 There are no reported additional transit pitches provided against this requirement. There are additional permissions which include touring caravans, to be sited on residential pitches, and to be used for travelling further afield. There are, however, no separate additional transit pitches approved against the requirement which remains.

6.3 The Local Planning Authorities should also be aware that if current transit provision, such as the Middlezoy site, fall permanently out of use, then those pitches on that site should be added to the 100 pitch requirement in the table above.

6.4 The 2010 GTAA noted that Taunton Deane Borough Council reported a capacity for 20 transit caravans at a privately owned Gypsy and Traveller caravan site at Stoneyhead, Wrantage, in North Curry. The transit capacity was reported be occupied by 26 caravans in January 2013 and 15 in July 2013. The Borough Council reported that members of the community had suggested that about half of this capacity was taken up by persons who are not Gypsies and Travellers. Following discussion in May 2013 with a local Somerset Gypsy in the area, information suggests that the residents on that site are mostly, or wholly, non-Gypsy/Traveller.

6.5 A transit site at Middlezoy (Sedgemoor) is still owned by the County Council but leased to Somerset Travellers Ltd. This was reported as having been closed due to damage caused by vandalism shortly after it was leased to STL and that, although there have been plans to re-open it, the County Council has recently stated that “at present there is no indication as to when or if it will be available for us to use” (July 2013). This site was reported as consisting of 19 transit pitches (CLG, 2009). The County Council has found this site “extremely useful” as it demonstrates alternative provision to offer those in unauthorised encampments, and helps the Police to use powers to move on encampments. The latest County Council annual enforcement report can be viewed at:

<http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/council/board11/2013%20July%2025%20Item%205%20Annual%20Enforcement%20and%20Monitoring%20Report.pdf>

6.6 That report stated that there were 33 cases of unauthorised encampments investigated in the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 20 May 2013 the County has received 85 reports of unauthorised encampments, of these 58 were on SCC owned land or the Highway, the remainder were on either privately owned land or land owned by a District Council. This data does not, however, reflect the full extent of encampment on SCC land. Indeed, in discussion with the enforcement officer at the county council it was acknowledged in an email on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013 that “I would normally only receive/record reports of UEs on SCC owned land or the Highway and I only occasionally get reports of UEs on private land or District Council owned land... However, I don’t get notified of all UEs within Somerset”.

6.7 Data on unauthorised encampments was collated for this study by a Police Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer. This draws on intelligence reports and public reports to the Police. This data recorded 38 encampments in the period April 2012 – June 2013 and showed that the average number of caravans at each encampment was five. The largest encampment in this period consisted of 20 caravans. The distribution of encampments recorded by the Police in this period was:

Mendip	6
Sedgemoor	8
South Somerset	5
Taunton Deane	18
West Somerset	1
All	38

6.8 Because of the variable recording procedures between districts, police and the County Council, a more consistent data set is necessary. The bi-annual CLG Caravan Count provides a snap shot of unauthorised encampments on all land, but covers only two set dates in January and July each year. Published data from January 2013 is shown below together with the previous five published counts.

<b>Not Tolerated Unauthorised Encampments - CLG Caravan Counts (last six)</b>						
	Jan 2013	July 2012	Jan 2012	July 2011	Jan 2011	July 2010
Mendip	58	37	13	16	0	0
Sedgemoor	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Somerset	0	0	0	25	12	3
Taunton Deane	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Somerset	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>

- 6.9 This data shows growth in the level of encampments in 2011 – 13 since the Middlezoy Transit site has been closed. This growth, has not, however, occurred in Sedgemoor (where that facility was located) but elsewhere in Mendip District. Reports from both County Council officers (Annual Enforcement Report, July 2013) and Somerset and Avon Police (email to Study Team, June 2013), when discussing encampments, both differentiate between the Travelling community (including New Travellers) and “homeless people”. The County recently estimated that 30% of encampments in 2012 -13 involved “homeless individuals” and that this group increased by 50% in that period, much of which it stated was accounted for by a small number of individuals in the Glastonbury area who move from one unauthorised place to another around the town.
- 6.10 The 58 unauthorised caravans reported at Mendip (January 2013) includes 44 at the Morlands site in Glastonbury. This is former industrial land that has been contaminated. Housing has been built in the area following remediation work to the land (*Mendip Contaminated Land Strategy 2007*, Paragraph 2.4.1). In respect of use of the land by Gypsies and Travellers the local authority has been seeking alternative land. Some encamped on this site are reported to be interested in the Community Land Trust.
- 6.11 The Middlezoy Transit site has actually been closed since May 2011, soon after Somerset Travellers Ltd took over ownership and management of the site. There was an incidence of vandalism and the site has since not recovered, with missing copper and water pipes and the block is not fit for purpose either. On a visit by the research team to the site on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013 the entrance was banded with large boulders, but there had been some clear up on the site. Some photographs taken of the site on the day are shown;

although at the time of writing (19<sup>th</sup> June 2013) Somerset and Avon Police have reported that there is a current encampment on the site:



- 6.12 In a conversation with environmental management at Somerset County Council there was a reminder that traditionally this transit site has been for county use and that the Local Planning Authorities had not 'bought into' the transit site originally. Regardless of past use though, it is unlikely that the Middlezoy transit site will be operational in the foreseeable future for use by anyone. There is a significant amount of work needed at considerable cost to bring the site back to use and this either needs to be undertaken by Somerset Travellers Ltd, or be bought back by the County and brought into use. In conversation with an officer at the County it is not seen as very likely that the County would want to do this.
- 6.13 There is a clear need for provision of places to stop for a temporary period of time and there is currently no site to accommodate this. In the absence of a transit site the Local Planning Authorities will need to liaise with the Police to establish their need for a place to direct Travellers under legal powers to move on unauthorised encampments that cannot be tolerated. There may be alternative approaches that can be taken and these were discussed in some detail in the 2010 GTAA which should be referred to again here. Some of the traditional stopping places might be opened up to allow encampments travelling through to stay for very brief periods of time. There may also be an opportunity under the duty to co-operate (Localism Act) for Local Planning Authorities to work together to establish provision of transit and permanent sites to meet county-wide need.
- 6.14 One idea which has been advocated for some time now, by Councillor Ric Pallister, Leader of South Somerset District Council, is the use of councils ability to licence sites, for example for the Caravan Club, and to find parcels of land that might accommodate a site for a temporary period to meet need.
- 6.15 It should be noted that if any sites have a change of use and are no longer available as transit provision for Gypsies and Travellers, this would be an additional requirement to the transit pitch requirement of 100 identified in 2010. Sites where use of, and access to pitches, is now reported to be problematic includes the site in North Curry (see paragraph 6.3) and the Middlezoy Transit site (see paragraph 6.4). The retention of the transit site at/called Otterford 2 as a Gypsy and Traveller site is also of importance in meeting transit needs. At the time of the January 2013 CLG Count the site, referred to as Otterford Site 2 was reported to have accommodated two caravans.

## **7.0 SHOWPEOPLE**

- 7.1 The GTAA identified five Showpeople yards in the Study Area but did not estimate the number of households residing on plots at these yards; because there was no further information provided at the time by the authorities or The Guild. This is the estimate, below, of the number of yards in GTAA 2010:

Mendip District Council 1  
Sedgemoor District Council 1  
South Somerset District Council 2  
Taunton Deane Borough Council 1  
West Somerset District Council 0  
**All 5**

However as shown in paragraph 7.4 below The Showmen's Guild estimate a total of 15 yards across the county in 2013. The local planning authorities could reconcile their data with this information from The Guild.

- 7.2 The local authorities have not reported any additional Showpeople plots since 1 January 2011. South Somerset has approved the retention of a chalet for occupation by travelling Showpeople (12/03239/FUL) and a Certificate of Lawfulness for the existing use of the yard at which this chalet is located (12/02095/COL). The annual 'experimental' count of Travelling Showpeople published by CLG for the period 2011 – 13 contains data only for Taunton Deane, showing 20 Showpeople caravans in January 2013. This limited data does not provide a basis on which to assess need.
- 7.3 The GTAA identified a need for four additional plots in respect of need arising at one of these yards. The 2010 GTAA concluded that there was insufficient data to estimate the overall size of the population or the number of plots required in the future at other locations. Any future plots would need to be of sufficient size to accommodate family members who live together and vehicles and equipment; with 3.7 trailers/living vehicles per household being found in the adjacent West of England GTAA (2007).
- 7.4 The research team contacted the Western Section of the Showmen's Guild to obtain a current estimate of the number of registered Showmen families in Somerset. Following our contact Mr Steven Rawlings debated this at a Guild committee meeting in the week beginning 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and in a subsequent telephone call from the Western Section secretary we were informed that the Showmen's Guild records showed there were 15 yards in the county and felt that there was a future need for 22 plots; this was not apportioned across future tranches up to 2032, but instead was a figure provided following a debate at the committee meeting on emerging future need in the population for accommodation. The research team has requested further information, most particularly on the number of families registered with the Guild in the county of Somerset; this information has not been received and it is

recommended that the client authorities continue to engage with the Guild to build up a relationship and to attempt to share data in the future. If the Showmen's Guild stated need for 22 plots was to be distributed pro rata to the distribution of yards outlined in paragraph 7.1, this would give rise to a need for the following plots:

Mendip District Council 4  
Sedgemoor District Council 5  
South Somerset District Council 8  
Taunton Deane Borough Council 5  
West Somerset District Council 0  
**All 22**

- 7.5 If an estimation of the current Showpeople population were to be obtainable, together with the current level of unmet need for additional plots, it would be possible to further estimate newly arising need to Showpeople plots in the period required. The accepted methodology to do so applies a compound growth of 1.5% per annum. This approach reflects that social, economic and demographic patterns of travelling Showpeople that are distinct from those of Gypsies and Travellers for whom a rate of household growth of 3% compound per year is assumed.
- 7.6 In trying to obtain information on estimates of family numbers living on yards in the County it is understood that some Local Planning Authorities used to collect such data, for example including age of children, so that estimates of future needs, as children became adults, could be undertaken.

## **8.0 MANAGEMENT OF EXISTING SITES**

- 8.1 In South Somerset District the three permanent sites are owned and managed by the South Somerset District Council. Two of these are former County Council sites and the third is a former private site (08/02225/S73), these have been maintained well and the political leadership in that district means that it is seen as a leader in the field with regard to Gypsy and Traveller issues.
- 8.2 In all other areas of Somerset: namely, Mendip, Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset the permanent local authority sites were owned by the County but sold to Somerset Travellers Ltd in March 2011. Since then there has been some investment by the owner and his management team, both in terms of infrastructure, maintenance and human resources to bring the sites up to standard. Whilst not all sites are to the standard that should be expected, there has been progress.
- 8.3 One of the sites in need of attention is Otterford 1 in Taunton Deane district. The research team visited this site on 14<sup>th</sup> May and at that time there were 5 pitches that were uninhabitable with serious work needed to bring them back into use. There are also issues of anti-social behavior on the site. In the middle of the site is a scrap-yard used by one of the residents on site; this was sold to the resident as a separate parcel of land by the County Council also in March 2011.



Occupied pitch at Otterford Site 14.5.13



Vacant pitch at Otterford site 14.5.13

- 8.4 At the Stogursey site in West Somerset, also visited by the research team on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013 the residents seem very happy with the new management. Empty pitches get turned around and relet very quickly. The allocations policy for the sites under Somerset Travellers Ltd is not clear and there is a view from council officers in at least one district that they would like to work with the staff at Somerset Travellers Ltd on allocations policy. During the site visit it was shown that there may be room to extend the site and add a further three pitches.
- 8.5 The research team also visited Weston Zoyland site in Sedgemoor. Again residents on the site seemed happy with the new management. There was only one vacant pitch at the time of the visit on 14<sup>th</sup> May, but this was about to be relet. One of the residents said that he liked the site so much he would like to buy his plot if Somerset Travellers Ltd is able to do 'right to buy'. Upon visiting the site though, there is still the hazard of the wooden pallets lining the entrance to the site. Lorries deliver to the pallet yard next door and there is not sufficient room to get a car past if there was an emergency. During the visit a lorry was there which blocked the car from leaving for a time. There is also no sign still at the entrance to the site, so emergency services might struggle to locate the site under duress. The 2010 GTAA highlighted the fire risk of the pallets and the problems of the lack of signage. No progress has been made on the 2010 GTAA recommendations on this to date.



Entrance to Weston Zoyland 14.5.13



Pallets at entrance to Weston Zoyland 14.5.13

- 8.6 On advice from Somerset Travellers Ltd on the day, the research team did not visit the site at Frome.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 There are a number of recommendations emerging from meetings and telephone interviews with council officers as well as site visits and speaking with some Gypsy and Traveller residents. It should be noted, however, that many of the recommendations in the 2010 GTAA are still extant and the research team suggests that further reflection on some of those recommendations are undertaken. These recommendations are supplementary to the main 2010 GTAA.
- 9.2 The research team recommends that the need identified in the 2010 GTAA is met through site delivery. There is a mixed response across the Somerset Local Planning Authorities, but in all cases sites delivered since 2010 have all been private pitches, and none have been social pitches. Indeed there could be a view that the only social pitches available now are in South Somerset as the other sites have been sold in March 2011 to a private owner who is managing the sites on behalf of the council, but they are indeed private not council owned and managed.
- 9.3 In discussion with council officers the main challenge to site delivery stated was the lack of suitable land. A site identification report was undertaken for the Somerset Local Planning Authorities by Clive Miller Associates, some years ago now. That report might be revisited. It is understood that in some Local Planning Authorities, for example in Mendip, the Planning Policy team are starting from scratch in identifying district council owned land that might be suitable. Other Local Planning Authorities should also consider undertaking this exercise. The Authorities might also consider opening up informal networks of dialogue with Gypsies and Travellers and offer pre-planning advice in order to supplement the more formal calls for sites.
- 9.4 There is a duty to co-operate under the Localism Act and the Somerset Local Planning Authorities may wish to consider meaningful dialogue with one another on the identification of suitable land for permanent and temporary pitches to meet need.
- 9.5 Funding of £200,000 has been awarded to Mendip District Council under the HCA site grant scheme. This is in addition to the initial £100,000 pot provided by Mendip District Council. The CLT project is currently struggling to identify a suitable plot of land, but they have their rules in place and are ready to move as soon as land becomes available. HCA grant needs to be spent by the end of financial year 2015 and if it is not spent it is returned. It would be a shame to have access to this finance and not utilise it for a site in Somerset. It is recommended that some liaison takes place between the Somerset Local Planning Authorities with Mendip on how financial resources might best be matched with public land that might be identified in current council searches.
- 9.6 A need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches has been identified up to 2032 in section four of this report. The study team recommends that the Somerset

- Local Planning Authorities endeavor to meet the pitch requirements in that period and that there should be a focus on meeting the requirements up to 2015.
- 9.7 It is also recommended that primary data is refreshed regularly, say every five years, to ensure that long term projections based on today's understanding of the population do not take precedence over emerging new data in the future. The Local Planning Authorities should undertake fresh GTAAs at regular periods to ensure that new primary data is collected through surveys and site visits. This 2013 update is rooted in the evidence collected for the GTAA 2010, which is still recent. However, for the future, the authorities will continue to need to collect and analyse new data periodically to keep accommodation needs evidence up-to-date.
- 9.8 The Western Section of the Showmen's Guild have suggested that there is a general future need for 22 plots. More investigation of this figure, and of data held showing current estimates of the Somerset population, is needed.
- 9.9 The Local Planning Authorities should consider greater sharing of information on sites and ideas for delivering future pitches; an interesting approach would be to consider a county-wide Development Plan Document.
- 9.10 There is a duty to co-operate under the Localism Act and the Local Planning Authorities should attempt to meet twice or three times per year to discuss Gypsy and Traveller issues.
- 9.11 Working together across issues would also be beneficial to councils and other public agencies in Somerset; for example the findings of the GTAA 2010, along with this update, could link to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. There is a role for co-ordination with a range of individuals and agencies; the delivery of sites is not solely a matter for planning, but also a housing, environmental and social issue. Colleagues, senior executives and elected members across authorities should be concerned with site delivery.
- 9.12 The research team was commissioned to undertake this update work to extend the pitch requirement forecast period up to 2032 so as to match the plan period for most of the Local Planning Authorities. However, there is much to do in the short-term, with 96 pitches still to be delivered in the period up to 2015.
- 9.13 The transit provision in the County does not seem to be certain. The Middlezoy site is currently out of use and it is uncertain whether/if this will be brought back into use. There is transit provision of 5 pitches in Taunton Deane at 'Otterford 2' and it is recommended that these remain for transit use for Gypsies and Travellers. Any pitches lost from existing provision should be added to the 100 pitch requirement figure for transit sites. Local authorities may wish to consider a more flexible 'zones of toleration' approach to transit

provision in the future. There may also be ideas around caravan site licensing to facilitate transit provision.

- 9.14 Public agencies in Somerset should work together on data collection and analysis. For example there is a lack of consistency in the data collected amongst the councils on unauthorised encampments; although the police do collect data, it might not always include encampments on council own land. If the agencies worked together on data collection and analysis then more evidence will be available for future accommodation analyses. There are some areas in the country where a multi-agency unit brings together the different agencies involved in Gypsy and Traveller issues to provide an efficient and effective service.
- 9.15 In order to facilitate leadership from executive and elected members it is recommended that training is made available to officers and members involved in the decision making on delivery of sites. This training would help to explain some cultural issues, but crucially would highlight the business case for delivery and the ramifications of not providing.
- 9.15 The evidence in this GTAA Update report should be shared with relevant committees and organisations. The next steps would be to circulate to the Somerset Housing Officers Group and to the Duty to Co-operate meeting.

## APPENDIX A – Annual Pitch Requirement Figures

In an addendum to the invitation to tender for this work, the Somerset Local Planning Authorities requested a year on year estimate of residential pitch requirements up to 2032. In the main body of the report the data has been presented in five-year tranches (save for the period 2031 – 2032); but in this appendix the pitch requirement is shown for each year.

<b>Residential Pitch Requirements by Year – Alternative Format</b>						
	Study Area	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
<b>Requirement 2010 - 2015</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>
Delivered to May 2013	34	2	10	12	11	0
Balance to be delivered	-95	-67	-14	(2)	-14	-2
<b>Newly Arising Need 2016 - 2020</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>
2016	11	5	2	1	3	0
2017	11	5	2	1	3	0
2018	12	5	2	2	3	0
2019	13	5	2	2	3	1
2020	14	5	3	2	3	1
<b>Newly Arising Need 2021 - 2025</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>
2021	11	5	2	1	3	0
2022	14	6	2	2	3	1
2023	14	6	3	2	3	0
2024	15	6	3	2	4	0
2025	16	6	3	2	4	1
<b>Newly Arising Need 2026 - 2030</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>
2026	16	7	3	2	4	0
2027	16	7	3	2	4	0
2028	17	7	3	2	4	1
2029	17	7	3	2	4	1
2030	18	7	3	3	5	1
<b>Newly Arising Need 2031 - 2032</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>
2031	16	5	3	3	5	0
2032	15	5	2	2	5	1

## **APPENDIX B – Stakeholders consulted**

### Consultation by Email

- Melanie Rowlands, Somerset and Avon Police, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013.
- Martyn Ford, Somerset County Council, emails 20<sup>th</sup> May & 11<sup>th</sup> June
- Colin McDonald, South Somerset DC, 7<sup>th</sup> June
- Andre Sestini, Mendip DC, 22<sup>nd</sup> April
- Jan Richardson, Western Section Showmen’s Guild, 10<sup>th</sup> June
- Imogen Statham (Dorset GTAA team) 11<sup>th</sup> June

### Telephone Interviews

- Barry James, Somerset County Council, 14<sup>th</sup> June
- Dave Woodridge, Mendip DC, 18<sup>th</sup> June
- Martin Wilsher, West Somerset DC, 18<sup>th</sup> June
- Angela Farmer, Sedgemoor DC, 18<sup>th</sup> June

### Face-to-Face Meetings

- Tracy Aarons, Mendip DC 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2013
- Ann Rhodes, Taunton Deane BC, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013
- Councillor Ric Pallister, South Somerset, 12<sup>th</sup> June

### Site Visits with Sally Woodbury Somerset Travellers Ltd 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013

- Otterford, Taunton Deane
- Stogursey, West Somerset
- Middlezoy, Sedgemoor
- Weston Zoyland, Sedgemoor