



# Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment

September 2011 update

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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 This update report has been specifically prepared to allow the Council to build on the information obtained in the 2007 report and quantify the likely need for accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers for the period of the Local Development Plan 2011 – 2021.

1.2 Under Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985, local authorities are required to consider the accommodation needs in their area and to carry out a periodic review of these needs. Section 225 of the Housing Act 2004 introduced a specific requirement for local authorities to assess the needs of Gypsies and Travellers within their area. This report is Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's response to that requirement and its main purpose is to provide:

- An overview of the current provision of site accommodation.
- Current levels of accommodation needs, including overcrowding and poor accommodation conditions.
- Household aspirations, preferences and concerns in terms of location, tenure, size and type of accommodation sought.
- The size and type of accommodation provision that is needed, including the demand for authorised sites (both static and transit) and for permanent affordable accommodation provision.
- Projected future levels of accommodation needed.

1.3 The research methodology was in accordance with Welsh Assembly Government Circular 30/2007 - Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites.

1.4 The research also drew on:

- Secondary Information: records of planning applications, unauthorised encampments and site management; and relevant strategies and policies: ORS report on "Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent Local Housing Market Assessment: Needs of Specific Household Groups"
- Interviews with local Gypsies and Travellers: there were structured interviews in September 2011 with 14 of the 19 Gypsy and Traveller Families on the publicly owned Cwmcraehen caravan site and 2 families in housing.

## **2. Existing Provision**

2.1 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area has traditionally had a very static Gypsy Traveller population. We currently have one permanent site at Cwmcraehen, Nantyglo and a Gypsy settlement has been in this area for over 200 years.

2.2 Due in part to our geographical location we have very few transient travellers settling in illegal encampments but each year we usually have a small number of vans that stop in the Borough for 5-7 days for short term work opportunities. The

Council has developed a policy for dealing with such encampments that includes providing the transient travellers with a Good Neighbour Guide so they can be sure of what the Council will do for them and what the Council expects of them. (see Appendix One)

- 2.3 Since 2007 there has been no need to take any other action other than provide WC and waste disposal facilities during these short-term visits. It should be noted that the visiting groups of Gypsies and Travellers have not always complied with all the requirements of the Good Neighbour Guide. Substantial amounts have had to be spent to clear up waste after the travellers have left.
- 2.4 Cwmcrachen Caravan Site was upgraded extensively between 2007 and 2009. The site now provides 20 permanent residential pitches. 19 of these pitches provide individual amenity units for the residents. The final unit is reserved for occupants who can provide their own amenities – usually in the form of a static caravan or similar. Connections to mains water, electricity and foul water disposal are provided.
- 2.5 The site now also benefits from a full CCTV system, a children's play area, a new wardens office incorporating a small private meeting room used by school outreach and medial workers. Road signage has been improved and speed humps installed.
- 2.6 There are currently no transit pitches available on site.
- 2.7 A site warden is on site on a daily basis and the site is managed by the Environmental Health Section of the Council.
- 2.8 There are no other illegal or private sites within the County Borough.
- 2.9 A new form of License Agreement has been issued to all residents since May 2009. These set out in much more open and transparent terms the conditions attached to holding a plot on Cwmcrachen Caravan Site.

### **3. Housing Needs Assessment Interviews**

- 3.1 Interviews were undertaken during September 2011.
- 3.2 The objective of the interviews was to assess likely household formation from within the existing families resident on the site to determine likely demands for future provision.
- 3.3 The interviews were undertaken by the Gypsy Site Warden.
- 3.4 In total 14 families were interviewed on Cwmcrachen Caravan Site.
- 3.5 In addition using information from the resident on Cwmcrachen we were able to interview an additional 2 Gypsy and Traveller families living in bricks and mortar accommodation.

#### 4. Survey Findings

- 4.1 The survey showed that the Gypsy and Traveller population within Blaenau Gwent is very static.
- 4.2 Only one family out of the 16 interviewed (6%) expressed an interest in moving. This was a move from Cwmcrachen into bricks and mortar accommodation. This decision was based on the fact that a family member was seriously ill and required care that could be better provided in a house.
- 4.3 The survey showed that of the families interviewed there had been no deaths during the last five years. Anecdotally the resident Gypsy Traveller families are mainly young families with children or young couples. Cwmcrachen has few elderly individuals or couples and none were found in bricks and mortar accommodation.
- 4.4 There had only been one move on the site where a child from a family had moved to his own pitch on the site.
- 4.5 Three families had left Cwmcrachen and moved into bricks and mortar accommodation. Of these the whereabouts of one family is known. This elderly couple moved to allow better care and treatment of an illness within the family.
- 4.6 No members of the Gypsy Traveller community in Blaenau Gwent interviewed (2 families) who currently live in bricks and mortar accommodation expressed an interest to move back onto a site.

#### 5. Secondary Data Analysis

- 5.1 Since 2007 there have been 6 illegal encampments. These can be broken down as follows:

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 (to date)
	1	1	1	2	1

- 5.2 There is no pattern to the location of these illegal encampments. The sites occupied by the Gypsies and Travellers were usually privately owned land, examples include the access road to a former open cast mine and a parcel of unused land on a large industrial estate.
- 5.3 There are also records of Gypsies and Travellers occupying Council owned land mainly on industrial estates and in turn areas at the end of dead end roads on such sites.
- 5.4 Planning data shows that no applications have been received for private or other residential sites for Gypsies and Travellers in Blaenau Gwent since 2007. Indeed there is no record of such an application ever having been made.

## 6. Estimated Future Accommodation Provision

- 6.1 Table 2 below summarises the estimated need for permanent residential pitches between 2011 – 2021.
- 6.2 The approach adopted in quantifying the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches within Blaenau Gwent is based on guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, “Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments” (2007).
- 6.3 This assessment has also based figures on the growth rate of 4% per year suggested in the Niner Report of 2006 (Accommodation Needs of Gypsy Travellers in Wales)

**Table 2 Estimated Need for Residential Pitches 2011-2021**

<b>Current Residential Supply</b>		<b>Data Source</b>
Supply of occupied socially rented site pitches available	20	20 permanent pitches on Cwmcrachen
Supply of occupied authorised privately owned pitches	0	No privately owned sites in Blaenau Gwent
<b>Available Supply of site pitches</b>	<b>20</b>	
Number of pitches unavailable for letting	0	All 20 pitches are available on Cwmcrachen
Number of pitches expected to become available through turnover	4	Based on turnover of pitches
Number of households on site accommodation expressing desire to live in bricks and mortar accommodation	6	Based on site survey and site warden data of those moving from site to bricks and mortar
New LA pitches planned	0	Planning Data
Number of private site developments/pitches planned	0	Planning Data
Pitches on unauthorised encampments	0	Enforcement data
Concealed households in the area currently in need of accommodation (backlog)	4	Site estimates on plot turnover
New family formations expected to arise between 2011- 2021 (4% per year)	10	Niner Report growth estimate
Number of households in bricks and mortar accommodation in need of site accommodation	0	Interviews
<b>ESTIMATED NEED 2011-2021</b>	<b>4</b>	
Pitches available for current and planned supply for 2011-2021	20 4	Site pitches available Estimated Need
<b>INDICATIVE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PERMANENT PITCHES 2011-21</b>	<b>4</b>	

## **APPENDIX ONE**



### **The Good Neighbour Code**

What we expect when you decide to stay in Blaenau Gwent

In Blaenau Gwent we recognise that there will be occasions when travelling families will need to set up a temporary home on land that is not intended for that purpose. We accept that lawful stopping sites are scarce and so, we have prepared this Good Neighbour Guide to ensure that your needs and the needs of the settled community are met.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (as landowners) will allow you to stay on this land as a temporary measure. However, in return we expect that you comply with all of the following:

- **Keep in small groups; not more than 6 caravans;**
- **Look after the land you park on and respect nearby residents;**
- **Keep animals under control at all times;**
- **Dispose of litter and rubbish in the bags or bins provided;**
- **Do not Fly-Tip;**
- **Use the “Portaloo” provided;**
- **For your own safety and that of others, remember the Highway Code;**
- **Do not start fires which may get out of control or cause concern/danger to nearby residents/properties;**
- **Do not start fires which will produce dark or black smoke, cause nuisance through smoke/smell or damage the land;**

We will also expect you to pay towards services, such as the hire of a Portaloo or waste disposal services, whilst you are on the site.

If you comply with all of the above the Council will allow you to stay on this site for up to two weeks. You will not be able to return to the same site within the following four weeks.

If you have any specific needs or would like to discuss this guide further please contact :

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