

## **Assessment of Accommodation Needs of Showmen in Conwy – February 2017**

### **1. Background**

On 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016 a Planning Enquiry has received by Conwy CBC for a residential Showman site. In order to inform the enquiry the Housing Strategy Team were asked to provide detail on the accommodation needs of Showmen in the County.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 definition of a Gypsy or Traveller includes members of an organized group of travelling show people or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such).

The same act also places a duty on Local Authorities to assess the accommodation needs of defined travelling groups and make provision for sites where the assessment identifies need.

Conwy CBC most recent Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment was submitted to Welsh Government in January 2017. Whilst the assessment did not identify a need for accommodation from the Showman population and there was no engagement in the assessment from a member of that community it is acknowledged that the fieldwork was conducted at a busy period in the working calendar. The assessment was also poorly publicised by within the Showman community.

This assessment provides supplementary evidence to the approved Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

### **2. Review of Best Practice**

The Showmans Guild of Great Britain provide best practice advice on the provision of Showmens Permanent Parking Sites. This includes the follow observations:

- The accommodation needs of Showmen with respect to permanent parking sites differs significantly from any other traveller group
- A showmen's equipment is inseparable from his home
- Equipment is almost regarded as extensions of the family, passed down from generation to generation

The emotional attachment to their equipment as well as the need for constant maintenance creates an inseparable link between residential accommodation and equipment and vehicle storage. This poses challenges for the Showmen community in finding suitable locations for both to be accommodated appropriately.

Young adults will be given a ride by their family in order to establish their own business, making their transition to independent living all the harder as any accommodation option must also take into their storage needs.

Permanent residential plots for Showman are used to site a park home. Caravans are used in connection with touring for business purposes.

There is a tradition of Showman preferring to find their own solution to their accommodation needs rather than approaching the Local Authority. They will also assist and support households within their own community network.

The proposed site will separate the storage of touring vehicles, and equipment which ensuring that they are located nearby for maintenance etc.

### **3. Showmen in North Wales and Conwy County**

Although Showmen will travel across the UK to events and shows which hire their equipment, there has been an established number of households based on the North Wales Coast and in particular the eastern edge of Conwy County for some generations.

The Tir Prince Amusement Park provides seasonal opportunities for rides and catering facilities to be provided, whilst events such as the Llandudno Victorian Extravaganza also provide local employment opportunities.

### **4. Household Interviews**

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017 interviews were arranged with a number of Showmen households who had expressed a wish to be accommodated on a Showman's yard and who lived or had a local residential or business connection with Conwy County.

Appendix 1 provides a summary of the information collected. The households are anonymised to protect personal information. All interviewees understood that the assessment was being conducted in order to provide evidence for the proposed site.

This is an accommodation assessment rather than an investigation into the planning situation at the locations visited. It was identified that this should be the case in order for personal information to be willingly shared.

Interviews took place with 5 households and details were given of a further 3 households known to have a need for alternative accommodation. 3 of these households currently reside in the County.

3 new households were identified as forming in the next 12 months based on the ages of children/young adults. A 5 further households were likely to form in the next 5 years on the same basis.

The accommodation circumstances of the households included:

- Touring caravan on a family member's property
- Privately rented accommodation
- Owner occupier
- Private Showman Yard

#### **4.1 Touring caravan on a family member's property**

Two households, one containing 3 children were identified as living in a touring caravan on a family member's property. In both cases a relationship breakdown had led to the households returning to the area. The households make use of washing facilities within the caravans, so live independently to the property, although they are dependent upon the property for water and electricity.

Whilst this is regarded as a temporary solution, one household had lived this way for a two year period. Both households benefited from the support of family members and could have sought housing advice and assistance from the Local Authority, but had chosen not to.

In one case, rides and vehicles was stored alongside the caravan. In the other rides were located at a place of business where it was being tolerated by the land owner. Limited access to equipment and a lack of facilities for maintenance were restricting the business and ability to be reactive to work opportunities.

Their main accommodation challenges a need for a combined accommodation and storage solution which is not currently available and a concern about the threat to their current situation through planning enforcement by the Local Authority.

#### **4.2 Privately rented accommodation**

One household with two children was currently accommodated in a privately rented property where they had lived for 4 years. The property was not large enough for their needs, children of different sexes sharing, they were unable to store their catering equipment at the property and were concerned that the neighbours would complain if they did. Whilst not reported as a major concern, they did state that their children were not happy playing with neighbours as they were considered to be the "kids from the fair".

There was an aspiration to live in a park home where "you could spread out more" and to live closer to other members for the Showman community.

Tolerated storage with limited access was again an issue for them and limiting business opportunities.

#### **4.3 Owner Occupier**

Two households are owner occupiers and their properties are large enough for their accommodation needs. Both have young adult children who aspire to have their own accommodation but are unable find a suitable location which also allows them to store their equipment.

For these households, storage is their main issues as there are unable to store their vehicles and rides at their properties due to lack of available space and the residential location, instead privately rented storage facilities are used. Depending on the size of the storage area rental levels can be up to £100 per week. Maintenance work is not possible here due to a lack of circulation space, electricity and water.

#### **4.4 Private Showmen Yard**

Two of the households rented a pitch on a Showman Yard in North East Wales. Due to the shortage of pitches of this nature, conditions on the Yard were overcrowded, there was insufficient circulation space between touring caravans and storage/maintenance facilities were inadequate.

One household had a small child with another one expected. Safe outside play space was considered to be an issue.

The other household had 4 children, one being 16 years old and living in a separate caravan alongside their parents. As with the other young adults identified, accommodation options for independent living are very limited.

Both households reported that the costs of transport to the numerous work opportunities in the Conwy area as an issue. One household also had family residing in Conwy.

### **5. Affordability**

An off-site contribution will be made for the one residential dwelling.

### **6. Summary of findings**

#### **6.1 Household Numbers**

- 8 existing households identified with an aspiration to live on a private yard plus 3 emerging households identified
- A further 5 emerging households by 2022 identified

#### **6.2 Accommodation Need**

- 2 households lived in a caravan and do not have anywhere to lawfully locate it
- 2 households (with one emerging) lived on an overcrowded yard

#### **6.3 Storage Need**

- All households reporting inadequacy in their current storage arrangements, either due to access, cost or facilities adequately maintain their equipment

- 2 households in North East Wales reported a need to relocate to the Conwy area to reduce travel costs

#### **6.4 Community Links**

- The interviews revealed the strength of support mechanisms within the Showman Community and family networks
- All interviews aspired to live on a yard with other Showmen and with their family on neighbouring pitches
- One household reported the difficulties of living on a residential estate and identified community tensions

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Appendix 1 – Interview Findings

<i>To be removed</i>	Ref	Interviewed/ Identified	Household Composition	Current Accommodation	Current Storage	Emerging household		County	Connection to Conwy
						2017	2022		
<i>Jade</i>	1	Interviewed	Single parent with 3 children (12,10 & 8)	Caravan on family member's property	Tolerated at business site	0	1	Neighbouring Authority	Business Family
<i>Simon</i>	2	Interviewed	Couple with 2 adult children 21 and 23	Owner Occupier	Storage facility	1	1	Neighbouring Authority	Business
<i>Brandon</i>	3	Identified	Couple plus 4 children (14-21)	Owner Occupier	Storage facility	1	3	Neighbouring Authority	Business
<i>Jared</i>	4	Interviewed	Couple with 3 children (11,9 & 5)	Private Rent	Tolerated at business site			Conwy	Residence Business
<i>Navenka</i>	5	Identified	Single	Caravan on family member's property	Adjacent to caravan	0	0	Conwy	Residence Business
<i>Charles</i>	6	Interviewed	Couple plus 2 children – 13 and 9	Owner Occupier	Tolerated at business site	0	0	Conwy	Residence Business
<i>Alexander</i>	7	Interviewed	Couple plus 1 child (2) 1 expected	Private Yard	Private Yard	0	0	North East Wales	Family Business
<i>Tamra</i>	8	Identified	Single Parent, 16, 12 and 9	Private Yard	Private Yard	1	?	North East Wales	Business
<b>Total Emerging Households</b>						<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>		