

Design Guide

for Travellers' Sites
in Northern Ireland



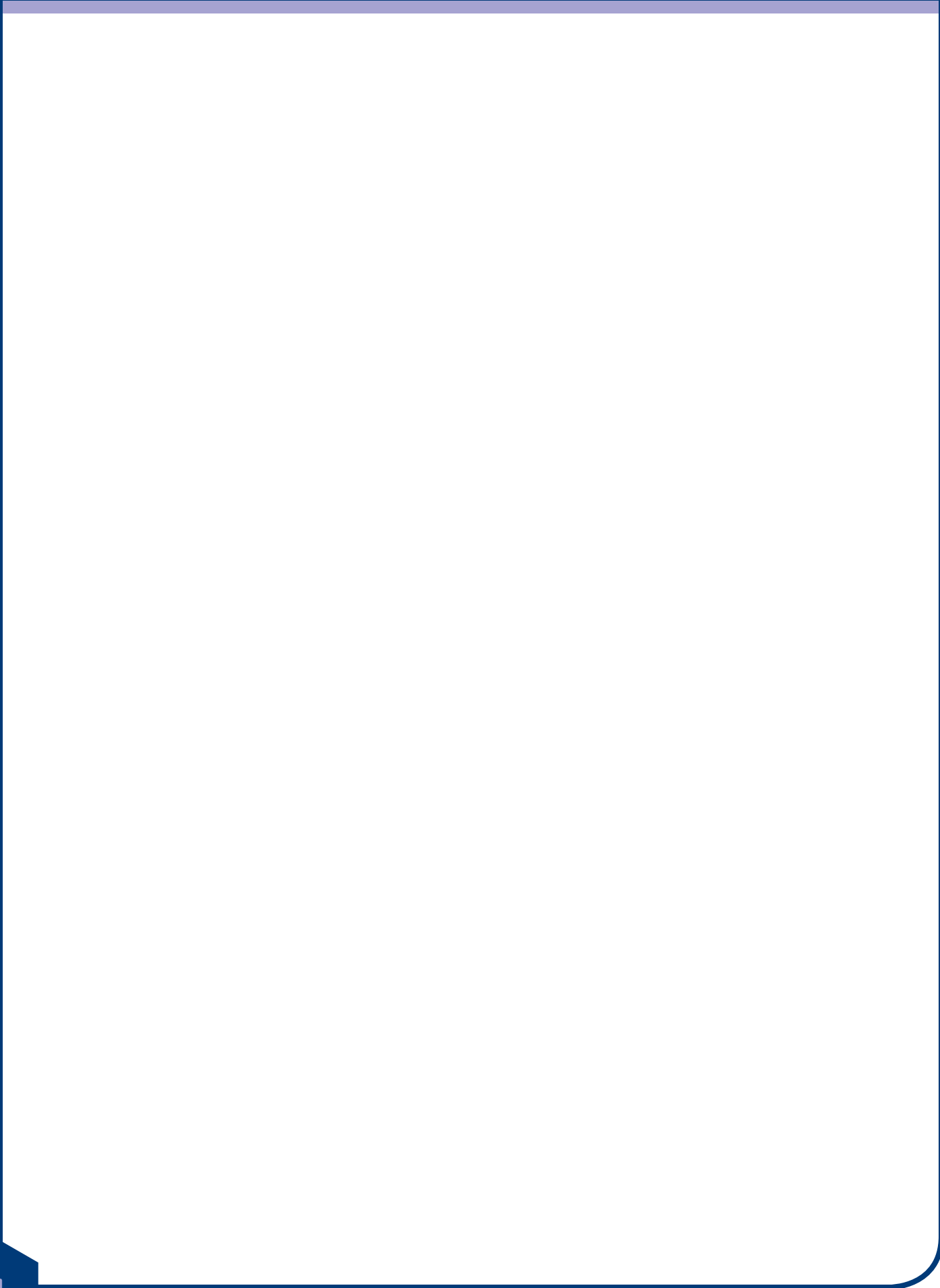
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Introduction

The current Design Guide for Travellers' Sites in Northern Ireland was published by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (DOE (NI)) in 1997, since then there have been a number of development and policy changes in how accommodation for Travellers is provided. This new version of the guide has been produced to reflect these changes.

In 1999 the DOE New Policy on Accommodation for Travellers recommended that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive be given the strategic role and responsibility for the provision of accommodation for Travellers. This included the transfer of all existing Council owned serviced sites to the Housing Executive.

The Housing Order (NI) 2003 provided the legislative framework to allow for the transfer of all sites/land which received funding in the form of a Government grant either for the acquisition or development of land for Traveller accommodation. On 1st December 2003 sites/lands were transferred under the Order from the following District Councils Strabane, Belfast, Derry, Omagh and Dungannon.

Since then, the Housing Executive has worked to improve the range of accommodation options available in delivering the Traveller Accommodation Programme and continues to work with partner agencies nationally, regionally and locally to reduce the inequalities experienced by Travellers.

In 2002 the Housing Executive completed a comprehensive assessment of the accommodation needs of all Traveller households in Northern Ireland. The impetus for this first needs assessment arose from recommendations made in the final report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers in December 2000. This needs assessment was updated by a second comprehensive Travellers' Accommodation Needs Assessment that was published in November 2008. A new assessment is due to be carried out in 2013.

Travellers have distinctive needs which will be assessed as part of the local housing needs assessment undertaken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Where a need is identified and a development plan is under preparation, the plan should identify a suitable site(s). However, where such sites are not identified in development plans, proposals will be assessed under the provisions of development management Policy HS 3 'Travellers Accommodation' contained within Policy Planning Statement 12 and Policy CTY 1 in Policy Planning Statement 21.



Scope

This guidance is primarily intended to cover social site provision for Irish Travellers and covers a range of sites including:

- **Serviced Site**

This is a range of managed accommodation where Irish Traveller families have a permanent base to park their caravan or erect timber framed sectional buildings; where electricity, water and sewerage are provided and where other facilities such as communal or individual amenity units may be provided.

- **Transit Site**

This is a basic facility where Irish Travellers may park their caravans on a temporary basis and where electricity, water and sewerage services are provided.

- **Emergency Halting Site**

This is a temporary place to park with basic facilities managed under Co-operation Policy principles

A range of managed accommodation where Irish Traveller families have a permanent base to park their caravan or erect timber framed sectional buildings; where electricity, water and sewerage are provided and where other facilities such as communal or individual amenity units may be provided

Section 1 – The Site

1.1 Site Location / Selection

Selecting the right location for a site is a key element in supporting good community relations and maximising its success. As with any other form of housing, poorly located sites with no easy access to major roads or public transport services will have a detrimental effect on the ability of residents to:

- Seek or retain employment
- Attend school, further education or training
- Obtain access to health services and shopping facilities

Easy access to local services and to social contact with other residents in the community should help deal with the myths and stereotypes which can cause community tension and instead encourage a greater sense of community with shared interests.

It is essential to ensure that the location of a site will provide a safe environment for the residents. Sites should not be situated near refuse sites, industrial processes or other hazardous places as this will obviously have a detrimental effect on the general health and well-being of the residents and pose particular safety risks for young children. All prospective site locations should be considered carefully before any decision is taken to proceed to ensure that the health and safety of prospective residents are not at risk. It should also provide visual and acoustic privacy and have characteristics which are sympathetic to the local environment. When selecting locations for permanent sites consideration needs to be given to the relatively high number of children likely to be on the site.

Sites should not be identified for Traveller use in locations that are inappropriate for ordinary residential dwellings unless exceptional circumstances apply. Such circumstances would be where the location is unsuitable for housing for practical or technical reasons but would not adversely affect the health and safety of the Traveller residents or the sustainability of the site and where the location has prospective residents' support. This could relate for example to a situation where:

- Prospective residents are happy to live in a location which is not attractive to housing developers
- Existing land is available to meet immediate need on a short term interim basis, pending a longer term solution, but not be available for a long enough period to justify housing development
- Land is suitable for low level single storey development but not for multi storey construction requiring deeper foundations

In such rare cases prospective residents should be made aware of these exceptional circumstances at the outset.

Where possible, sites should be close to local services and there should be a managed coexistence with the local community. As one way of helping to address shortages of site provision local councils and Housing Associations can consider the feasibility and scope for providing a site for Travellers within their negotiations to provide affordable housing as part of significant new build developments. Even where smaller scale developments are planned they could consider including a small scale site of three to four pitches which are known to work well for single extended families.

1.2 Relationship to Surrounding Land Use

Consideration must be given to the relationship of sites with the surrounding community. For this purpose it is important to ensure that proposals to develop a site link in with other broader strategies in place for improving community cohesion and be regarded as a key issue within them.

The site must be sustainable, offering scope to manage an integrated coexistence with the local community. This will include consideration of noise and possible disturbance to Travellers living on the site and possible noise and disturbance to the wider community in particular from movement of Traveller vehicles.

Many Travellers express a preference for a rural location which is on the edge of or closely located to a large town or city consistent with traditional lifestyles and means of employment. However, characteristics that make a location unpopular for the

settled community are likely to hold similar fears for Travellers. Sites adjacent to light industrial areas therefore tend not to be popular because of their isolation, distance from local facilities and because of safety fears (when walking home at night for instance).

1.3 Health and Safety Considerations

Sites must not be located on contaminated land. Only where land has been properly decontaminated should development be considered on that land. Remedial work should only be undertaken by approved contractors in accordance with relevant standards to ensure the contamination has been remedied to the standard on which housing development would take place. These processes can be prohibitively expensive and should be considered only where it is financially viable from the outset.

Brownfield sites may be suitable however the same considerations should apply when appraising such sites as for conventional residential housing. For instance, sites adjacent to a rubbish tip, on landfill sites, close to electricity pylons or any heavy industry are unlikely to be suitable.

When considering sites adjacent to main roads, flyovers and railway lines careful regard must be given to:

- The health and safety of children and others who will live on the site; and
- The greater noise transference through the walls of caravans than through the walls of conventional housing and the need for design measures (for instance noise barriers) to abate the impact on quality of life and health.

The proposed site must be relatively flat and suitable for purpose. Sites should not be developed on exposed sloping sites where there is risk of caravans being overturned or where there is a high probability of flooding risk.

Section 2 – Site Design

2. 1 Size and layout of the Site

When designing the layout of a site careful consideration must be given to the health and safety of residents and in particular children, given the likelihood of a high number of children and relatively high levels of vehicle ownership amongst some Travellers for towing caravans and employment purposes. The need for separate vehicular/pedestrian access should also be considered.

It is important to ensure that traffic calming measures are considered for all sites. Care should be taken when introducing speed humps and other measures to ensure that appropriate drainage is accommodated within the scheme to allow for the effective passage of surplus water.

Clear and effective signage should be introduced where a speed restriction or other traffic calming measure is to apply. Similarly, clear directions should be in place to indicate the location of hydrants and other access points for the fire service when attending an emergency on site.

For practical reasons, caravan sites require a greater degree of land usage per household than for smaller houses and Traveller sites are no exception. In making comparisons it needs to be recognised that there is for example no equivalent on a site to two or more storey accommodation in housing.

Traveller sites are designed to provide land per household which is suitable for a mobile home, touring caravan and a utility building together with space for parking. Sites of various sizes, layouts and pitch numbers operate successfully and work best when they take account of the size of the site and the needs and demographics of the families that resident on them. Many Travellers prefer a circular or horseshoe design rather than the traditional linear layout of pitches.

Consultation with the Traveller community is crucial in deciding how best to proceed with the overall layout of the site and how to get full value from the investment in it. It is a key element in obtaining the trust and full support of the prospective residents at the outset of the project and can help deal swiftly with subsequent consultation on individual aspects of the design as they arise.

There is no one ideal size of site or number of pitches. The size will depend on the individual scheme which will take into consideration the experience of the tenants, compatibility issues and guidance provided by the Housing Executive.

Where conditions permit sites should ideally consist of up to 15 pitches in capacity unless there is clear evidence to suggest that a different size site is preferred by the local Traveller community. Nevertheless, where a larger site is unavoidable, or where one exists already, in a few cases smaller 'closes' have been created within the site for extended families thereby retaining the sense of community and creating defensible space.

This arrangement could also open up possibilities for facilitating inter site transfers where for example families may be offered the opportunity to move closer to other family members or elderly and dependant relatives where a pitch in a certain close may become available.

2.2 Site Boundaries

The site boundary must provide clear demarcation of the perimeter of the site so as to prevent nuisance for existing residents created by others seeking to move on to the site without permission. Boundaries should take into account adjoining land uses and be designed for the safety and protection of children.

Where an existing site may be located near an industrial area or process or a main road, fencing and planting may be used to screen out unpleasant characteristics. A range of different boundaries may be used including fences, low walls, hedges and natural features. The aim should be to achieve a boundary that is sympathetic to and in keeping with the surrounding area. Boundaries can also be used to provide shelter for more exposed sites.

More open boundaries may be used in residential areas so as to promote integration and inclusion with the surrounding community although the degree of integration which can be achieved will be in part governed by the degree of community cohesion already experienced in that location. A balance needs to be struck between providing privacy and security for the site residents and avoiding a sense of enclosure through for example the use of high railings.

Measures to protect the safety of site residents from fire are of paramount importance and it is essential that a clear gap of 3 metres is provided within the inside of all site perimeter boundaries as a fire prevention measure.

2.3 Size of Pitch

In common with some other ethnic minority communities some Travellers often have larger than average families, for instance where members of an extended family live together. For this reason there is likely to be much greater demand amongst these communities for large family units, and small pitches may become quickly overcrowded. Larger than average family sizes, alongside the need for vehicles for towing caravans and for employment also creates particular requirements for parking.

There is no one-size-fits-all measurement of a pitch as, in the case of the settled community, this depends on the size of individual families and their particular needs. In designing a site, account should be taken of the likely characteristics of families on the waiting list as identified in the Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment in Northern Ireland. There may be a larger element of families with children approaching teenage years who are likely to need to one or two additional small touring caravans on the pitch as separate sleeping accommodation, until their children are old enough to move on to a separate pitch.

Some families may also be in possession of larger mobile homes and one or two pitches should be designed where possible to cater for that possibility.

Alternatively, potential residents may be single or elderly members of the community, who would not need a pitch of the same size.

As a general guide, it is possible to specify that an average family pitch must be capable of accommodating an amenity building, a large trailer and touring caravan, drying space for clothes, a lockable shed (for bicycles, wheelchair storage etc), parking space for two vehicles and a small garden area.

Smaller pitches must be able to accommodate at least an amenity building, a large caravan, drying space for clothes and parking for at least one vehicle.

Individual parking spaces should be a minimum of 2.4 × 4.8 metres.

Where space permits the inclusion of a garden or play space on each pitch is recommended.

Drainage falls must comply with Part N of the Building Regulations 1990. Ideally the pitch should be level apart from drainage falls.

2.4 Layout of Pitches

The layout of pitches will depend on the layout of the overall site. There will be different views about whether to have grassed areas and amenities at the front, back or side of the pitch. Discussion with the Traveller community will be useful however developers also need to consider prospective residents.

Each pitch should be clearly demarcated to make it clear what each individual household may occupy in return for the fee paid and their responsibilities for the pitch they occupy.

A range of different boundaries may be used including fences, low walls, hedges and natural features. The aim should be to achieve a boundary that is clear, sympathetic to and in keeping with surrounding areas.

Pitch boundary fences should provide a balance between good neighbourliness and privacy. For example fencing between pitches could be up to 1.8 metres in height, particularly where amenity buildings would otherwise be overlooked, whereas 1.2 metre high fencing around the front of the pitch will offer good surveillance of the road and the site in general.

2.5 Orientation of Pitches

As with the settled community, site layout and design should ensure a degree of privacy for each household without inhibiting the sense of community.

Where residents are members of an extended family, there may be a preference for individual households to have a reasonable vision of the site in general to help improve security. On larger sites, or those with a broader spectrum of residents, more seclusion and privacy may be preferred. In these cases, preferences over the degree of privacy required can be addressed in part by the height of fencing between individual pitches, particularly to shield the amenity building and by use of other soft landscaping approaches.

In designing the layout of a site enough space must be provided to permit the easy manoeuvrability of the residents own living accommodation both to the site and subsequently on to a pitch. Account needs to be taken of a tendency for some Travellers to use a mobile home in place of the traditional caravan.

Some mobile homes could be up to around 25 metres in length. In order to overcome this, the site design should strike a balance between enabling a variety of accommodation to be catered for and making best use of available space. Access roads and the site design should provide sufficient space for the manoeuvrability of average size caravans of up to 15 metres in length with capacity for larger mobile homes on a limited number of pitches where accessibility can be properly addressed in the light of the land available.

In addition to the movement of families on and off the site, site residents will sometimes wish to change the caravan accommodation they own and this movement can sometimes cause problems when boundary fences or gates do not allow for this. This could be overcome by the use of movable fencing and gates adjacent to the roadside which are capable of short term removal.

2.6 Access for Emergency Vehicles

It is essential consultation with local fire and rescue service officers take place at a very early stage of designing a site. Some authorities are reported to differ in advice as to a minimum turning and reversing requirements of emergency vehicles which may impact on the number of pitches permitted. Good practice from recognised sources is outlined in the paragraphs below which can be used as a starting point prior to discussions with local emergency services.

In designing a site, all routes for vehicles on the site, and for access to the site, must allow easy access for emergency vehicles and safe places for turning. To enable this roads must be provided with no caravan more than 50 metres from a road. Roads must have no overhead cable less than 4.5 metres above ground. Vehicular access and gateways must be at least 3.1 metres wide and have a minimum clearance of 3.7 metres.

Roads must not be less than 3.7 metres wide or if they form part of a one way traffic system, 3 metres wide. One way systems should be clearly sign posted.

To increase potential access points for emergency vehicles more than one access route into the site is recommended. Where possible, site roads should be designed to allow two vehicles to pass each other (minimum 5.5m). Specific guidance should be sought from the local fire authority for each site.

Although roads on sites do not require adoption it is recommended all roads are constructed to adoptable standards to avoid future maintenance costs from increased wear and tear due to frequent movement of heavy vehicles.

2.7 Children's Play Area

A communal recreation / play area for children of all ages should be considered where suitable provision is not available within walking distance on a safe route or using easily accessible public transport. For larger sites specially designated play areas should be designed where possible in consultation with children and parents, to ensure they provide the equipment that will be most used. The Housing Executive should also be consulted in view of the ongoing maintenance issues.

Where recreation areas are provided it is important to ensure they are designed and located with the safety of children in mind (taking into account the proximity of busy roads) and allowing for natural supervision. Play areas should meet normal local authority standards.

Locating play areas in secluded areas of the site and near boundary perimeters is not favoured as children could be subject to outside harassment and the play area and equipment open to vandalism. Perimeter fencing should be included to ensure children are safe from site traffic.

2.8 Car parking

A key element for the site is the provision of adequate parking space for resident's use. Parking spaces must be a minimum of 2.4 x 4.8 metres. Resident parking should be provided for on individual pitches but a site should also contain additional parking facilities for visitors as parking on the roadside could otherwise impede access of fire and other emergency services. Separate parking areas may present security considerations for residents and should therefore be situated in sight of residents generally.

2.9 Site Security

Site layout can play an important role in avoiding a sense of enclosure and isolation amongst Travellers. The aim should be to 'design out' crime and social exclusion and 'design in' community safety and social inclusion through openness of design, allowing ease in passing through whether walking or driving. Care also needs to be taken to ensure the safety of residents and children where car traffic passes through.

Before pursuing this approach however prospective residents should be consulted at the outset to ascertain the level of community cohesion already prevalent in the area and to establish the degree to which those who are to live on the site are comfortable with this approach and if it meets the degree of privacy and security that is acceptable.

Site layout should maximise natural surveillance enabling residents to easily oversee all areas of the site. Scheme specific advice on security provision for the site should be obtained from the Police Architectural Liaison Officer for the area and reference should be made to 'Secure by Design' standards to inform detailed planning of the site.

To avoid disputes and provide defensible space it is important to provide clear delineation of public communal areas such as play areas and private space with boundaries that indicate clearly where individual pitches begin and end. It is recommended that communal areas without a clear usage are avoided in the design as they may attract vandalism, fly tipping or unauthorised caravans.

It is recommended that local needs and preferences are taken into account as well as the requirements of the local roads authority and fire and rescue services when designing the entrance to the site. Many Travellers are in favour of controlled access to sites, for example using a lockable gate. Such controls can prevent unauthorised parking and caravans on site; however such gates can sometimes act as a psychological barrier to effective social inclusion. Gates also can hinder access for emergency services, postal deliveries and refuse collection and they may also hinder access for emergency services, postal deliveries and refuse collection.

2.10 Landscaping

Some Travellers may express a preference for soft landscaping (grassed areas, shrubs and trees) as opposed to hard landscaping (paved or concrete areas) although this can have an impact on the maintenance budget. Attractive landscaping can enhance resident satisfaction and pride with the site, encouraging participation with management to maintain their surroundings.

Soft landscaping can be used to ensure spatial separation which prevents the movement of caravans to positions which would breach fire safety distances from the adjoining pitch. When designing a site to include soft landscaping thought needs to be given to preventing it from being used for unauthorised parking or unauthorised pitching of caravans.

2.11 Hard Standing

Each pitch must include a hard standing area constructed of concrete or a similar suitable hard wearing material which extends over the whole area to be occupied by a touring caravan or other vehicle. These standings must be constructed in accordance with the industry code of practice and project a sufficient distance outwards to enable occupants to enter and leave safely. The base must be sufficient to bear the load placed on it by the home or vehicle and its contents, and the anticipated level of vehicle movement.

Hard-standing should be part of the landscape design. The pitch width need not be entirely paved but could be designed to break monotonous design with soft landscape. Where soft landscaping is adopted in the design consideration should be given to the inclusion of a storage facility on each pitch for residents to keep equipment to maintain it.

Local councils and the Housing Executive should consider the environmental impact of the site and measures that might be taken to improve sustainability. For example, the inclusion of separate identifiable containers for the collection of recyclable waste and provision of water butts is recommended.

Section 3 – Site Facilities

3.1 Amenity Building

It is essential for an amenity building to be provided on each pitch, although this can be provided across two pitches as two separate and entirely self contained semi-detached units. The amenity building must include as a minimum hot and cold water supply, electricity supply, a separate toilet and hand wash basin, a bath/shower room and a kitchen and dining area. The access to the toilet should be through a lobbied area or by separate access direct from the pitch.

The amenity building must include, secure storage space for harmful substances/ medicines, enclosed storage for food, brooms, washing, cleaning items and space for connection of a cooker, fridge/freezer and washing machine. The provision of a gas hob could be considered.

The inclusion of a day/living room in the amenity building for family meals is recommended. The day/living room could be combined with the kitchen area to provide a kitchen/dining/lounge area. It is desirable that the day/living room should not be part of essential circulation space, nor contain essential storage.

The design and construction of amenity buildings must meet the requirements of the current Building Regulations, the Institution of Electrical Engineers regulations, the Local Water Authority and Local Housing Authority Design and Quality Standards. Materials used must comply with the relevant British Standards and Codes of Practice and provide for durable and low maintenance buildings. Its construction should be, sympathetic to local architecture, be attractive and of a domestic nature to meet the requirements of PPS12.

It is recommended that amenity buildings incorporate cost effective energy efficiency measures. Layout and construction should be designed to maximise energy conservation and the use of passive solar gain. All mechanical and electrical systems should be as energy efficient as possible.

Consideration should be given to the insulation of plumbing systems, the use of low energy light fittings and appropriate heating and ventilation systems. Any opportunity for using energy from renewable sources should be considered.

Adequate and sensibly situated electrical outlets, switching and controls should be installed throughout the amenity building.

Means of heating should be installed throughout the amenity building which provides temperatures suitable for room use, which is economical and capable of individual control for each room.

The width of main entrances, doorways and passageways must comply with building regulations to ensure mobility standards. Fixtures and fittings in the amenity building should be domestic but robust.

In line for standards for social housing other recommended features include:

- Glazing lines in living/dining area no higher than 810mm above floor level
- Hot water taps to baths/showers with a thermostatically controlled supply
- Adequate screening and wall tiling where showers are provided over baths
- A worktop-cooker-sink-worktop sequence that is not broken by doors, passageways or tall units
- A 1.2 metre run of worktop between the cooker and the sink
- A 500 mm minimum worktop each side of the cooker and wall units set back minimum 100 mm
- A space for additional equipment such as a microwave
- Walls in bathrooms and WCs must be designed to take support aids
- Smoke/fire and heat detectors.

3.2 Communal Facilities (where provided)

Where a site is isolated from local facilities either by distance or a lack of public transport facilities and/or is large enough for a diverse community of residents rather than one extended family, provision of a communal building is recommended. This facility can be an important resource in sustaining a more remote site offering an opportunity for visits by health visitors, youth workers and education services as well as use by site management and residents alike.

Any such building should include:

- A community room
- Toilets (male and female)
- A kitchenette.

Ideally it should be situated towards the front of the site, accessible to all the community not just site residents and if promoted and managed well can help encourage good relations between Traveller and neighbouring communities.

3.3 Lighting

Sufficient lighting must be provided on the site to enable safe access and movement through the site at night for both pedestrians and vehicles. External lighting should also be provided on amenity buildings to ensure safe access.

Street lighting arrangements should be planned to minimise the risk of damage through vandalism and avoid problems of light pollution to homes on the site through light shining directly into caravans or amenity buildings. It should be planned to properly illuminate access roads and access to residential pitches.

Consideration could be given to using three quarter length light pillars where there is a prospect the site may create light pollution for neighbouring sites.

3.4 Postal Arrangements

The site should be designed so that post can be delivered separately for each pitch. Experience has shown that postal deliveries to pitches can be disrupted by complaints about harassment by dangerous dogs so the provision of an individual box at the entry to a pitch would be advisable.

Consultation has shown that a simple but key element in helping to avoid discrimination against the residents of a Traveller site is to allocate site and pitch addresses which are of a similar nature to those for the settled community and which do not highlight that the accommodation is site based.

3.5 Waste Disposal, Scrap and Storage

Travellers should receive the same waste disposal arrangements as any other member of the community. Domestic waste disposal must be provided for each pitch in accordance with the local authority requirements. A key element in designing the layout of the site is to ensure sufficient space exists for refuse collection vehicles to reach an appropriate point from which waste can be collected from individual pitches, as well as any communal refuse areas.

Consideration should be given to including a recycling collection point on the site where it is not in close proximity to one in the neighbouring vicinity.

Communal refuse areas can encourage fly-tipping and the accumulation of non-domestic waste. If a communal refuse area is necessary (in addition to refuse collection for each pitch), this should be designed and located to be convenient, accessible, robust and inconspicuous. It should be located away from individual pitches and from access points to the site to ensure that fire service vehicles can enter the site and deal with any fire that might break out.

3.6 Space for Work and Animals

Traveller sites are essentially residential and those living there are entitled to a peaceful and enjoyable environment. Guidance on site management would therefore propose that working from residential pitches should be discouraged and residents should not normally be allowed to work elsewhere on site.

Where significant commercial or other work activity is envisaged it is very important to ensure the site is delineated so that residential areas are separated from commercial or work areas. The provision of facilities for some level of activity may therefore be considered where it is accepted that it is appropriate having regard to planning, environmental and health and safety considerations.

This also applies to the inclusion of space for keeping animals. Where there is demand for space for animals and where the site provider is satisfied that it may be reasonable and practicable to include this. Local councils do lease land for grazing and Travellers should be encouraged to apply for the use of such facilities.

Section 4 – Site Services

4.1 Scope to Provide Essential Services

All sites must be provided with access to mains water, electricity supply, drainage and sanitation. Sewerage for permanent sites should normally be through mains systems. In some locations this may not be possible and in that case alternative arrangements can be made, such as a sealed septic tank sewage system.

All sanitation must accord with current legislation, Building Regulations and British Standards.

4.2 Water supply

A mains water supply suitable for drinking must be provided for each pitch, sufficient to meet the reasonable demands of residents. Water supplies must comply with current legislation, Building Regulations and British Standards. Ideally water meters will be provided in amenity buildings by Northern Ireland Water and must be for domestic usage.

Water pressure must be sufficient to enable the use of fire hydrants by the emergency services which should be located near the front of the site.

Provision of an outside tap on each pitch is strongly recommended.

4.3 Electricity supply

Mains electricity to each pitch is essential, sufficient to meet the reasonable requirements of the residents, and with separate meters for each pitch. Ideally electricity meters will be provided in amenity buildings for each pitch by the relevant supplier and must be for domestic usage. Each Traveller household is responsible for their own electricity account.

Underground cabling must be adequately earthed and comply with current electrical installation regulations. Installations must be inspected annually and all electrical work carried out by competent / appropriately qualified personnel.

4.4 Connection points

Consideration may be given to providing more than one electricity and water access point on each pitch to allow for trailers to be realigned either through resident's choice, family expansion or to cater for visitors.

4.5 Gas supply

It is essential that gas installations, supplies and storage meet all statutory requirements, relevant standards and codes of practice. Storage facilities that comply with health and safety regulations for Liquid Propane Gas cylinders must be provided. As the guidance on storage is complex, the Housing Executive should seek advice from local environmental health services. It is essential any mains gas installation is inspected annually and certified as safe.

Provision of a mains gas supply is recommended for amenity buildings on pitches and, if supplied, must comply with current gas installation regulations.

4.6 Oil fired central heating

Installations for oil fired central heating should meet Part L of the Building Regulations 2006 together with appropriate storage and safety arrangements in case of oil leaks.

4.7 Drainage

Surface water and storm water drainage must be installed. All drainage must accord with current legislation, Building Regulations and British Standards. This should be given early consideration in both site selection and scheme design.

Smaller drain covers could be considered as these can assist in preventing foreign objects becoming accidentally lodged in soakaways and gulleys.

Traveller sites may offer opportunities for implementing a Sustainable Drainage Systems approach for dealing with surface water management where surface water runs off to either natural water courses or municipal systems.

Consideration should be given to the inclusion of interceptors within the drainage system to ensure protection against petrol, oil and other substances within the surface of the water case system.

4.8 Sewerage

Each pitch should be connected to a public sewer when it is economic to do so. Where this is not possible provision must be made for discharge to a properly constructed sealed septic tank. Sanitation provision must accord with current legislation, Building Regulations and British Standards.

Consideration should also be given to additional waste disposal connections from resident caravans to avoid problems over unauthorised connections.

Section 5 - Health, Safety and Accessibility

5.1. Risk assessment

It is essential that site owners undertake a risk assessment of the site during the initial stage, including the homes on the site.

5.2 Fire Safety

To ensure fire safety it is essential that every caravan must be not less than 6 metres from any other caravan that is occupied separately.

Other structures are allowed in the separation zone if they are made of non-combustible materials (such as a brick built amenity building), as long as they do not impede means of escape.

It is essential that site owners undertake a risk assessment of the site during the initial design stage, including the homes on the site.

It should pay particular attention to those at special risk, such as children, and must include consideration of any dangerous substance liable to be on the site. A fire risk assessment will help identify the risks that can be removed or be reduced and to decide the nature and extent of the general fire precautions.

The significant findings of such an assessment should always be recorded.

General fire precautions include measures to reduce the risk of fire on the site and the risk of the spread of fire on the site.

- (a) Pitches should be no more than 30 metres from a fire point. Fire points must be housed in a weatherproof structure, easily accessible and clearly and conspicuously marked 'Fire Point'. A clearly written and conspicuous notice should be provided and maintained at each 'Fire Point' to indicate the action to be taken in the case of fire including details of a muster point.
- (b) Water standpipes, hydrants or fire extinguishers should be provided on each site as determined by the risk assessment and as informed by consultation with the local fire officer. All equipment should conform to relevant British/European standards.

- (c) A means of raising the alarm in the case of fire should be provided at each fire point. This must be appropriate to the size and layout of the site and informed by consultation with the local fire officer.
- (d) All alarm and fire fighting equipment should be installed, tested and maintained in working order by a competent person. All equipment susceptible to frost should be suitably protected.

The level of necessary safety (or service) must be dictated by the findings of the risk assessment.

5.3 Accessibility

All private or communal buildings on the site must be provided to mobility standards as specified within Part R of the Building Regulations 2006. Developers must also have regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 both when designing the site and during refurbishment planning.

When considering the extent to which pitches, parking spaces and amenity buildings should be suitable for wheelchair users, reference should be made to local Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments. Where no need has been identified it is recommended that at least one pitch in 20 on a site of such size, or one pitch per site where smaller, be constructed to meet the needs of a disabled resident as a contingency for future demand. Where provided, these should be consistent with the standards for housing for wheelchair users as set out in the Department for Social Development's Design Standards as detailed in the Housing Association Development Guide.

A basic facility where Irish Travellers may park their caravans on a temporary basis and where electricity, water and sewerage are provided

Section 6 - The Site

6.1 Site Location / Selection - The guidance for permanent sites largely also applies except that the proximity to community facilities is primarily in respect of the need for access to schools. The presence of children on the site, and potential health and safety risks for them and other residents should receive equal consideration

6.2 Relationship to Surrounding Land Use – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

6.3 Health and Safety Considerations – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

Section 7 - Site Design

7.1 Number of pitches – The number of pitches should not normally exceed 15.

7.2 Site boundaries – The guidance for serviced sites applies

7.3 Size of pitch - Wherever possible each pitch should be of a size sufficient to accommodate two touring caravans, two parking spaces and private amenities.

7.4 Orientation of pitches – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

7.5 Access for emergency vehicles – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

7.6 Car Parking - It is recommended that parking space for at least two vehicles is provided on each individual pitch at a minimum size of 2.4m x 4.8m each.

7.7 Site Security – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

7.8 Landscaping - The guidance for serviced sites applies although soft landscaping on transit sites can be more difficult to maintain. As these sites are only intended for short stays there is less need for soft landscaping but the general ambience of the site should be maintained to a limited and cost effective degree.

7.9 Hard Standing – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

Section 8 - Site Facilities

8.1 Private amenities - Travellers prefer private amenities on each pitch including a toilet, wash basin and shower with hot and cold water supply.

Depending on the degree of usage, portable facilities may be provided to meet these needs. Where sites are empty for lengthy periods and to avoid vandalism to facilities these should be removed until the site is reoccupied.

8.2 Lighting – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

8.3 Waste disposal - Waste disposal for individual pitches is recommended. Communal refuse disposal should be provided which is convenient (but away from pitches and associated dwellings), fenced off, robust and inconspicuous.

8.4 Sluice – Provision of a sluice should be considered on each site.

8.5 Space for Work and Animals – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

Section 9 - Site Services

9.1 Water supply – The guidance for serviced sites applies

9.2 Electricity supply - The guidance for serviced sites applies although in practice a central electricity supply administered by the site management may be provided which would entail residents paying by meter.

9.3 Gas supply – Mains gas supplies are not applicable to transit sites.

9.4 Drainage – The guidance for serviced sites applies

9.5 Sewerage – The guidance for serviced sites applies. The guidance for serviced sites applies.

Section 10 - Health and Safety Considerations

10.1 Risk Assessment – The guidance for serviced sites applies.

10.2 Fire Safety - The guidance for serviced sites applies except where the local Fire Officer agrees alternative arrangements.

10.3 Accessibility – The guidance for serviced sites is optional.

Emergency Halting Site

A temporary place to park with basic facilities managed under Co-operation Policy principles

Section 11 – The Site

11.1 Site Location / Selection

Emergency halting sites should provide safe and convenient access to road networks and cause minimum disruption to surrounding communities.

When considering the suitability of different sites, the potential presence of young children and any risks from adjoining land uses must be considered.

11.2 Site Layout, Access and Orientation

It is important to provide markings or barriers to encourage residents to park safely, allow access for emergency vehicles and enable maximum use of the site in accordance with its intended capacity and fire safety standards. Particular regard must be given to the need to ensure a safe distance between trailers/caravans and other structures made of combustible materials. Advice from the Local Fire Officer must be sought during the planning of temporary stopping places.

The road to and from the site must be of sufficient quality and size to enable access onto and off the site by heavy vehicles such as trailers.

There must be a clear barrier around the emergency stopping place to discourage unauthorised expansion of the site.

11.3 Site Facilities and Services

It is essential for a cold water supply to be provided for the use of site residents which may be by use of water standpipe or water bowser. Portalooos must be provided for the use of residents and there must be at least one portaloo for every household on the site. However Council licences may require higher standards of service provision in certain circumstances.

It is essential for a sewerage disposal point to be provided.

Refuse disposal facilities should be provided.

11.4 Health and Safety Considerations

The guidance for serviced sites applies.



Introduction

- 12.1 This guidance is not intended to replace local consultation with Travellers and other key agencies. Local consultation should include:
- Travellers from the communities whose needs will be met on the site, including if possible, the families who will move onto the site at first let
 - Planners – from the very first stages of site identification
 - The Fire Officer
 - The Police, for advice on site security
 - The Local Roads Service section
- 12.2 The same principles apply to consultation on Traveller sites as with other refurbishment projects and new developments. Very few architects and developers will have firsthand experience of living on a site as part of a Traveller community, and consultation with Travellers will be crucial to ensuring the site works successfully.
- 12.3 The needs and preferences of those who will live on the site should be given full consideration and should be met as far as is possible within available resources. People who have lived on sites for most or all of their lives are in the best position to advise on what works well and what doesn't for a particular community. However, the needs of those people who will move onto the site at first let.

When to consult?

- 12.4 Travellers and/or their relevant representative bodies should be consulted throughout all stages of the design process, including site identification through the local council. Local communities can be aware of factors which, despite site shortages, could prevent take up of site places in particular areas.

Methods of consultation

- 12.5 The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has an established record of joint working with the Traveller community following the development and publication of the Travellers' Accommodation Needs Assessment in Northern Ireland 2008. It is recommended that Housing Associations wishing to work with Travellers for the first time, consult with the Housing Executive at the outset to secure its own introductions.

- 12.6 Where difficulties remain introductions can usually be secured through other organisations which already have a good working relationship with members of the Travellers community and their representative organisations. The Housing Executive is already involved in a wide range of Partnerships such as with Southern Area Action with Travellers (SAAT) and the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.
- 12.7 Participation will be greatly improved by holding the consultation in familiar and informal surroundings that are easy to get to, comfortable and warm. The office of a local organisation working with Travellers, or a local community building might be appropriate for instance.
- 12.8 There are low levels of literacy in some sections of the community. It is important therefore that consultation does not rely on written methods such as leaflets, surveys or feedback forms. Face to face consultation which enables Travellers to influence rather than just respond to the consultation agenda is important. Provision of models and computer generated images of proposed site development will also help prospective residents visualise the outcome and help identify useful refinements which may not otherwise be immediately apparent.
- 12.9 In some cases it may be appropriate to use a small number of people from the communities to represent their interests, however there is a danger with this type of approach that the perspective of some parts of the community will be missed – for instance children, women or men, or older people.
- 12.10 It would be beneficial to ensure as far as possible that sympathetic and knowledgeable architects and contractors are employed in the site design process. The Housing Executive could offer an “awareness raising” session on Traveller culture at an early stage with representatives of the local Traveller community, as a means of opening the dialogue and ongoing consultation needed with prospective residents to best ensure the successful design and construction of the site and best value for the money invested in it.
- 12.11 The timing of the consultation will be important. For instance women are more likely to be able to take part in consultation that takes place on sites during the day (and outside school pick up hours) whereas men may be more likely to be able to make evening meetings.
- 12.12 One to one interviews are one method of consulting, but they can be time-consuming and do not provide an opportunity to attempt to resolve differing opinions. Focus groups can be a good way to encourage discussions around matters where there are differing perspectives and where there is a need to achieve a consensus position. If some tensions between different members of the community are anticipated then small meetings or group discussions will work better than large meetings.

- 12.13 Where prospective site residents or those already living on a site which is to be refurbished have appropriate skills, consideration could be given to proposing their involvement in the work required, provided they are included on the appropriate register of preferred contractors.
- 12.14 Travellers' Accommodation Needs Assessment in Northern Ireland report 2008 gathered views on site design and asked about satisfaction with existing sites. This information should be drawn upon and the imminent 2013 report should add to the knowledge base.

Feeding back on the results of consultation

- 12.15 It will not always be possible to meet the needs and preferences of everyone and, if the reasons for this are explained clearly, this will normally be understood by participants. As a common courtesy the results of any consultation should always be fed back to the individuals and/or communities concerned. Where it has not been possible to meet the expressed preferences of the community the reasons for this should be clearly explained.
- 12.16 Once the site has been developed, this consultation process offers the basis of a permanent resident's forum, which can help sustain a good co-operative spirit of consultation between the Housing Executive and residents which is a key element in managing a site successfully.

Consulting with the settled community

- 12.17 As for other kinds of development, it is important that members of the local community, whether Travellers or settled residents, are able to feed in views on plans for new sites.
- 12.18 Misinformation and limited contact between Travellers and the settled community can feed distrust and misconceptions, and these must be challenged and addressed proactively. Opposition from the settled community can delay, and in some cases prevent, the issue of planning permission for new sites. The Housing Executive needs to plan for the possibility of such opposition at an early stage in the development and provide accurate information to help overturn negative stereotypes and allay concerns.
- 12.19 It will be important to demonstrate the need for new site provision in any consultation with the settled community, and the steps that the Housing Executive will take to address concerns and deal with problems should they arise.



LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 1963
- Race Relations Order (Northern Ireland) 1997- Where Irish Travellers were specifically identified as a racial group protected against unlawful discrimination.
- Northern Ireland Act 1998- Specifically section 75 which requires Public Authorities to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial groups.
- DOE New Policy on Accommodation for Travellers 1999- Although the responsibility for Traveller accommodation remained within the remit of local Councils this policy gave the NIHE a more strategic role.
- Promoting Social Inclusion Report 2002- Highlighted the various needs of the Traveller community and helped push their issues higher up the Governments agenda.
- Housing Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 - Led to the transfer of 6 sites from local Councils and gave NIHE responsibility to both manage and provide suitable accommodation, including transit sites.
- Unauthorised Encampments (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 - NIHE now deal with all reported Unauthorised Encampments in conjunction with PSNI under a joint protocol.
- Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 - An Act to amend the law relating to caravans and caravan sites.

Additional Copies

Additional copies of this document can be obtained from:

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