



**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ACCOMMODATION  
NEEDS OF GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS IN  
SOUTH AND WEST HERTFORDSHIRE**

**SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON  
WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In November 2004 the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at the University of Birmingham produced the final report of an assessment of accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in South and West Hertfordshire. That final report (referred to below as the Main Report) covered the area of the four Partner local authorities: Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans and Three Rivers (Hertfordshire County Council was also a Partner in the research). Subsequently CURS was commissioned by Watford Borough Council to carry out similar work and thus to complete geographical coverage of this part of the county. The current note presents the findings of the supplementary work in Watford.
- 1.2 The note does not aim to replicate the Main Report, but it does ‘update’ the main findings related to accommodation needs for the area incorporating Watford. It also presents other findings for Watford alone. There are four sections: a brief account of data sources and methods used; an ‘update’ of accommodation demand and supply information leading to an assessment of accommodation need for the whole Study Area (effectively material covered in Chapters 4, 5 and 7 of the Main Report); other findings of the research related to Watford; and a brief comment on the impact of the inclusion of Watford in the Study Area for the recommendations made in the Main Report (Chapter 8).

## **2. DATA SOURCES AND METHODS**

- 2.1 We have used three main sources of information:
  - Hertfordshire County Council Gypsy Section provided information on the residents of its site at Tolpits Lane in Watford and on the site waiting list. HCC also provided a print out of the Encampment Hotline records for all unauthorised encampments in Watford since mid 1997. This information has been analysed as it was for the Main Report.
  - Interviews were carried out on 22 February with five council officers and one elected member able to give an overview of local policies and practices related to Gypsies and Travellers. Departments/sections included were: planning, housing, equalities, street care and legal services.
  - Researchers visited the Tolpits Lane site on 8 March and interviewed eight women residents (out of ten licensees in all). We were introduced to residents by site management staff and residents responded very well. There are no private Gypsy/Traveller sites (authorised or unauthorised) in Watford, and there were no unauthorised encampments at the time of the research. We were advised not to attempt to talk to housed Gypsies or Travellers who might not wish to be identified for the research.

- 2.2 These methods replicate those used in the original research, and the inclusion rate of local Gypsies and Travellers is above the original rate. The findings should be robust and reliable.

### **3. ACCOMMODATION NEEDS AND SUPPLY**

- 3.1 There are three sub-sections: accommodation need; accommodation supply; and assessment of future requirements.

#### **Accommodation Need**

- 3.2 As in the Main Report we look at: occupancy rates and over-crowding on sites; demographic growth and household formation; health and special accommodation needs; amenity provision and site conditions; registered demand for HCC sites (waiting and transfer lists); movement intentions; unauthorised camping; unauthorised development; and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation aspirations. Taken as a whole, the findings provide indications of the general extent and nature of accommodation needs.

#### ***Occupancy Rates and Over-Crowding***

- 3.3 All Tolpits Lane residents interviewed had a mobile home and two also had trailers (caravans). Just half (four) said that this gave them enough space for their family's needs and half said that it did not. Comments noted the need for further bedrooms and a bigger kitchen area. One said that her son lived with his girlfriend.
- 3.4 Seven out of eight site residents thought that their pitch was too small – only one said it was about right. One said that it was too small for the rent paid.
- 3.5 In terms of perceptions of space needs in living accommodation, the Tolpits Lane site seems similar to other HCC sites in the Study Area; a higher proportion of residents on Tolpits Lane than elsewhere thought their pitch too small.
- 3.6 Family size of interviewees ranged from one to seven persons. The average size was 3.38 which is lower than the Study Area average for HCC sites of 3.74 (see Main Report Table 4.2). This puts Tolpits Lane alongside Long Marston and Sandy Lane in terms of family size.

#### ***Demographic Growth and Household Formation***

- 3.7 The only information on demographic growth and family formation that we have relates to Tolpits Lane residents. Four of the eight interviewees said that someone in their household would want independent accommodation within the next five years:
- One said her daughter wanted a touring caravan on the same pitch.

- Another said her son or daughter would like a plot on Tolpits Lane or a plot of land; they did not want a house but might consider a bungalow.
  - Another said her 20 year old daughter was trying to get a house with her partner in Bedford.
  - The final woman said her son and daughter would need accommodation. They might consider either a house or site, but *'they need somewhere permanent, not travelling the roads'*. She thought that sons and daughters should be top of the site waiting list. She also thought that another site was needed within three or four miles of Tolpits Lane to accommodate new families from the site.
- 3.8 Another interviewee's family already had independent accommodation – two were in houses and one on a site. One family is 'doubled up' on a pitch where HCC have granted permission for a man and his family to live on his grandmother's pitch.
- 3.9 From HCC records it appears that the two families not included in the survey are young and unlikely to include people seeking independent accommodation in the near future. This therefore implies a need for about four units of accommodation from family growth at Tolpits Lane over the next five years. Not all new households appear to be looking for site places. The Main Report indicated a need from household formation of 50+ on a base of 175 families. The addition of Watford suggests perhaps 55+ on a base of 185 families.

### ***Health and Special Accommodation Needs***

- 3.10 Tolpits Lane residents were asked a general health question 'does anyone in your household have a disability or serious long-term illness'. Six of the eight interviewees said that someone did have such a disability or illness. This is a higher incidence of health problems than was found across the HCC sites included in the Main Report (37%). The problems mentioned were: osteoporosis, diabetes and heart attack, back problems (two), and asthma. These health needs did not mean people wanted to move from the site, but a couple of families mentioned the need for a shower and/or disabled access as a desired site improvement. This suggests that access and services for people with mobility problems might be a priority for consideration on the 'more mature' HCC sites.

### ***Amenity Provision and Site Conditions***

- 3.11 All Tolpits Lane residents had an amenity building with all basic amenities – water and electricity supply and an amenity building including bath, WC and a sink. One also had a shower. Some said that the heating in the amenity building was inadequate.
- 3.12 Residents were asked what improvements they would like made to their site. As on other HCC sites in the Study Area the main suggestions related to bigger and/or better amenity buildings. This was mentioned by four respondents. Three would like a bigger pitch. Three also suggested changes to

the garden areas. The other main improvement suggested was for better fencing and/or walls to improve security (four respondents).

- 3.13 Most residents interviewed (five) said that they were satisfied with their site overall. One was very satisfied and two were neutral. In comparison with other HCC sites included in the Main Report, this puts Tolpits Lane slightly behind Sandy Lane and Watling Street, but significantly ahead of Three Cherry Trees in resident satisfaction.
- 3.14 The things most liked about the site were its quietness and lack of aggravation; its small size and the fact that families all know each other and are inter-related; and its location handy for shops, schools and hospitals. One respondent thought it could do with a '*good tidy up*'. Two were concerned about costs, one comparing the rent with what her daughter is paying for a three-bedroomed house, and two saying that electricity is dear. Several residents would like different electricity meter arrangements and individual water metering.
- 3.15 Respondents were asked specifically whether they had any concerns about health and safety on the site. Three out of eight said that they had concerns, although others also mentioned concerns after thinking about it. In order of frequency of mention, concerns were:
- Fire equipment: no extinguishers and low water pressure in hose.
  - Site entrance needs lighting and a mirror to see oncoming traffic.
  - One respondent suggested a ramp to deter people turning in the entrance.
  - Overhead pylons (concern about effect on amenity and health).
  - Flooding on occasion from blocked drains.
  - Speed bumps need re-painting.

### ***Registered Demand for HCC Sites***

- 3.16 There are twenty applications on the waiting list for Tolpits Lane site in March 2005. This is twice the number of pitches (ten) which puts Tolpits Lane alongside the other relatively 'popular' HCC sites in the Study Area: Long Marston and Watling Street (see Main Report Table 4.4).
- 3.17 In estimating how much the Tolpits Lane waiting list should add to assessed need on the Study Area the following are relevant:
- One applicant is seeking a transfer from Sandy Lane.
  - Eight are also on the waiting list for one or more Study Area site.
  - One applicant has an address on Sandy Lane and might already have been included through the original family growth estimate for that site.
- 3.18 These applicants have either already been included in the assessment or would, if transferred, create a vacancy on a Study Area site.

- 3.19 Of the remaining ten applicants, seven appear to be applicants from outside the Study Area (London or Essex) or are housed in Watford. Three give a contact address on Tolpits Lane and appear to have close family links with the site. Thus it seems safe to add ten to the estimate of need from site waiting lists in the Main Report, with the proviso that there could be a small degree of double-counting with family growth estimates. This produces a Study Area estimate of need from this source of 69 pitches, with a possibility that up to 22 involve double-counting.

### ***Movement Intentions***

- 3.20 Only one of the site residents interviewed thought that they might move from the site in the next five years or so. This resident favoured a house – she did not like having to ‘*run outside*’ for washing and so on. Other comments were very different:
- Only if they throw me out.*  
*Only in a box.*  
*No, unless I could buy my own land.*
- 3.21 These answers suggest that there is unlikely to be significant movement off the site to create pitch vacancies. They also illustrate the popularity of the site with residents.

### ***Unauthorised Camping***

- 3.22 In the Main Report HCC Encampment Hotline information was used to chart the incidence and nature of encampments across the Study Area between 1998 and first quarter 2004. A crude estimate of possible need for further transit site provision was made based on the analysis. Watford figures have been added to this analysis. Officers in Watford report that all local encampments are notified to the Hotline.
- 3.23 Table 1 shows the number of encampments, caravans and average size of encampment (in caravans) in Watford and in the Study Area as a whole including Watford each year since 1998. This effectively updates Table 4.6 in the Main Report.

**Table 1 : Encampments and Caravans 1998-2004 : Watford and Extended Study Area**

Year	Watford			Study Area		
	Encampments	Caravans	Average size	Encampments	Caravans	Average size
1998	22	176	8	63	542	9
1999	13	97	7	79	906	11
2000	4	21	5	66	640	10
2001	2	13	7	42	454	11
2002	-	-	-	30	234	8
2003	2	2	1	26	166	6
2004 (Q1)	-	-	-	7	38	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>2980</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: CURS analysis of HCC Hotline

### 3.24 Three points emerge:

- Watford shares the wider Study Area pattern of a sharp decline in the number and size of encampments over time. The Watford ‘peak’ in numbers seems to have been a year ahead of the wider area.
- Since 2001 the number of encampments in Watford has been very low. Officers interviewed noted this decline. Some attributed it to the progressive development of land which was previously encamped (High Street retail park).
- Average encampment size in Watford throughout the period has been lower than for the Study Area as a whole. Perhaps this reflects the nature of the town and land potentially available for encampment.

3.25 Table 2 updates Table 4.8 of the Main Report and uses HCC analyses to show the duration of encampments over the period 1997 to 2003 for each Study Area authority. Watford had more encampments over the period than Three Rivers, but fewer than the other Study Area authorities. Average duration of encampments in Watford was broadly similar to that in St Albans and in the middle range for the Study Area.



**Table 2 : Duration of Unauthorised Encampments 1997-2003**

Area	Encampments	Days stayed	Average duration Days/encampments
Dacorum	100	1504	15
Hertsmere	70	1214	17
St Albans	85	572	7
Three Rivers	26	83	3
Watford	46	328	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>3701</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>8009</b>	<b>13</b>

Source : HCC analysis of Hotline data

3.26 Table 3 updates Table 4.7 of the Main Report which showed the extent to which specific family groupings contributed to encampments over the period 1997 to 2003. As can be seen, over a quarter of encampments in Watford were by these families, and particularly by Family A. As noted in the Main Report, the ‘disappearance’ of these families after 2001 is closely related to the steep decline in encampment numbers in the Study Area.

**Table 3 : Encampments by Specific Family Groupings within the Study Area**

Families:	Number of encampments by family (1997-2003) in:				
	Dacorum	Hertsmere	St Albans	Three Rivers	Watford
Family A	22	2	9	1	8
Family B	5	4	1	-	-
Family C	6	3	3	-	1
Family D	1	2	3	2	2
Family E	-	1	2	-	-
Family F	-	-	3	-	1
Total families A-F	34	12	21	3	12
% of total encampments in period accounted for by families A-F	34%	17%	25%	12%	26%

Source: HCC analysis of Hotline data

3.27 Incorporating Watford into the estimate of accommodation need from unauthorised encampments makes very little difference to the figures quoted in paragraph 4.67 of the Main Report, and especially for the more recent period 2002/2003 during which time Watford experienced only two very small encampments (see Table 1 above). A revised paragraph 4.67 would read:

4.67 *The analysis shows:*

- *On 1998-2001 encampment rates there were an average of 77 days in a year (365 days) when there were more than 30 caravans in the study area, and 105*

*when there were more than 20 caravans. There were no caravans at all present on 65 days.*

- *Because encampment rates have decreased sharply, using 2002 and 2003 encampment rates shows that there were an average of 7 days in a year (365 days) when there were more than 30 caravans in the study area, and 15 days when there were more than 20 caravans. There were no caravans at all present on 227 days.*
- *There have very rarely been more than three separate encampments in the study area at the same time. During 2002 and 2003 there have been more than three separate encampments only on four days over the whole two year period.*
- *Over the full period 1998 to 2003 almost seven out of ten encampments comprised ten caravans or fewer.*
- *Over the two years 2002 and 2003, nine out of ten encampments comprised ten caravans or fewer.*

3.28 The conclusions drawn in Main Report paragraph 4.68 remain valid after the inclusion of Watford. Namely, *had three additional transit sites or stopping places been provided in the Study Area each providing about ten plots, the majority of unauthorised encampments could have been accommodated. At encampment rates experienced in the last two years, almost all encampments could have been accommodated. Such provision would not cater for unusually large encampments. On most recent rates of unauthorised encampment, transit/stopping place provision might have been vacant in total or in part at times.*

3.29 There were no families on unauthorised encampments in Watford at the time of the research. The analysis of views and preferences of families interviewed on the roadside and on the South Mimms transit site in paragraphs 4.71 and 4.72 of the Main Report remain unchanged.

### ***Unauthorised Private Sites***

3.30 There are no unauthorised sites in Watford, nor have any been established in the recent past. Thus there is no addition to need identified in the Main Report from this source.

### ***Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Aspirations***

3.31 Tolpits Lane residents were asked about their ideal accommodation. Most felt their current site was also their ideal although one wanted a larger amenity building, one wanted a bigger mobile home on a bigger plot and another also wanted a bigger plot and more space for children to play. Three had different ideals:

- For two the ideal was to buy their own land and have a mobile home on it. In one instance the ideal location was the Watford to High Wycombe area, in the other it was around Oxford. One explicitly identified the difficulty of getting planning permission as the main barrier to achieving the ideal.
  - For the third, the ideal was a bungalow with a garden in the Hatfield/Watford area.
- 3.32 When asked which of a number of specified accommodation they thought most and least attractive, residents showed some difference of opinion. Four said that ‘a private Gypsy caravan site owned by you and your family’ was the most attractive and another thought a site owned by the local council most attractive. Two other residents thought a house or bungalow rented from the local council most attractive, and the last interviewee thought a ‘house or bungalow that you own yourself’ most attractive. On least attractive options, four identified a site owned by a Gypsy or Traveller to whom they were unrelated, three a council rented house or bungalow and one an owner-occupied house or bungalow.
- 3.33 Only one interviewee had personal experience of living in a house (lower than the average across HCC sites). She had thought it better for her son’s schooling, but had found it too claustrophobic.
- 3.34 When asked whether they would consider living in a house, five of the eight said that they would not. They referred to not being used to it, or being too closed in. One of the others was positive about wanting a house which would provide more room – she commented that a lot of Travellers she knows have moved into a house. The other two were more ambivalent but not totally closed to the possibility:
- A bungalow would be nice – willing to give it a try.*
- Only if a nice house with plenty of land to get motors on.*
- 3.35 The views on accommodation options and aspirations expressed by Tolpits Lane residents are broadly similar to those expressed by HCC site residents interviewed elsewhere in the Study Area. Perceptions of housing appear slightly more positive in Watford than elsewhere, but the majority still want to live in a mobile home or caravan on a site.

### **Accommodation Supply**

- 3.36 This sub-section looks at the supply of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers in Watford and adjusts figures from the Main Report for the extended Study Area. As in the Main Report, findings are presented on HCC site turnover and vacancies, site provision policies and the policy approach to unauthorised camping.

### ***HCC Residential Sites : Supply***

- 3.37 The inclusion of Tolpits Lane raises the number of HCC residential sites in the Study Area to seven and the number of pitches to 113. Comments in the Main Report on pitch allocation policies and charges for pitches and services<sup>1</sup> apply equally to Tolpits Lane. The only revisions needed by the inclusion of Watford are the consequence of pitch turnover and vacancies.
- 3.38 Table 4 updates Main Report Table 5.1 by including Tolpits Lane. As can be seen, the Watford site is extremely stable and contributed very little to the recent supply of vacancies.

**Table 4 : Length of Tenancies and Turnover on HCC Residential Sites**

Length of tenancy	Sandy Lane	Barley Mow	Cherry Trees	Long Marston	Tolpits Lane	Watling Street	Ver Meadow	Total
Up to 6 mths	1	0	4	0	1	4	1	11
>6 to 12 mths	0	0	10	2	0	0	0	12
>1 to 2 years	1	0	5	0	0	0	2	8
>2 to 5 years	3	2	7	2	1	3	8	26
>5 to 10 years	3	4	3	0	0	2	3	15
>10 to 20 yrs	11	5	0	0	2	1	0	19
Over 20 years	8	4	0	2	6	0	0	20
Average tenancy	14.7 years	14.5 years	2.0 years	9.8 years	16.0 years	3.7 years	3.5 years	8.8 years
Plots void at survey	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Plots vacated 2003/04	1	0	9	1	1 <sup>(1)</sup>	4	4	20
Turnover (plots vacated as % all plots)	4	0	30	17	10	40	27	18

Source : HCC site records

<sup>(1)</sup> This plot was vacated in November 2004, but has been included here.

- 3.39 Comparing turnover and length of site waiting list (as in Main Report Table 5.2) suggests that Tolpits Lane is broadly similar to Sandy Lane and Barley Mow in terms of the ratio between registered demand and possible supply of pitches.

### ***Transit Accommodation : Supply***

- 3.40 Because there is no transit site in Watford and none is currently planned, the findings in the Main Report on transit pitch supply are not altered.

<sup>1</sup> A small number of Tolpits lane residents spontaneously commented that pitch rents were too high.

### ***Managing Unauthorised Camping***

- 3.41 Because of the big decline in the number of encampments in Watford, officers interviewed on the Council's approach to managing encampments were normally referring to a period several years ago.
- 3.42 Watford adopts a pro-active approach towards moving encampments on council land as quickly as possible (assuming that there are no welfare needs). The land-owning department instructs the legal department to take action. The Head of Legal and Democratic Service has delegated authority to act. It is usual to use s77 or the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 against unauthorised campers in caravans. Bailiffs are employed to act as witnesses and to serve notices. Procedures are well worked out and an encampment can normally be moved on within three days (24 hours notice to leave; 24 hours notice to get into a Magistrates Court if they fail to comply with the direction; and 24 hours notice to leave). Officers thought that the local Police were reluctant to use their s61 powers. Watford informs the HCC Hotline about all encampments.
- 3.43 The County Council would be responsible for dealing with any encampment on county-owned land. Borough council officers do not get involved in encampments on private land.
- 3.44 Approaches towards unauthorised encampments in Watford appear very similar to those followed elsewhere in the Study Area. As noted in Main Report paragraph 5.31, current policies on managing unauthorised camping across the Study Area suggest little scope for 'toleration' of encampments as an alternative to more formal transit provision, especially in the St Albans, Three Rivers (and Watford) areas.

### ***Private Sites : Supply***

- 3.45 There is currently no private Gypsy/Traveller site in Watford either with or without planning permission. There have been no applications for such a site over the last five years. Future site development would be governed by planning policies.
- 3.46 The Watford District Plan 2000 (adopted December 2003) includes **Policy H24 Traveller Accommodation:**  
*Proposals for the use of a site for gypsy or travelling showpeople accommodation will be considered against the following criteria:*
- *evidence demonstrating need for the site;*
  - *safe access to major road network;*
  - *access to shops, education and health services;*
  - *no adverse impact on the environment and local residential amenity;*
  - *site suitability – including a supply of essential services such as water, sewerage and drainage, and waste disposal; and*
  - *not located within the Green Belt or other protected areas.*

- 3.47 Officers commented that it would be extremely hard to find locations meeting these criteria in combination. Effectively all open land in Watford is either Green Belt or protected in some other way. Other land might find it hard to meet the adverse impact criterion.
- 3.48 Officers stressed the very tight boundaries of Watford as a local authority. They also stressed the priority requirement for affordable housing (some 700 units a year) and very high house and land prices. Stakeholder interviewees commented that other Partner authorities in the Study Area with more rural areas might be physically better placed than Watford to provide Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- 3.49 Because there have been no planning applications for Gypsy sites in Watford, approaches to planning enforcement were not discussed.
- 3.50 The overall conclusion reached in Main Report paragraph 5.45 remain entirely valid with the inclusion of Watford: *It is clear that current planning policies, both national and local, heavily constrain the possibility of developing new Gypsy sites in the study area. A continuation of current policies at all levels would make it very unlikely that need for sites on any significant scale will be met.*

### ***Housing : Supply***

- 3.51 As is the case in the wider Study Area, an unknown number of Gypsies and Travellers live in houses in Watford.
- 3.52 The housing officer interviewee thought that perhaps one Gypsy/Traveller family a year had been housed over the past four years, usually as homeless from the Tolpits Lane site when sons and daughters of residents grow up and can no longer be accommodated there. Applications are treated in the same way as any other applications. The interviewee thought that most families have integrated well into the community when housed and was not aware of tenancy problems or harassment.
- 3.53 All population groups face major constraints on access to social housing in Watford because need and demand is greater than supply. Gypsies and Travellers would share this overall constraint. High house prices limit access to the owner-occupied sector. Average house prices in Watford October to December 2004 were<sup>2</sup>:
- |                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| All properties  | £208,446 |
| Semi-detached   | £255,589 |
| Terraced        | £205,666 |
| Flat/maisonette | £163,804 |
- 3.54 The overall conclusion in Main Report paragraph 5.56 remains: *We have little evidence of particular problems facing Gypsies and Travellers in accessing bricks and mortar housing in the study area over and above those faced by*

<sup>2</sup> Land Registry figures accessed through [www.provider.com/regional/town/watford](http://www.provider.com/regional/town/watford) on 16 March 2005

*other members of the community. However, the local housing market is such that everyone faces constraints in accessing housing – either because of relatively small stocks of social housing or high house prices.*

### **Future Requirements**

- 3.55 Chapter 7 of the Main Report brought together findings on accommodation need and supply into an assessment of the need for further accommodation in the Study Area. Inclusion of Watford in the Study Area makes very little difference to the assessment.
- 3.56 Table 5 (overleaf) updates Main Report Table 7.1, bringing together need and supply.
- 3.57 Paragraph 7.32 of the Main Report summarised the level of additional site accommodation required in the Study Area over the next five years. The addition of Watford has the following effect:
- The need for additional plots on local authority and private residential sites is raised from around 80 to **90 plots**. The composition of need is around 50 for site waiting list applicants unlikely to be accommodated through plot vacancies in the year; 5 for families currently on the roadside or South Mimms who want a residential site; and 35 for families on unauthorised private site who would be displaced by enforcement action.
  - The need from household growth over the next five years of families already on residential sites might rise from another 30 to another **35 plots**.
  - There is no real impact on the assessment of need for transit and short stay accommodation. Provision of about **30 additional transit plots** would remain adequate.
- 3.58 The general conclusion in the Main Report was that current allocation and homelessness policies should be adequate to cater for the small number of Gypsy/Traveller families looking for social housing over the next five years. This remains unchanged by the inclusion of Watford.

**Table 5 : Revised Summary of Need and Supply : Study Area**

<b>Need</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Overcrowding on residential sites (up to 50% of residents)	Re-housing of newly formed households from within existing resident families would reduce but not remove over-crowding. Larger plots could only be provided on existing sites by site extension or re-modelling to provide fewer, larger plots. This would displace families and lead to additional need. Re-modelling is a major exercise requiring significant investment.
New household formation on residential sites (55+ new families over 5 years; of which 35+ on HCC sites)	Perhaps 22 of these new households are registered on HCC site waiting lists. Not all these new households will want to live in the study area although some will. New households could be housed through plot vacancies at recent turnover rates (20 pa across the study area), but the supply of vacancies would not meet likely ethnic needs or locational preferences. New household formation on private sites could be accommodated through site expansion, but this would require planning permission.
Health needs	Best considered on an ad hoc basis and met where possible through adaptations. Some movement to housing may be generated by health needs, but the scale cannot be estimated.
Site conditions	Information is only available on sites included in the CURS survey. On all HCC sites surveyed, residents identified some improvements they would like, but the main problems were on Three Cherry Trees. GSRG-funded improvements might be appropriate, requiring match funding and an assurance of site sustainability to justify investment. On private sites, residents are working toward site improvements.
HCC site waiting lists (69 families, no estimate for new entrants)	Except on Three Cherry Trees, waiting list need could be met through plot vacancies at current turnover rates only over a period in excess of five years. Need, as expressed by the waiting list, will be unmet on six of the seven study area sites. By definition, site waiting lists represent demand to stay/be in the area.
Movement intentions	On the basis of the CURS survey it appears that very few site residents (HCC and private) want to move over the next five years. Vacancies are likely to be created through mobility only on Three Cherry Trees and this might be reduced through site improvement. Residents are very aware of constraints on their movement options. Very few wanted to move away from the area.
Unauthorised camping (most current encampments could be accommodated by 30 additional transit plots)	Unauthorised camping has decreased significantly since 2002, making it very hard to predict need. The CURS survey showed that most roadside and South Mimms families wanted residential site accommodation or housing rather than short-stay accommodation. Most wanted to stay in the general area.
Unauthorised sites (up to 35 families could be displaced by enforcement, no estimate for new sites set up)	Families interviewed on unauthorised sites wanted to stay where they were. They preferred family-owned sites and wanted to stay in the area. They did not want to go back to active travelling and, by implication, would not want short-stay accommodation.



## 4. OTHER FINDINGS FOR WATFORD

- 4.1 The interviews with Gypsies and Travellers and with stakeholders covered ground not directly contributing to the assessment of accommodation need. Similar findings for the original study area were presented in Main Report Chapters 3 and 6. There are sub-sections below on: the characteristics of local Gypsies and Travellers including travelling patterns, their housing histories and employment patterns; and attitudes to education. A final sub-section summarises findings on strategy, inter-agency working and consultation arrangements relating to Gypsies and Travellers in Watford.

### **Gypsies and Travellers in Watford: Some Characteristics**

- 4.2 As noted above, the only Gypsies and Travellers interviewed were residents on Tolpits Lane. All identified themselves as English Travellers (seven) or Romany or Gypsy (one).
- 4.3 Average household size was 3.38 persons. HCC records show that five of the ten resident families include children aged up to 16. Three of the eight families interviewed included someone aged over 60. From this it appears that site residents include a proportion of relatively mature families.
- 4.4 Most families interviewed seemed to be relatively settled. While several respondents spoke of travelling in the past, only one had actually travelled in the past year for holidays and to visit fairs. They had not experienced any problems in finding places to stop.
- 4.5 When asked about their ideal travelling patterns in the future, it was apparent that most saw the ideal as essentially holiday travel, using other Traveller or holiday sites. One respondent wanted to travel as often as possible now her children have left home, but stressed that she also wanted a base to return to.
- 4.6 Seven interviewees said that they had been on the site (or on the nearby site which pre-dated Tolpits Lane) for over ten years (one did not give an answer), and five for over twenty years. 'Housing history' is thus often quite ancient history. Previous accommodation included other council sites, continuous travelling and, in one case, a house. Family reasons were mentioned as reasons for leaving previous accommodation and coming to the site. Two specifically mentioned having to wait for a vacancy on Tolpits Lane because so few occur. One woman who was formerly travelling on a continuous basis '*wanted to settle to watch the children grow*'.
- 4.7 Local Gypsy and Traveller occupations were said to be gardening, scrap, farm work and door-to-door selling. Two commented that, in the past, there was more work on farms. Another commented that work now is easier and better paid. Family occupations were said to be garden-work, scrap metal, driveways and '*anything*'.

## **Attitudes to Education**

- 4.8 Only three of the families interviewed included school age children. Of these, two said that their children attended regularly; the other said that a child did not explaining *'boys like to get out to work'*.
- 4.9 As in the interviews reported in the Main Report, the great majority of respondents thought that schooling is very important for Gypsy and Traveller children (seven out of eight, the eighth thought it important). Several thought education essential now to achieve anything and to get jobs. One mentioned its importance to be independent. Some respondents contrasted their children's or grand-children's opportunities with their own. One felt that schools do not do enough to encourage Traveller children to achieve.
- 4.10 One respondent was going with friends to adult literacy classes which she thought very important, stressing the need for small classes and a comfortable environment.
- 4.11 In answer to a question about the work they would like their children (grand-children) to do, several referred to 'regular' jobs. Specific jobs mentioned were hairdressing, a vet, a nurse, a pop star and a farmer. One respondent commented that traditional Gypsy jobs are hard to come by now. As with the initial interviews elsewhere in the Study Area, there are clear aspirations – on the part of some parents and grand-parents – to see Gypsies and Travellers getting better education and qualifications and moving closer towards the 'regular' pattern of employment.

## **Gypsies and Travellers in Other Local Policies**

- 4.12 As in other districts within the Study Area there is no overall strategy/policy towards Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Watford. Gypsies and Travellers are not specifically mentioned in housing or corporate strategies. There are no specific attempts to involve Gypsies and Travellers or to consult them. The main area for inter-agency working is with the county council on managing unauthorised encampments.
- 4.13 Overall, there are so few Gypsies and Travellers in Watford, and the level of unauthorised camping has been so low over the past few years that, as one respondent put it, *'they don't register on the radar'*. The Council *'has plenty of things to worry about, but not Travellers'*. Having said this, the councillor interviewed was keen to stress that the Council would want to face up to its responsibilities for Gypsy/ Traveller matters given the need.

## **5. IMPACT ON MAIN REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The inclusion of Watford makes very little difference to the overall recommendations set out in Chapter 8 of the Main Report. The minor adjustments to assessments of accommodation requirements stemming from the inclusion of Watford in the wider Study Area have already been described

(paragraphs 61 and 62 above). Other recommendations made in the Main Report are still valid.