

Research on Gypsies and Travellers in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Planning

27 February 2023

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1. Executive summary

Planning and Local Context

1.1 National guidance to inform local planning authorities' assessments of need is set out in '[Planning policy for Traveller sites](#)' (2015).

1.2 The definition includes "gypsies and travellers" and "travelling showpeople"; for planning related purposes it excludes those who have permanently ceased from travelling. However, this planning definition has recently been rejected by the Court of Appeal as it has been found to be discriminatory against elderly and disabled Gypsies and Travellers. The impact of this ruling is yet to be seen in a formal change to Government planning policy, though to reflect this ruling, this document will continue to consider the needs of those who have permanently settled due to age, ill health or disability.

1.3 There is one existing Traveller site in the borough in Hampton containing 12 pitches which is managed by Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP).

1.4 The purpose of this research is to inform the Council's new [Local Plan](#), building on earlier research published in 2016. It is also informing a Londonwide Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment currently being undertaken. Surveys of occupants on the site in Hampton were undertaken in 2013, 2015 and 2022 to understand existing and future needs. Unauthorised Gypsy and traveller encampments in the borough have also been considered in assessment of housing need.

1.5 Under the Data Protection Act, all research has been anonymised so that no personal information is revealed, and no individual respondent can be identified.

Understanding accommodation supply and future needs

1.6 RHP undertook an assessment of the site in 2016 that advised 42 people were living on the site, including 25 children in 11 pitches accommodating families, from two extended families from the Irish Traveller community. They reported fewer young men than women aged 16-26. It was commented that at this age Traveller women tend to leave when they marry, which suggested that there may be capacity on the site in future years.

1.7 There are also Travellers that might be currently accommodated elsewhere. There have been relatively few unauthorised encampments in recent years, and there have been no applications for private sites which would give an indication that there is no additional demand for permanent transit infrastructure in the borough.

1.8 RHP hold a waiting list for the site – at the time of writing there were four families on the waitlist in February 2023. There were five waiting list applications in September 2013, two in March 2015, two in June 2016 and three in September 2017. A Lettings Policy sets out priorities to those with a Richmond connection and to the site. Pitches do become available over time – it is estimated that one pitch is vacated each year on average as there have been nine vacancies over a ten year period. However, using turnover as an approach to assessing supply can result in an under-estimation of need because it relies on making assumptions. However, in this case it is based on an in-depth knowledge of the site, rather than relying on broad assumptions.

1.9 Since the 2015 survey was carried out, RHP have amended the layout of the Hampton site which resulted in the reduction of one existing pitch. This was carried out on the basis that the rearrangement would benefit the existing residents. The pitch that was lost was very small and it has since been used to address overcrowding and has not affected the satisfaction of or overall number of residents that the site caters for.

1.10 There are other sources of information. In the 2021 Census, 85 residents identified their ethnicity as White Gypsy or Irish Traveller compared to 95 in 2011. The majority of residents identifying as White Gypsy or Irish Traveller in the borough live in Nursery Lands and Hampton North ward, which is where the surveyed site is located. 0.3% of the population in this ward are White Gypsy or Irish travellers compared to a rate of between 0% and 0.1% in all other wards across the borough. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) [report on Gypsy and Traveller health](#) (2014) refers to the site in Hampton accommodating 51 residents, and of the remaining Gypsy and Travellers living in the borough 18% own their house, 60% live in socially rented accommodation, and 22% live in private rented accommodation, although the most recent [JSNA from 2021](#) simply refers to the Gypsy and Travellers population as reported in the 2011 census and the Count of traveller caravans (see section 4).

1.11 In 2013 a questionnaire was undertaken by RHP of the families living on the site in Hampton, and then repeated in 2015 and again, for this report, in 2022. In 2013 surveys from eight pitches were completed, in 2015 from seven pitches, and in 2022 from all 12 pitches, which were considered accurate and representative alongside RHP officer knowledge. The survey results are detailed by each question.

2022 Survey Results

1.12 All respondents were Irish Travellers, renting accommodation as their main home. In 2015, one of the respondents had moved from the site into bricks and mortar housing. The majority of respondents have lived there for more than 5 years, however, five households have started renting a pitch in the last 5 years, indicating that there is a degree of turnover in the site averaging at one per year.

1.13 Two respondents in 2013 shared their pitches with one other household, but none did in 2015. Only one pitch was reported as shared and is between two family members in 2022. In 2015 the surveys showed a total of 24 people – 9 adults and 16 children, including 7 pitches accommodating families. There was one young woman aged 16-26 and 2 young men of that age. In 2022, 40 people were counted (the increase owing to all households taking part in the survey)- consisting of 13 adults and 27 children. There are 3 young women and 4 young men aged between 16-25, which marks an increase in this age group.

1.14 Satisfaction with current accommodation increased overall from 2015 to 2022, however, 25% of responses were listed as dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the site. In 2013, no respondents were looking for somewhere else to live, in 2015 one respondent was – due to not having enough space and looking for better facilities. In 2013 two respondents had someone in their household looking for somewhere else to live, but in 2015 no residents were identified by respondents as looking for somewhere else to live. In 2022, no respondents were looking for somewhere else to live.

1.15 In 2013 future needs were identified as:

- 2013 – five pitch requirements (one male, four female)
- 2018 – one pitch requirement (one female)
- 2019 – one pitch requirement (one male)

1.16 In 2015 future needs were identified as:

- 2015 – one pitch requirement (one female)
- 2017 – three pitch requirements (one female, two male)
- 2020 – one pitch requirement (one female)

1.17 In 2022 future needs were identified as:

- 2022 – three pitch requirements (two female, one male)
- 2025 – two pitch requirements (two female)

1.18 The majority of those looking for future pitches are not willing to live in bricks and mortar and are seeking accommodation in Hampton. The most popular of any factors that would encourage moving into bricks and mortar was the type and design of housing, private outdoor space and space for caravan/additional vehicles.

1.19 All residents surveyed reported that they have travelled at some point in their lives. There are a number that have ceased travelling due to ill health or family commitments. No respondents have travelled in the 12 months prior to being surveyed.

Survey Analysis and Further Comments

1.20 The survey analysis, with comparisons between 2013, 2015, and 2022, illustrates a site comprised of long standing, settled residents. Between the surveys there was movement within the site which appeared to stem largely from existing residents and their families, changing the composition of pitches. The surveys across all years identified a limited number of young men who may wish to start to form their own families and look for pitches on the site - in the latest survey, only one male with future housing need on the site was identified. The five individuals identified for pitch needs in the next 5 years are not on RHP's housing waiting list or on the housing register for the borough. In recent years there has remained only a limited site waiting list.

1.21 Overall this research suggests that the size of the site and the way that it is managed do allow for some natural turnover. This position is likely to continue with effective site management given one pitch is vacated each year on average.

1.22 While generally there is little desire to move into bricks and mortar, it appears that one respondent in 2015 has moved. Clearly this would depend on individuals' circumstances, given the 'psychological aversion' to housing that is recognised in case law. The analysis does confirm the factors that would need to be addressed in considering any move – complexities including the type of housing available and the support that might be received. There are currently two single-person households living in family-sized pitches.

1.23 The analysis shows RHP's management of the site, services available and support to residents are clearly highly valued, and available to beyond those living on the site. The difference in the analysis between 2015 and 2022 does suggest that satisfaction with the site environment has increased, however, the number of respondents indicating that they are very dissatisfied has also increased.

Dissatisfaction appears to be related to the quality of on-site repairs and ongoing complaints regarding drainage. RHP has set up a caretaking service to respond to residents' needs, however from the most recent research, there is perhaps a need to assess how well this service performs on the site, and opportunities for any funding for improvements. It is positive that RHP's services and support are provided to those in extended families living in bricks and mortar.

Unauthorised encampments

1.24 The analysis shows a small increase in unauthorised encampments in recent years, although levels remain relatively low. The Council has sought injunctions to protect Council-owned land from unauthorised encampment, but this is to reduce time and cost of enforcement. There are no existing transit pitches in the borough, and no indication of a local need arising.

Travelling Showpeople

1.25 There are no sites for Travelling Showpeople in the borough. While there are a number of fairs, circuses and shows held regularly in the borough's open spaces, there is no indication of any need specifically within the borough for pitches to meet their seasonal working needs.

Conclusion and recommendations

1.26 To conclude, the outcome of this research suggests that there is no demonstrated need for additional pitches, nor any signals indicating unmet need arising from elsewhere in the borough. There remains the need to continue to protect the existing site through the Local Plan, which will continue to accommodate existing and future needs of the existing Gypsy & Traveller population within the borough. At this stage there are no plans to identify or allocate additional pitches. There is no need arising within the borough from unauthorised encampments or for travelling showpeople that suggests a need for transit sites, although this could be explored in pan-London work.

1.27 The research provides evidence for the continued joint working within the Council, RHP, Public Health and other bodies, to support the existing residents on the site. For any Gypsies & Travellers living in bricks and mortar, there may, as previously identified, be opportunities for other solutions to improve support to address needs. This could be through providing floating support to those in bricks and mortar to address issues of isolation, managing a home and maintaining a tenancy. The GLA Assessment may further inform what support can be provided to Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar.

1.28 As with the pan-London consultation, there will be further evidence that may inform research, and reporting through the authority's Annual Monitoring Report will continue to be reviewed. Under the Duty to Cooperate, the Council continues to liaise with neighbouring boroughs, as relevant, although to date discussions have not identified any cross-boundary issues related to Gypsy & Traveller movements. It is recommended that the survey of families on the existing site in Hampton is repeated to continue monitoring. In light of recent changes to Government guidance, the most recent survey has explored the extent to which those resident within the Borough have permanently ceased from travelling, however, as confirmed by a recent Court of

Appeal challenge in relation to the Government definition, the Council still needs to have regard to the requirements of the Equality Act.

2. Planning and Local Context

2.1 Accompanying the NPPF, the [Planning policy for Traveller sites](#) sets out that local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning and make plans to meet need. For the guidance, “travellers” means “gypsies and travellers” and “travelling showpeople”.

2.2 [Planning policy for Traveller sites](#) was revised in August 2015 when the Government changed the definition of “traveller” for planning related purposes so that it excludes those who have permanently ceased from travelling.

2.3 The CLG Guidance [Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments](#) (2007) was not formally withdrawn by Government. The [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#) at section 124 ‘Assessment of accommodation needs’ removed the requirement in the Housing Act 2004 for a separate Gypsy and Traveller assessment, which can now be part of the general assessment of housing needs to include all people residing in or resorting to the district in caravans or houseboats. The Government clarified during [Parliamentary debate](#) on the Bill that this change does not remove the duty on local authorities to assess their housing needs and make provision for sites, and stated they will consider incorporating any necessary elements of the current “Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments Guidance (2007)” in wider planning guidance, to which local authorities must have regard. In 2016 [Review of housing needs for caravans and houseboats: draft guidance](#) was published. These sources of guidance have been used to guide the methodology for this research.

2.4 Many local planning authorities needs assessments for Gypsies and Travellers were distinguishing between those meeting the Government definition, and those who seek culturally appropriate accommodation, recognising that under the Equality Action (2010) as a result of their protected characteristics. Then in October 2022 the Court of Appeal ruled the planning policy definition of Gypsies and Travellers discriminates against disabled and elderly members of the community, in the case [Smith v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities & Anor \[2022\] EWCA Civ 1391](#). Although in any case the weight is for a decision-maker, it is considered relevant to this study to note the importance of the traditional way of life, and that Gypsies and Travellers who are too old or ill to travel any more still wish to adhere to their cultural traditions, and live in caravans.

2.5 Some authorities are also now including reference to boat dweller accommodation needs, following the Housing and Planning Act 2016 reference to housing needs of those residing in inland waterways.

2.5 In the borough there is one existing permanent Traveller site at Bishops Grove in Hampton, now called Priest Close and Chapter Way, which is managed by Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP). This currently contains 12 pitches, and there is no identified capacity for expansion.

2.6 The key purpose of this research is primarily to inform the Council’s new [Local Plan](#). It updates the previous [Research Report published in 2016](#), which found: there was no demonstrated need for any additional pitches within the borough, nor any signals that there was an unmet need for gypsy or traveller accommodation into the future, and no needs arising for travelling showpeople within the Borough. The Inspector found the Local Plan sound (adopted July 2018).

2.7 The Council has liaised with and asked RHP to undertake surveys of occupants on the site in 2013, 2015 and 2022 to understand existing and future needs. The involvement of RHP ensured the credibility and acceptance within the local Gypsy and Traveller community. The site surveys also invited contacts of Gypsies and Travellers and Showpeople who live in bricks and mortar within Richmond upon Thames to take part.

2.8 At the same time as this research has been undertaken in 2022, a London-wide Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment is being undertaken by consultants RRR to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, and the Roma community in London over the period 2022 to 2032. The quantitative and qualitative data outputs of the council's research [all personal details removed] have been shared to feed into the assessment. RRR have also been resourced to undertake online household surveys of households residing in bricks and mortar accommodation, visiting sites, yards and stopping places across London, as well as other stakeholder surveys.

2.9 The Data Protection Act 1998 covers personal information provided to the Council as part of this research and so the information collected has been anonymised in this report. This is to safeguard the privacy of those who participated so that no personal information relating to specific individuals is made public and no individual respondent can be identified through the description of where or how they live or their other circumstances.

3. Unauthorised Encampments

3.1 Historically in the borough there have been relatively few unauthorised encampments. As there has been an apparent small increase in unauthorised encampments since the 2015 research was carried out, details have now been added into this research. However, it appears the total number of these unauthorised stays remains at a level lower than those of neighbouring local authorities.

3.2 The borough sees an average of 3.3 unauthorised encampments of varying sized and stay-lengths per year. With the exception of 2018, 2019 and 2021, there were only two encampments seen per year. The number of unauthorised encampments peaked in 2018 at seven. In 2019 and 2021 there were five encampments in each year. There were only two encampments in 2022. It has been reported that residents of unauthorised encampments do not engage with Council officers when approached for welfare checks, which suggests that for now at least, there is little desire to stop on official pitches, nor attribute to local needs. It can be inferred from this that there is no local demand for transit stopping infrastructure.

3.3 The majority of unauthorised encampments occurred in four locations spaced between Ham, Petersham and Riverside and North Richmond and Kew, however, there have been other sites used less frequently in the West of the borough.

3.4 In recent years, a Borough-wide preventative injunction was in place to protect the borough's parks and open spaces and any Council owned land from unauthorised encampment. It also sped-up the enforcement process that officers go through. These broad injunctions have been found to be impermissible and they are set to go to appeal at the Supreme Court in 2023, meaning that this approach has ceased to be a viable option.

3.5 In the case of *The London Borough of Bromley vs Persons Unknown*: the borough tried to appeal a previous refusal of their boroughwide injunction, but were again refused. In the case, unauthorised encampments in Bromley (11 in 2016, 12 in 2017, 12 in 2018) were described as 'relatively small numbers' Richmond saw approximately six times fewer encampments as Bromley in comparative years.

3.6 Bromley's appeal was in part rejected as the injunction covered the whole borough and effectively forced any gypsies and travellers onto other boroughs as there were no legal stopping sites in the borough. Richmond is in a similar position of having very few encampments and (with a borough-wide injunction in-place) no stopping provision within the borough. This example and concerns around proportionality have posed an opportunity to change the council's legal approach to unauthorised encampments.

3.7 The adjoining authority of Surrey County Council sought, in 2021 to bring forward a proposal for the county's first transit site in the east of the borough, a 10-pitch transit site in Merstham (subject to planning permission), to reduce the occurrence of unauthorised encampments. Surrey County Council's evidence of unauthorised encampment data identifies that there are an average of over 100 recorded unauthorised encampments across Surrey every year on private- and local authority-owned land, with numbers within the east of Surrey (Tandridge, Reigate & Banstead, Epsom & Ewell and Mole Valley) ranging between 25 and 30, which equates

approximately to 1 unauthorised encampment per week with the average duration of stay being 6.4 days. Their strategy is for a further transit site planned in the future to be built in the west of the county, but there are no identified sites or timescales.

3.8 Going forward, in place of a long-term injunction, the injunction in Richmond is planned to be limited to a one-year period with reviews taking place annually thereafter. Furthermore, in place of a restrictive borough-wide injunction, the injunction will be limited to a number of high-profile and vulnerable sites to mitigate the impact on Gypsy and Traveller communities. These actions will make the injunction more proportionate and appropriate.

Transit sites

3.9 There is currently no recommendation for permanent transit sites to be located within the borough. The number of encampments seen across the borough is very small and there is no evidence to suggest that there is enough demand for a stopping site in the area.

3.10 There is a proposal for a new transit site in East Surrey near to Merstham, subject to planning permission. In the instance that this site goes ahead, it has been noted that the newly available pitches, combined with existing transit sites in Borehamwood will provide accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers that may otherwise stay in Richmond. It is not clear to what extent these sites will help with accommodating demand, so annual reviews of unauthorised encampments considering the size, stay length and impact on the borough should be carried out.

3.11 Officers attending unauthorised encampments report that residents do not engage with authorities when approached for welfare checks. This reluctance to engage and provide detail of what stopping provision is required suggests that there is no local connection for these groups and that stays are short-stops on longer transitory journeys.

3.12 Taking into account the case of a new and unused site in Wolverhampton, it is difficult to assess how well used a new transit site would be by Gypsy and Traveller communities.¹ It has been noted by officers that encampments typically occur on green space that is along travelling routes from the north to the south of the borough. Kew Green, where four of the five most recent encampments have taken place, is a connecting point of the north circular and south circular roads; this may explain its popularity as a stopping place. This suggests that if a permanent stopping site in the west of the borough were identified, it may not be on a preferred route and would go unused. Assessing stopping need at a borough level may not be appropriate, as the consideration of strategic routes on a broader scale may be required.

Negotiated Stopping

3.13 Dependent on monitoring outcomes, in the long term, the Council could also consider the use of Negotiated Stopping Agreements.

¹ [Wolverhampton's traveller transit camp unused almost one year after opening | Express & Star \(expressandstar.com\)](https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2022/02/24/wolverhampton-traveller-transit-camp-unused-almost-one-year-after-opening/)

3.14 Negotiated Stopping describes agreed short-term provision for Gypsy and Traveller caravans. It does not describe permanent 'built' transit sites but negotiated agreements which allow caravans to be sited on suitable specific pieces of ground for an agreed period of time, with the provision of some services such as water, waste disposal and toilets. Agreements are made between the authority and the (temporary) residents regarding expectations on both sides. This approach could also prompt more engagement from Gypsy and traveller households to identify individual circumstances to better assess needs, however, as residents have not in the past engaged with officers and there are currently no designated suitable sites, this would be a complicated process.

3.15 The ongoing London-wide Gypsy and traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment being carried out by RRR for the Greater London Authority may provide further insight, taking a strategic view of needs across London and the opportunities for a managed approach.

4. Understanding accommodation supply and future needs

4.1 The most recent survey can be used to estimate the number of people living on the site and their household make up. This can be hard to pin down at any point in time because some individuals and family units will leave the site for either short or extended periods to travel. The existing Traveller site within Richmond Borough accommodates 40 people including two extended families from the Irish Traveller community:

- There were currently 12 pitches on site which accommodated single-person households and families with children (8 of these families appear to be headed by single parents). In total from these pitches there were 40 people living in these families of which 27 were children.

4.2 From a desktop survey carried out by DTZ in 2012 it was commented that Traveller women living on sites often tend to leave when they marry – joining their husband’s site, although individual family needs may vary. On balance, this suggested there should be capacity on the site in future years if the young women leave to form families. Conversely, they stated there is significant potential for the population of the site to expand in future years, leading to overcrowding, if these young people remain on the site and begin to form their own families. However, no overcrowding has occurred in the last decade, and it appears that some young people choose to leave the site, and some choose to stay depending on personal circumstance.

4.3 There are also Travellers that might be currently accommodated elsewhere e.g. in housing or living outside of the Borough but who wish to join the site via the waiting list. However, there have been no applications for private sites which indicates that there is no additional need/demand. Research has established that there are sometimes negative psychological effects for Gypsies and Travellers moving into housing. This is caused by the transition from living in a close-knit community to a single dwelling which can result in social isolation and can cause stress and depression amongst Travellers.

4.4 RHP hold a waiting list for the site and as of November 2022, there were four families on the waiting list, for which applications now have to be renewed annually. All of those on the waiting list had a connection to someone on the site. RHP operate a Lettings Policy which sets out priorities to those with a Richmond connection and to the site, with decisions agreed by a panel.

4.5 From the 2021 Census, 85 residents identified their ethnicity as White Gypsy or Irish Traveller in the borough which is 10 fewer than in 2011. This was the second lowest for Outer London boroughs, this follows the same pattern as reporting in the 2011 census. This figure may be an underestimate as some people may prefer not to identify themselves or identify themselves within wider Census categories, such as White Irish. The 2011 Census data also provided information on household overcrowding and under-occupation for different ethnic groups in England and Wales, which suggests that in the White Gypsy or Irish Traveller there were higher proportions of households considered to be overcrowded (with a bedroom occupancy rating of -1 or less, having fewer bedrooms than the notional number recommended by the bedroom standard) than in other ethnic groups.

4.6 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) [report on Gypsy and Traveller Health Needs](#) (May 2014) was based on interviews with six matriarchs from the site in Hampton, and refers to the 95 Gypsies and Travellers within the borough identified in the 2011 census, of which the site in Hampton houses the majority with the remaining 44% made up of 18% who own their house, 60% who live in socially rented accommodation, and 22% who live in private rented accommodation.

4.7 The [Government Count of Traveller Caravans](#) happens twice a year, both authorised and unauthorised sites. The number of socially rented caravans on authorised sites within the borough has remained at 12 sites and there have been no unauthorised sites reported in each count.

4.8 Through RHP, in 2013 a questionnaire was undertaken of the families living on the site in Hampton. This was then repeated in summer 2015, with identical questions, to gain comparative data over time and assess the current and future situation in more detail. In 2022, the same survey was conducted with an additional set of questions regarding travelling habits (to account for the government's change of guidance).

4.9 In 2013, surveys from eight pitches were completed. In 2015 surveys from seven pitches were completed, and in 2022 from all twelve pitches. In some analysis, comments have been reworded and shown in [brackets] to ensure personal sensitive information is not revealed.

2013, 2015 and 2022 Survey Results:

In 2013, 2015 and 2022, all respondents were Irish Travellers **(Q1 Ethnicity of respondent)**. In 2013 and 2022 all rented an on site pitch/plot, but in 2015 one of the respondents was in conventional bricks and mortar housing – rented from a housing association. This respondent did not complete a survey in 2022. **(Q2 Details of current accommodation)**.

Of the caravans/mobile home/chalet on each pitch, these ranged in size from 2 bed to 4 bed in 2022 **(Q3 Type and size of current accommodation)** and from 1 bed to 3 bed where stated in 2015. For all respondents in 2013 and 2015, this was their main home **(Q4 Is this your main home?)**.

In 2022 five respondents had lived there between 1 to 5 years and all the other respondents had lived there more than 5 years. In 2015 two respondents had lived there between 1 to 5 years and in 2013, only one respondent had lived there less than 5 years. **(Q5 How long have you lived here?)**

Two of the respondents in 2013 shared the pitch with one other household **(Q6 Is the pitch shared with another household(s)? e.g. extended family members)**, of which one had been doubled up for 3 months and one respondent for 4 years **(Q7 If the pitch is shared with another household, how long have you been 'doubled-up' for?)**. In 2015 none of the respondents shared the pitch with another household, but two respondents raised that visitors or family members sometimes stayed. This is similar to the 2022 responses – only one pitch is described as 'shared' which is between two family members'

The information given on the composition of households surveyed (**Q8 Please describe the composition of your household(s)**) in 2013 showed:

- 5 pitches on site which accommodate families with children (4 of these include families headed by single parents). In total there are approximately 21 people living in these families of which around 15 are children.
- 1 pitch accommodating a single adult (1 person)
- 1 pitch accommodates two adults (2 people)
- 1 pitch accommodates three adults (3 people)
- There are more than 27 people living on site – 12 adults and 15 children.
- 14 children between the ages of 2 years and 15 years on the site.
- 1 young woman aged between 16-26 on the site, and no young men of that age range.

In 2015, the composition of households showed:

- 7 pitches on site which accommodate families with children (6 of these include families which appear to be headed by single parents).
- There are more than 24 people living on site – 9 adults and 16 children.
- 11 children between the ages of 2 years and 15 years on the site.
- 1 young woman and 2 young men aged between 16-26.

In 2022, the household compositions were as follows:

- 9 pitches on site which accommodate families with children (8 of these include families headed by single parents). In total there are 35 people living in these families including 25 children.
- 2 pitches accommodating a single adult.
- 1 pitch accommodating two adults.
- There are 40 people living on site- 13 adults and 27 children.
- 19 children between the ages of 2 years and 15 years on site.
- 3 young women and 5 young men aged between 16-26 on site.

In terms of satisfaction (**Q9 How satisfied are you with your current accommodation?**) in 2013, seven respondents were satisfied or very satisfied, with one respondent very dissatisfied. In 2015 only two respondents were satisfied or very satisfied, with three respondents neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and two respondents dissatisfied. In 2022, five respondents were satisfied, with four neither satisfied or dissatisfied. Three respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

In 2013 no respondents were looking for somewhere else to live (**Q10 a) Are you looking from somewhere else to live?**) although one respondent indicated this was not at present - as may need something cheaper, depending on the benefit changes (**Q11 a) What are your main reasons for wishing to move?**). In 2015 only one respondent was looking for somewhere else to live – not enough space and looking for better facilities. In 2022 no respondents were looking for somewhere else to live, though one single-person household was hoping to downsize.

In 2013 two respondents had someone in the household looking for somewhere else to live (**Q10 b) Is someone else in your household looking for somewhere else to live?**) with the main reasons identified as not enough space (x 2 respondents), getting married (x 1 respondent), and looking for better facilities (x 1 respondent) (**Q11 b) What is someone else in your household's main reasons for wishing to move?**). In 2015 no respondents identified anyone in the household looking for somewhere else

to live. In 2022, one respondent indicated that a close family member wants to move to the site, it is unclear if she is on the waiting list or not.

In 2013 future needs were identified (**Q12 Please provide details for you and members of your household likely to require their own pitch/plot in the borough in the next 5 years. Please include other family members you anticipate joining you on the site (e.g. extended family living elsewhere) in the next 5 years.**) as:

- One pitch requirement now (female), not registered on a site waiting list or a housing register, willing to live in bricks and mortar and in any location.
- Four pitch requirements estimated for 2013 (one male, three female including two with other adult(s)/families), two of whom were not registered on a site waiting list or a housing register/two of whom were registered on both, all not willing to live in bricks and mortar and seeking accommodation in Hampton.
- One pitch requirement estimated for 2018 (female with family), not registered on a site waiting list or a housing register, not willing to live in bricks and mortar and seeking accommodation in Hampton.
- One pitch requirement estimated for 2019 (male with family), not registered on a site waiting list of a housing register, not willing to live in bricks and mortar and seeking accommodation in Hampton.
- A total of seven pitches identified in the 2013 surveys, covering the period 2013 to 2019.
- Two respondents indicated future needs but did not provide specific details - one respondent stating would like children to move on, and one respondent stating too early to say as daughters are too young.

In 2015, the future needs were identified as:

- One pitch requirement estimated for November 2015 (female), registered on a site waiting list with RHP and a housing register, not willing to live in bricks and mortar and seeking accommodation in Hampton.
- Three pitch requirements estimated for 2017 (one female with other adults, two male), all registered on a site waiting list with RHP/other and on a housing register, all not willing to live in bricks and mortar and two seeking accommodation in Hampton, one not specified.
- One pitch requirement estimated for 2020 (female), registered on a site waiting list with RHP and a housing register, not willing to live in bricks and mortar and seeking accommodation in Hampton.
- A total of five pitches identified in the 2015 surveys, covering the period 2015 to 2020.

In 2022, future needs were identified as:

- Three pitch requirements for 2022 (two female, one male). None are registered on the site waiting list or borough-wide housing register. All are seeking accommodation in Hampton and aren't willing to live in bricks and mortar.
- Two pitch requirements for 2025 (both female). None registered on site waiting list or the housing register, not willing to live in bricks and mortar and looking for accommodation in Hampton.
- A total of five pitches identified in the 2022 surveys, covering the period 2022-2030.

The factors that would encourage living in bricks and mortar identified in 2013, 2015, 2022 were (**Q13 Are there any factors that would encourage you/someone else in your household to move into/remain in bricks and mortar housing?**):

	No of respondents		
	2013	2015	2022
Space for touring caravan/trailer/additional vehicles	2	1	6
Type and design of housing e.g. prefer a house to a flat	3	3	5
Private outdoor garden space	2	3	6
Easier access to education, health and other services		2	3
Support to maintain community links and avoid isolation	1	2	1
Assistance with repairs and/or adaptations to the property		1	1
Assistance with form filling, welfare and financial advice	1	1	2
<i>Other (as specified):</i>			
Peace and quiet		1	
I would like a house but would feel scared		1	
On one level only bungalow or house		1	
Near family who live on site. Very important		1	
Bungalow house with garden		1	
Near to the site and family and friends. Travelling community.		1	1

Note that in 2013 there were four respondents, two respondents in 2015 and three in 2022 which identified no factors that would encourage them to live in bricks and mortar.

In 2022, questions regarding travelling habits were posed to residents for the first time. When asked about recent travelling, **(Q14 Have you or someone in your household travelled in the last year?)** four respondents indicated that they had travelled previous to the last year and eight respondents had not travelled ‘for a long time’.

The motivations for travel are predominantly to visit family, with 11 respondents highlighting this reason. Other responses to this question were, tradition (three respondents) and holidays (three respondents) **(Q15 - Main reasons for travelling?)**.

Regarding specific travelling habits, all respondents identified travel within the UK and Ireland. Four respondents have not been able to travel at all due to family commitments or ill health. **(Q16 - When and where do you travel?)**. When asked about future plans, six respondents intend to travel in the next two to five years and one intends to travel in the next year. The remaining respondents indicated that they have permanently or temporarily ceased from travelling **(Q17 - Will you travel in the future?)**.

Five respondents highlighted ill health as a reason for not travelling, and six respondents indicated that family commitments (young children or family members who require support) prevent them from travelling. One respondent identified the lack of stopping places nationally as a barrier to travelling. **(Q18 - What reasons do you have for not travelling?)**. Additional comments **(Q19 - Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your travelling patterns?)** on travelling are similar. Two respondents highlighted the difficulty in finding short-term pitches - ‘We do not travel as much anymore because places we used to go are not open.’ Health barriers and family commitments were also reiterated.

In relation to feeling part of the community (**Q20 Do you feel you are part of the wider community?**) in 2013 six respondents felt they were part of the wider community, one respondent felt they were sometimes (because they were brought up in a house) and one respondent felt they were not part of the wider community. In 2015, two respondents felt they were part of the wider community, four respondents felt they were sometimes (because if people know they are a traveller they have been blanked or experienced racism) and one respondent felt they were not part of the wider community (because they don't really mix).

In 2022, two respondents felt they weren't part of the wider community, seven do on site but not beyond, and three felt part of the wider community (though one advised 'except for one pub which does not allow travellers').

To promote cohesion respondents in 2013 and 2015 identified the following factors (**Q21 What would you like to see more of to promote cohesion?**):

	No of respondents		
	2013	2015	2022
Community events	6	4	4
Links through schools	1	4	6
Cultural Events	1	4	
<i>Other (as specified):</i>			
More events for children		1	
Exercise class		1	
If the site was nicer and more environmentally welcoming		1	
[Support in education to stop bullying]		1	
Drop in at old community centre			2
Training for older children (e.g. beauty therapy)			1
Support sessions to discuss rent, repairs etc.			1

In both 2013 and 2015 there were two respondents in each year that didn't know or didn't identify any factors to promote cohesion. In 2022, three respondents didn't identify any factors.

In terms of the existing forms of support currently accessed (**Q22 What forms of support do you/someone else in your household currently access?**) these were identified as:

	No of respondents		
	2013	2015	2022
Assistance with form filling, welfare and financial advice	8	4	12
Healthcare through GP and visiting clinics	7	3	10
Education and training	5	3	2
Community events and activities e.g. children's holiday club	2	4	1
<i>Other (as specified):</i>			
[Health body]	1		
[Landlord] Customer Support Advisor	1		
Caretaking service		1	

CAB			1
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In 2013 it was noted by a couple of respondents that assistance with form filling etc. was through their landlord for example explaining letters. In 2015 it was noted by some respondents that their landlord provided support, and that in some areas such as healthcare and education the support was not very good, for example not listened to or slow responses.

In 2013 seven respondents said they did not find it difficult to access services, while one respondent said that did have difficulty because they get asked too many questions that they don't know how to answer (**Q23 Do you find it difficult to access services i.e. health, education, housing, police, benefits advice?**). In 2015 five respondents said they did not find it difficult to access services, while two respondents said they did find it difficult to access services sometimes, one because people are racist and one because they considered their GP was not listening. In 2022, eight respondents found it difficult to access services, mainly in health due to the difficulty in getting a GP appointment; one respondent advised that contacting RHP regarding repairs was difficult. Four respondents did not find it difficult to access services and one mentioned the availability of RHP on site.

In 2013 six respondents had children (or grandchildren) in school placements (or starting soon)/access to other learning and development opportunities, with two respondents having no children in school placements/access to other learning and development opportunities, of which one specified because they did not have children (**Q24 Do your children have school placements and access to other learning and development opportunities?**). In 2015 three respondents had children in school placements (or starting soon)/access to other learning and development opportunities, with five respondents having no children in school placements/access to other learning and development opportunities, of which two specified because it was too early and two because children had left school/are older. One noted that when grandchildren stay [for an extended period] the education services are slow to get them into school. In 2022, five households had children with school placements and two did not. Four respondents answered N/A due to their children being too old. One mentions trying to get their child into college to set up a local business.

In 2013 there were seven respondents, in 2015 three respondents and in 2022 five respondents, who did not identify any other forms of support that they would like to have access to (**Q25 What forms of support would you/someone else in your household like to have access to?**). Respondents identified the following forms of support that they would like to have access to:

	No of respondents		
	2013	2015	2022
Assistance with form filling, welfare and financial advice	1	1	3
Healthcare through GP and visiting clinics			4
Education and training			
Community events and activities e.g. children's holiday club		1	4
<i>Other (as specified):</i> Support to keep the site nice and safe for our children		1 1	

Support to do the site up as it is very depressing living here			1
Exercise and gym membership			1
Citizens Advice on site			

In both surveys additional support was identified that would improve quality of life and well being (**Q26 What additional support would improve you and your families' quality of life and well being?**). Comments in 2013 raised:

- Cleaning of the site; caretaking services and maintenance on the site;
- Streets/roads at Chapter Way maintained and cleaned like the surrounding ones;
- More presence on the site with maintenance and repairs;
- The cleaning of the pathways and roads on the site;
- The cleaning of pathways and roads on the site;
- The management of visitors and ASB.
- One respondent said they didn't know.

Comments in 2015 raised:

- Better quality of living. Better facilities on site;
- Caretaker and handyman. Better fences, gates. It's depressing at the moment, all concrete wall and open lands adjacent with foxes and rats. Would like more greenery. The gates are not safe for children;
- Regular cleaner/caretaker, maintenance man to keep the site tidy;
- The site needs major improvements. Needs planting and greenery. Control of the fly tipping on site. Better gates and walls. The present walls are grey ugly concrete and the gates are cattle gates. Very depressing. Would like the parking to be controlled as I cannot access my plot from the access road as vehicles are parked in the way. I do not want to move to a house/flat. I like living on the site as friends and family are here but I feel ashamed as the site is so depressing and uncared for.;
- I think the site needs major improvements;
- Fix pitch, sewage
- One respondent did not comment.

2022 comments:

- More frequent postal service
- Larger bins or more frequent bin service as foxes rummage through the bins
- Better drainage on site
- Better access to GP
- Larger site to reduce waiting times
- Caretaking service
- Better quality of repairs to buildings

Respondents identified the following forms of communication as the best ways to keep informed (**Q27 What's the best way to keep you/someone else in your household informed about services for gypsies and travellers?**):

	No of respondents		
	2013	2015	2022
Visit by RHP officer / support worker	7	3	10
Visit by health / education worker	1		2

Electronic communication e.g. email			11
Postal communication e.g. newsletter	1	3	4
Community / Voluntary group			
Site notice board		1	1
<i>Other (as specified):</i>			
[Health body]	1		
Prefer face to face or phone		1	
Phonecall		2	
Letter		1	

One respondent in 2015 noted literacy issues so postal communication would not be a good way. In 2022, a number of respondents highlighted the poor postage service which limits the effectiveness of newsletters. All respondents in this year who identified electronic communication wrote ‘whatsapp’ or ‘text’ alongside this response.

There was an opportunity to record any other comments (**Q28 Any other comments of relevance**). In 2013 one comment was made:

- Want to remain here; have no interest in moving or living in bricks and mortar. Would like to see another site built to home future family as I want to see my family grow up around me.

In 2015 three comments were made:

- Need to improve the site as the environment is very depressing surrounded by concrete walls and gates that look like they belong on a big farm.
- The maintenance and cleanliness of the site needs improvements. Need more security for plots i.e. better gates that are safe. The concrete walls are ugly and depressing. We used to have nice brick walls and it was more homely and prettier. Planting in communal areas to make it look prettier. Hedges would be nice and grass. Fencing off open areas of land adjacent to site where rats + foxes live so near to us.
- Speak to [landlord] about having cooking and cultural activities in Chapter Way. Childcare facilities being available. More activities during school holidays.

In 2022, the comments made were as follows:

- Would like more traveller sites in Richmond but smaller ones that are family run.
- Repairs on site and Universal Credit support are needed. Help from RHP helped with my UC arrears. I would like extra support with utility bills as the costs of electric are very high.
- More pitches in Richmond would help families live closer together and would provide community family support.
- The site is very messy. We do not have any street cleaners and the bin area is too small and gets dirty. The drainage on site is very poor and causes waste to emerge from blocked grids.
- There aren't enough sites in the borough. Other areas have more sites and pitches. It would be good to have smaller sites that are easier to manage and can be run by the families who are on site.
- There are barriers to being offered a pitch on site. I needed so many letters of support from doctors and social workers to get a place.
- The site is in poor disrepair. I feel ashamed when family visit. The block between pitches feels like a prison and the roads are filled with holes. The drains are always blocked and it floods in the winter. I am going to contact my MP.
- Would like nicer walls and gates to the property boundaries. Repairs are of poor quality. We had no door to the shed all winter and now the temporary gate is failing. I would like more greenery and plants- I would look after them.

- I would like another site in the borough or smaller sites with only 3 or 4 pitches. It would be easier to manage and result in a stronger community. Sites in South Ireland and Maidstone, Kent, are well-run small family sites- some of which are privately run.
- The site is old and needs a caretaking service. The firewalls between pitches should be removed and fenced in. There is always rubbish in communal areas and drainage on site is poor.

Contact details were requested if the respondent knew of any others who are in bricks and mortar and who may wish to be interviewed as part of the Council's research (**Note for Interviewer – leave contact details if the respondent knows of others who are in bricks and mortar who would be happy to be interviewed**) however in all years no additional contacts were identified through this means.

Survey Analysis and Further Comments:

4.10 The survey results, and the ability to compare against the makeup of the site in 2013, 2015 and 2022, continue to illustrate a site comprised of long standing, settled residents, from two extended families of Irish Travellers.

4.11 The survey results show that in the period between 2013 and 2022, there was movement within the site which appeared to stem largely from existing residents and their families. The composition of some pitches had changed, for example relatives had moved on, or a child now had their own pitch [when each survey is viewed in its entirety, with personal details]. The 2013 survey identified an immediate need for at least five pitches which had reduced to an immediate need for one pitch in the 2015 survey. The most recent survey identified the immediate need for three pitches- however the three individuals requiring a pitch are not registered on the site waiting list or housing register. There were only a limited number of young men identified who may wish to start to form their own families and look for pitches on the site, in the 2022 survey, only one male was looking for a pitch on site.

4.12 The latest position from RHP in 2022 is that there are no void pitches, all pitches, except three with single adults, are occupied by families. Of those occupied by families, all pitches apart from one are currently registered as single mothers, however it should be noted that the fathers of the children are regularly on-site and the trend continues for family compositions to increase. There are currently a total of 40 people living on the site – 13 adults and 27 children. There has remained only a limited waiting list. There have been nine vacancies over a ten-year period.

4.13 Overall, this research suggests that the size of the site and the way that it is managed do allow for some natural turnover and that position is likely to continue, with effective site management given one pitch is vacated each year on average. This estimate is based on in-depth knowledge of the occupants of the site, looking at historic patterns in turnover (including assessing moves within the site [by name/personal relationships], and how long they have lived there), demonstrated through site surveys over a number of years, to inform future trends based on current occupants (including by age). Therefore it is considered to justify this approach in the borough circumstances, due to the size of the site and the way it is managed by RHP.

4.14 While generally there is little desire to move into bricks and mortar, it appears that one respondent in 2015 moved. Clearly this would depend on individuals circumstances, given the 'psychological aversion' to housing which is recognised in

case law. The analysis does confirm the factors that would need to be addressed in considering any move – complexities including the type of housing available and the support that might be received.

4.15 As set out in section 2 of this report, due to the Government definition excluding those who have permanently ceased from travelling, the 2022 survey included for the first time questions about travelling habits. A number of respondents did indicate they have ceased from travelling, and may therefore be seeking culturally appropriate accommodation. However, given the recent challenge to the Government definition, and as it is clear that those surveyed are affected by health needs, it is not considered appropriate to exclude their needs from consideration, and this research continues to consider the needs of those who have permanently settled due to age, ill health or disability.

4.16 The analysis shows RHP's management of the site, services available and support to residents are clearly highly valued, and available to beyond those living on the site. The difference in the analysis between 2015 and 2022 does suggest that a degree of dissatisfaction with the site environment has remained and that recurring issues with drainage and waste collection have continued. Since the time of the 2015 surveys, RHP has acted on the request of residents and a weekly caretaking service is now provided. One of the main concerns was the open area at the back that had been used for dumping, which has been gated off and there has not been any fly-tipping since. This illustrates that RHP has listened and responded to residents needs to provide supportive management. It is positive that RHP's services and support are provided to those in extended families living in bricks and mortar, who trust RHP to help them with health and wellbeing, benefits, training and education.

Unauthorised encampments:

4.17 There has been an apparent small increase in unauthorised encampments in the borough since the previous research, however these numbers appear low compared to neighbouring boroughs. Although the Council is one of a number of authorities that has sought to use injunctions to protect Council-owned land from unauthorised encampment, this is largely to reduce the time and cost of the enforcement process. There are no transit pitches in the borough, and the levels and patterns of unauthorised encampments do not indicate a local need arising within the borough.

Travelling Showpeople:

4.18 There are no sites for Travelling Showpeople or Transit pitches in the borough. Merton Council previously led discussions in 2012 and 2013 with south London authorities, finding that Travelling Showpeople accommodation needs, including working patterns, were met across south London and adjoining south-eastern areas. While there are a number of fairs, circuses and shows held regularly in the borough's open spaces, there is no indication of any need specifically within the borough for pitches to meet their seasonal working needs.

The ongoing London-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment being carried out by RRR may also provide the opportunity to consider needs across London.

Riverboat Dwellers:

4.19 Other boroughs have considered the accommodation needs of households living on boats on the River Thames. However, within the borough, the Thames is designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and therefore the character and openness of the river are safeguarded from inappropriate uses.

4.20 There is no evidence to suggest that there is any need to introduce new provision for riverboat dwellers within the borough. There have been no requests for moorings from the Traveller community and no reports of any unauthorised moorings of riverboats by the Traveller community which indicates that there is no requirement for any additional permanent moorings in the borough. There is a [London Mooring Strategy](#), produced by the Canal and River Trust, which has identified zones for potential additional moorings elsewhere in London.

4.21 The ongoing London-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment being carried out by RRR for the GLA may introduce additional understanding of current mooring provision and identify additional need in this regard.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 The outcome of this initial research suggests that there is no demonstrated need for additional pitches, nor any signals indicating unmet need arising from elsewhere in the borough. There remains the need to continue to protect the existing site through the Local Plan, which will continue to accommodate existing and future needs of the existing Gypsy & Traveller population within the borough. At this stage there are no plans to identify additional pitches.

5.2 The research provides evidence for the continued joint working within the Council, RHP, Public Health and other bodies, to support the existing residents on the site. For any Gypsies & Travellers living in bricks and mortar, there may be opportunities for other innovative solutions to improve support to address needs such as providing floating support to those in bricks and mortar to address issues of isolation, managing a home and maintaining a tenancy.

5.3 The need for site improvement works has been identified in the past. A funding bid was submitted in January 2015 to the GLA's Traveller Pitch Fund (funding to be spent by March 2015) for environmental improvements to the existing site (hard landscaping/tree work, replacement fencing, lighting upgrade, CCTV upgrade, gully's/sewage works to address inadequacies). Although funding was not obtained, and drainage problems continue to have been raised in the 2022 survey. Identifying funding for improvements remains an ambition to take forward, with this research providing an up to date justification as to the need for improvements. There could be opportunities for future funding, as there was a recent Government Traveller Site Fund in 2022/23 for capital funding to support local authorities, including to refurbish existing permanent traveller sites, and the Mayor of London making capital funding available through the Affordable Homes Programme for remodelling existing sites.

5.4 The timing of the publication of this research is to inform the new Local Plan. There will be consultation that may inform further research, and reporting through the Authority's Monitoring Report will continue to keep under review. Under the Duty to Cooperate, the Council continues to liaise with neighbouring boroughs, as relevant, although to date discussions have not identified any cross-boundary issues related to Gypsy & Traveller movements. There could be further work with RHP, Public Health, and the Traveller Education Service to ascertain the extent of those living in bricks and mortar within the borough, although often any records are confidential and will be difficult to access for research purposes. The GLA's survey of Gypsy and Travellers in London may provide an additional source of information. It is recommended that the survey of families on the existing site in Hampton is repeated to continue monitoring. Dependent on future changes to Government guidance, questions regarding travelling habits may be removed or retained.