



Item No.

Traveller Accommodation in Dublin City Council

This report is intended to provide information for the Special Meeting on Traveller Accommodation in Dublin City Council. It covers the current provision of Traveller-specific accommodation and estimated unmet need, options to address accommodation need, the management of Traveller Accommodation and issues that commonly arise.

1. Provision of Accommodation to Travellers in DCC

The table below details all Traveller-specific accommodation - official and unofficial sites - across the 5 administrative areas of DCC. Central and South West Inner City areas do not have Traveller - Specific accommodation provision or demand for same.

Housing Type			No. House	No. Bay	Households with a housing need currently in caravans at back of houses or on sites.	Total
North Central Area						
Cara Park/ Close	Group Housing	Belcamp Lane, Coolock, D 17	41		22	63
Grove Park	Group Housing	Malahide Road, D17	1		4	5
St Dominic's Park (Closed)	Halting Site	Belcamp Lane, Coolock, D17			23	23

Tara Lawns (Closed)	Halting Site	Belcamp Lane, Coolock, D17			11	11
Northern Close	Group Housing	Belcamp Lane, Coolock, D17	11			11
Newtown Court Area	Unoff. site	Newtown Access Road (East) Purcells/Wards			21	21
Newtown Court Area	Unoff. site	Newtown Access Road to end of (West) Gavins /Others			17	17
			53	0	98	151
North West Area						
Avila Park/Close/Gardens	Group Housing	Cappagh Road, Finglas, D11	49		21	70
St. Margaret's Park	Halting Site	St Margarets Road, Ballymun, D11		30	1	31
St Mary's Park	Group Housing	Dunsink Lane, Finglas, D11	10		1	11
St Joseph's Park	Halting Site	Dunsink Lane, Finglas, D11		14		14
			59	44	23	126
South Central Area						
Labre Park/Kylemore Grove	Group Housing	Kylemore Road, Ballyfermot, D10	20		23	42
St Oliver's Park	Halting Site	Cloverhill Road, Clondalkin, D22	1	14		15
Bridgeview	Group Housing	Cloverhill Road, Clondalkin, D22	10			10
			31	14	23	67
TOTAL NO OF HOUSES					143	
TOTAL NO OF BAYS					58	
TOTAL NO OF HOUSEHOLDS – UNOFFICIAL SITES/BAYS					144	

2. Options to address Accommodation Need - Potential within Existing Sites

The demand/need for Traveller specific accommodation is outstripping what is available through TAP or casual vacancies. Listed here are the main options for supply.

Grove Lane has 1 house, a number of mobile homes and 5 derelict houses. There is one family consisting of 3 separate households (father, mother, 2 adult sons) living on the site. The site has featured on successive TAP programmes but agreement on the redevelopment with residents has not been possible to date. Previous efforts have included an independent mediator from ITM. CENA, the first Traveller-led Approved Housing Body is currently working with residents to agree a plan that will accommodate the family's needs and create capacity. We are hopeful that this change of approach may produce a better outcome.

St. Dominic's and Tara Lawns are 2 adjacent sites with 23 and 10 bays respectively. Both sites were closed in 2006 but new families have moved onto both sites in the intervening years. Both sites require significant refurbishment notwithstanding the considerable efforts of the families now living on the sites and the basic services and maintenance programmes provided by DCC.

St. Mary's & St. Joseph's - the latter will have 5 bays refurbished shortly. There have been quite serious issues on the site which have resulted on a number of moves in recent years. There is scope for additional development of up to 5 houses in St. Mary's, a well-kept mature estate, but we have to liaise with FCC as these sites fall within their boundary.

Avilla has additional capacity for 3 houses, a project that is currently at pre-planning consultation stage. The future development of Kildonan lands may give scope for new development.

Cara Park has potential for 9 houses within the boundary of the site and additional needs may be met under 3a. There will be a need to move at least temporarily the current occupants off the 2 areas with potential to develop the proposals. This must be agreed with residents. There is a further concern that as many families have caravans at the back of houses the allocation of new housing must be fair to all residents.

Labre Redevelopment – as per previous discussions Clúid will not achieve planning permission as is and we have engaged an independent Chair of the Redevelopment sub-committee Niall Crowley to support us finding an agreed way forward with residents. Niall's appointment has been welcomed by the residents and Ballyfermot Traveller Action Project.

3. Options to address Accommodation Need through New Site Development

- a. We are open to surveying any sites identified to us by Councillors/ Travellers/ Advocates that either are owned by DCC or could potentially be acquired for new developments. This might include areas within public parks or any land that could accommodate a development of 4-8 houses.
- b. Dublin City Council has identified sites in the Northern Fringe that have the potential to meet the Traveller specific accommodation needs of all households in the Coolock/Darndale area. Pat Teehan is the Project Manager developing this plan.
- c. Sites adjacent or within existing DCC estates with the capacity for a small development (4-8 houses) on a green area are being considered. A request to Area Housing Managers to identify such sites has been sent.

- d. We are currently trying to purchase houses suitable for households from Labre Park until the Redevelopment is complete and/or new group housing/halting sites are identified. This is led by the families on the site contacting us directly.
- e. We are setting aside a small number of units within new developments in standard housing where Travellers have expressed a particular interest in living due to their proximity to existing Traveller accommodation.
- f. There are under-occupied 3 and 4 bedroom houses in all sites. It is worth considering if we should be building some smaller one and 2 bedroom units for parents to allow younger families to occupy the larger houses. We would have to have a sense of the demand.

Issues Raised with DCC via LTACC/Other Fora

Traveller Specific Accommodation and Standard Social Housing

Concern has been expressed that DCC is pursuing an agenda of forcing Travellers into standard housing. DCC allows for Travellers to apply for both lists and to remain on the list for Traveller specific housing if their preference long-term is to live in culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation. Under DCC's Scheme of Letting for standard social housing, Traveller households in emergency accommodation, at the back of houses, in bays or on unofficial sites may be awarded priority on the social housing waiting list. While it should be a matter of choice for individual Traveller households, we recognise that as long as there is insufficient culturally appropriate Traveller housing, some families will feel they do not have real choice. Other families are very clear that they only want standard housing but would like to be within easy distance of their family supports. So while we have few Traveller priority households waiting for standard housing in the City Centre, it often does not suit the needs of the families to switch to those areas.

The Management & Conditions of Sites

There is often a circular argument of blame with respect to the conditions of *some* sites. Travellers and advocates point to the condition of a given site and the local authority points to endemic issues of dumping and/or estate management issues that are or have contributed to the problems. Some but by no means all Traveller sites are subject to the same antisocial issues we experience in pockets across the city. Some residents and non-residents engage in dumping and antisocial behaviour. We do not hold all the Travellers of a site responsible for the behaviour of a few and our policy has been to engage with Waste Enforcement to discourage those who are engaged in dumping or harmful burning of copper wire. There is a response by the Traveller Accommodation Unit to anti-social behaviour and, as in standard housing, complaints are often made confidentially. Legal remedies were subject to the same challenges of changed legislation that affected standard housing.

There are 2 sites where dumping has been on a massive, commercial scale and efforts of the staff to respond have been met with threats and intimidation. Residents too report fear in speaking against the main beneficiaries. DCC will continue to pursue multi-agency solutions to respond.

The mobile caretaking crew visit each site at least twice per week (with the exception of Grove Lane) for a general clean-up and there is a cyclical programme of works planned each quarter with the contractor.

Drawdown of Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) Funding

Each year the Department makes an allocation of a *nominal* amount of capital funding to each Local Authority based on its planned programme of works and whether they are likely to be achieved within the coming 12 months. There can be a perception that DCC is not spending its allocation. No actual money can be drawn down until there are completions of the stages in a project or there has been actual expenditure by the local authority that is to be reimbursed. Funds allocated to one project cannot be moved to a different project. There must be Departmental approval (usually forthcoming) prior to works commencing. When projects stall for any reason, a perception may arise that DCC is unwilling to build or progress Traveller Accommodation. This is not the case and every effort is made to push on the projects listed on the TAP Programme. There is a half time review built in to each TAP programme. However the TAP needs to be reviewed openly and transparently on a quarterly basis and we commit to ensuring a comprehensive update will be available at every LTACC meeting and that there will be full and frank disclosure at LTACC meetings when there is an issue that threatens the delay of a project.

Opposition and Support

Some of the unofficial sites are on lands that historically had alternative uses planned for them, in particular the lands at Newtown Court. We anticipate considerable local opposition to proposals to provide serviced sites or group housing to the families in the area.

In Finglas the Kildonan lands may provide an option for at least some of the Avila households that are currently at the back of houses.

In South Central Area we need to plan for both the Labre Redevelopment and the future needs of families in Bridgeview/Oliver's through new site development.

We undertake to review sites that have the capacity to be developed for Traveller accommodation in the areas with the highest demand i.e. Ballyfermot, Finglas/Cabra, Ballymun/Whitehall and the Malahide Road. We will face opposition to proposals and we would welcome strong political leadership to support new development proposals brought before Councillors for approval.

Mary Hayes

Executive Manager