

TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE'S SITES - A PLANNING FOCUS
MODEL STANDARD PACKAGE

Revised September 2007

The Showmen's

Guild of

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Founded 1889



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INTRODUCTION

The traditional lifestyle of travelling showpeople has been of peripatetic nature, With showpeople travelling from fair to fair predominantly through the summer months, and settling on more permanent sites known as "winter quarters" during the winter months. Increasingly, however, sites are being occupied all year round by other family members. A reduction in the number of large scale fairs has also led to more localised travelling with a need for more permanent bases.

Within the planning framework it is these permanent sites where travelling showpeople are experiencing difficulties. Many of these sites are historical and have an established use, but where new sites are needed travelling showpeople have experienced great difficulty in securing valid use for the land. With the publishing of Circular 04/07 by the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Guild issues this booklet not only for guidance to its members but also for reference by Local Planning Authorities, who are becoming increasingly aware of the problems experienced by travelling showpeople.

This package incorporates model standards for the layout of new sites — a useful tool for travelling showpeople when laying out their sites and also for Local Planning Authorities when considering this specific use of the land.

TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE'S SITES

Travelling showpeople require a permanent base where they can store, maintain and repair their equipment and where they can station their caravans, when they are not travelling for the purpose of their business. This has traditionally been known as the winter quarters site as historically it has only been through the winter months - 1st October until Easter - when a permanent base has been required. Today, however, more showpeople are wishing to occupy these sites during periods of the summer; older family members require less seasonal occupation and a more permanent base assists in the education of children.

Generally throughout the country the number of showmen's site has diminished, primarily through different forms of redevelopment and sometimes as a result of compulsory purchase. At the same time Membership to the Guild has remained constant. Where traditional showmen's sites have survived there has been a tendency for these to become overcrowded and, as single family units have expanded, other showpeople have been displaced. As a result of redevelopment and displacement some showpeople have been left to find their own sites.

A situation has arisen in many parts of the country where demand for showpeople's sites exceeds supply and where there is a clear and established need for additional showpeople's sites.

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HISTORY AND WAY OF LIFE OF TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE

Today's showman is the heir to a long tradition of providing popular entertainment. We can only speculate on the first appearance of his earliest ancestor; like the institution of the fair itself, it predates recorded history.

The first generation of strolling performers undoubtedly relied on their physical and artistic skills to amuse the crowds at the fair. Tumblers, conjurers and other entertainers who wandered from place to place can be found in Roman records. In this country the first glimpses of these "jongleurs", as Chaucer was to describe them, can be seen in the margins of medieval missals such as the Luttrell Psalter. The illustrations of everyday life used to decorate these religious texts depict figures of minstrels, dancers and balancers performing feats with knives and balls.

Their presence at the great trading fairs of the Middle Ages was equally marginal, these peripatetic performers only coming into their own after the day's business was done and the fairgoers sought refreshment and relaxation at the alehouse or inn.

As the trading aspect of the fair declined, the showman took the centre stage. By the 17th century, the booths of the illusionists, puppeteers, theatricals and acrobats were the main attractions at events such as the legendary Bartholomew Fair in London's Smithfield. The diarist Samuel Pepys wrote vivid accounts of his visits to the fair, thronged by rich and poor alike. Such was the popularity of fairs after the Restoration that, when the Thames froze in January of 1684, booths for puppets and plays were set up on the ice and remained there for over a month.

At the start of the 19th century contemporary engravings depict the grand booths of the theatrical companies and the menageries dominating the fairground scene. Only on the periphery of the fair can be spotted small riding devices such as hand-turned roundabouts and swinging boats.

The elevation of these rides from minor to major attractions had to wait until later in the century. It was the invention of a practical form of steam engine to turn a roundabout that enabled the development of the magnificent Galloping Horses, the Swichback Railways and all their successors down to the present day.

The shows that had given him his title were soon to be eclipsed by these lavishly-decorated "merrygo-rounds and whirligigs", but the showman - now riding master - quickly responded to the changing circumstances with an age-old adaptability. In maintaining the tradition of the fair, the showman was demonstrating more than mere economic self-interest. His way of life was - and still is - largely driven by its momentum, born perhaps out of the essential nature of the fair itself.

Since it evolved out of the annual festivals of pre-historic times, held on the downland slopes of southern England, the fair has been an integral part of the social fabric of this country. In the Middle Ages it was paramount as the only venue for the exchange of goods other than sold at the weekly market. As a result of the Black Death in the 14th century and the consequent Statute of Labourers, the hiring of workers was added to its function - an aspect of the fair that continued into this century.

Over the centuries the fair has nurtured or developed kindred forms of entertainment. The theatre survived the zeal of Cromwell well by seeking refuge on the fairground, while pantomime owes its

inspiration to the "forains" or strolling players who crossed over from France to perform at fairs in the late 17th century. An audience for moving pictures - and hence the cinema — was created in the Bioscopes of the enterprising showmen of the 1890's.

Before the age of mass entertainment the arrival of the fair was a highlight of the year in most communities. It brought a form of amusement that was unpretentious and available to all. These same qualities exist today: it is the accessibility and undemanding nature of the fair that ensures its continuing - if underestimated - appeal.

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THE SHOWMEN'S GUILD OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain is a democratic organisation set up at the turn of the century, with the principal objective of protecting the interests of its members - travelling showpeople who gain their livelihoods by attending fun fairs. Its objective is achieved in two ways; by its code of rules for members and through the legal and constitutional processes of the land.

The Guild is accepted at both the national and local levels as the negotiating body for travelling showpeople. It has a parliamentary agent acting on behalf of the showpeople in respect of proposed legislation and a delegation of officers who deal with matters involving Local Authorities.

Some of the Central Council's powers have been delegated to the three main Committee's; Management, Appeals and Safety. With particular reference to the Safety Committee, this ensures that Members maintain and operate their equipment to the highest of standards. It ensures that they comply with the Code of Safe practice at Fairs, published by the Health and Safety Executive, and with specific Guidance Notes issued for individual types of fairground rides. Each year Members of the Guild submit their equipment for inspection by a firm of independent engineers. This ensures a consistently high standard of repair and safety.

The Guild is concerned with the retention and promotion of existing fairground sites - as with travelling showpeople's sites, redevelopment schemes have taken their toll. The loss is felt by the town which loses part of its heritage, by the people who are denied an essentially popular form of entertainment, and by the showmen who loses part of his livelihood.

Of equal concern to the Guild is the diminishing number of showpeople's sites, as identified in the preceding section. It is hoped that, by the preparation of this model standard package, Local Planning Authorities will be able to obtain better understanding of the requirements of travelling showpeople and the problems that they face in retaining and/or finding a permanent site.

The Guild's Head Office is in London and there are ten regional sections within the UK. For development control purposes relevant to individual Local Planning Authorities, each of the ten sections will be able to assist. The ten sections of the Guild, together with correspondence addresses, are set out in Appendix A.

(5)

THE PLANNING SITUATION

Whilst travelling showpeople enjoy permitted development rights, and hence do not require express planning permission for the use of the land when travelling for the purpose of their business, planning permission is required for the change of use of land and/or buildings for travelling showpeople's sites, whether these sites are proposed to be occupied on a traditional winter quarters basis or where more permanent occupation is envisaged.

Travelling showpeople do not enjoy any priority status in respect of seeking planning permission and, whilst there is a commonly held misconception that their use of land is similar to that of gypsies, this is not the case and indeed they are specifically excluded from the definition of gypsies under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. They do not benefit from the duty on Local Authorities under that same legislation to provide gypsy accommodation and historically they have had little assistance in providing sites for themselves.

The present planning scene, insofar as it affects travelling showpeople's sites, is affected by the following:

1. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Planning and Compensation Act 1991
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- The Housing Act 2004
- The Human Rights Act 1988

Major changes to the planning system have been brought about through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, including the way in which the development plan is prepared, with Regional Spatial Strategies replacing county plans and Local Development Frameworks replacing the Local Plan.

A presumption in favour of development that is in accordance with the development plan is given in Section 38 (6) of the 2004 Planning Act. Hence, in the determination of planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should determine the application in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Housing Act 2004 requires Local Authorities to undertake Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments as part of their wider housing strategies. The Act includes travelling showpeople within the definition 'gypsies and travellers' for the purposes of undertaking the assessment.

In the Human Rights context, Local Authorities should consider the consequences of interfering with one's right to their home, private and family life and demonstrate why it is necessary to do so by reference to the particular planning harm attributable to the exercise of these rights.

2. Department of Communities and Local Government Circular 04/07.

Circular 04/07 has replaced previous policy guidance relating to travelling showpeople contained within Circular 22/91. A replacement circular had been considered necessary because evidence had showed that the guidance had failed to address the accommodation needs of travelling showpeople. The new Circular therefore aims to increase the number of sites in appropriate locations over the next three to five years and to maintain an appropriate level of provision through the development plan.

Policy Guidance as set out in Circular 04/07 can be summarised as follows:

- i. The Development Plan — The Circular highlights the importance of assessing showpeople's needs at a regional and local level and for Local Planning Authorities to develop strategies to ensure those needs are met. The data collected through the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment process should inform the preparation of regional strategies and Local Development Frameworks. The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain and other travelling showpeople may be approached as sources of information when carrying the assessment. The Regional Spatial Strategy should identify the number of pitches required, although it will not give their location. These should be given within Development Plan Documents, which form part of a Local Development Framework.
- ii. Sustainability — Local Planning Authorities should consider identifying sites in terms of accessibility to existing local community facilities and services, including public transport. Sites should not place undue pressure on the local infrastructure, although projected vehicle movements should be assessed on an individual basis. Sustainability issues arising from the distances travelled by showpeople from their home to their work should be considered. Sites on previously developed or derelict land may be acceptable as may sites on the outskirts of built-up areas. A well-planned travelling showmen's site may be seen as positively enhancing the environment.
- iii. Planning Applications — These should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is emphasised that very special circumstances must be demonstrated to justify allowing development for purposes not normally appropriate in green belts. These may include the likely impact on the surrounding area, the existing level of provision and need for sites in the area, the availability (lack of) alternative sites and other personal circumstances. Local Planning Authorities should not refuse applications solely because the applicant has no local connection. In nationally designated areas, Local Planning Authorities should consider the site's effect in terms of the designation given, but these should not be used in themselves to refuse permission for showpeople's sites. Current restrictions on

development in specially protected areas contained in others circulars and Planning Policy Guidance notes and Planning Policy Statements still apply.

- iv. Enforcement Action — Local Planning Authorities should have regard to whether the local need for sites and absence of existing provision may prejudice enforcement action being taken. Reference is made to Planning Policy Guidance Note 18, which in part states that Local Planning Authorities should consider the underlying reasons for any breach of planning control and investigate whether the use could be allowed to continue on a modified and hence acceptable basis.

- v. General — Local Planning Authorities should be ready to discuss showpeople's needs at any early stage, both while development plans are being prepared, as well as in the development control context. It encourages pre-application discussions and Local Planning Authority involvement to enable showpeople to secure their own sites. Local Planning Authorities should offer practical advice to travelling showpeople wishing to purchase land for development, however travelling showpeople should first consult local planning authorities as to the planning merits of the site.

The Guild sees that it is of the utmost importance that Local Planning Authorities are aware of the needs of travelling showpeople during the stages of preparation of development plans, in order that site-specific or more general policies can be incorporated within these development plans to allow both for the current and future requirements of travelling showpeople.

(6)

SITE CRITERIA

Showpeople's sites do not fit neatly into any definition of any one land use category. The sites combine a residential use, attained by the siting of their mobile caravans, with a commercial use — that of storing and maintaining fairground equipment. Quite often the sites themselves may be subdivided to allow for these two distinctive uses.

As a result of the joint use, and it is essential that these are combined, sites do not fit easily into existing land use categories; because of the commercial use they do not fit easily within any built up residential area and because of the residential use, which requires amenities, they do not easily within any built up industrial area.

Whilst each site must be considered on its own particular merits, in general the following criteria can be applied:

1. The site should be relatively flat;
2. The site should have good vehicular access, suitable for the ingress and egress of large vehicles;
3. The site should be in close proximity to a good road network;
4. The site should be close to schools and other community facilities;
5. The site may have existing buildings located on it, which could be used for the storage, maintenance and repair of equipment;
6. A mature and natural landscaping is of benefit;
7. The site should respect amenities of any occupants of residential properties nearby;
8. The site should provide amenities normally expected for human occupation;
9. The site should not be located within an area where there is a high risk of flooding.

(7)

MODEL STANDARDS

Introduction

The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain recommend the following model standards with respect to the layout of new sites used by showpeople when they are not travelling and the provision of facilities, services and equipment. They are model standards, i.e. they represent the standards normally to be expected as a matter of good practice on such sites. They should be applied with due regard to the particular circumstances of each case, including the physical character of the site, any services or facilities that may already be available within the convenient reach or other local conditions. Further information in connection with specific requirements in force should be obtained through the relevant Statutory Authorities and it should be noted that these standards may require adaptation to meet particular requirements of Statutory Authorities.

The model standards apply to sites for individual showmen, sites in multiple occupation and sites in multiple ownership, where individual plots within the site have been formed.

Site Boundaries

1. Boundaries to the site (or individual plots) should be clearly marked and the site or plot made secure from members of the public.

Site Layout

2. There should be separate areas identified for the stationing of caravans and for the storage, maintenance and repair of fairground equipment.

It is recommended that a three metre wide area should be kept clear within the inside of all boundaries.

Density and Spacing of Caravans

3. Caravans used for the purposes of human habitation should be positioned not less than six metres from any other caravan, subject to the following variations:
 - Porches may protrude one metre into the six metre spacing and should be of the open type;
 - Where awnings are used, the distance between any part of the awning and an adjoining caravan should not be less than three metres;
 - The six metre recommended guide can be relaxed in the cases of showmen's specialist caravans used for solely living accommodation and any touring caravan used solely as sleeping accommodation, but these should in any event be positioned not less than three metres from any other caravan.
 - Other extensions or attachments can be permitted between units only if of noncombustible materials and as long as they do not impede means of escape.
4. The density should not exceed 20 caravans per hectare, calculated on the basis of usable area allocated for residential purposes on that site and excluding lakes, communal services and other areas unsuitable for the siting of caravans. The density should be consistent with safety standards and health and safety requirements.

Storage and maintenance of Fairground Equipment

5. A separate area shall be allocated within each site for the storage, repair and maintenance of fairground equipment.

Any buildings erected in connection with the above should comply with the Building Regulations in force at the time. In any event these buildings should not be less than six metres from any caravan used for the purposes of human habitation. †

Any lorries, trailers, trucks, vans etc. not used during the course of daily activities should be parked within this allocated area.

No equipment exceeding five metres in height should be stored on sites.

Roads, Gateways and Footpaths

6. Roads and footpaths should be designed to provide adequate access for fire appliances. Roads of suitable material should be provided so that no caravan standing is more than 50 metres from a road. Such access routes should not be less than 3.7 metres wide, should have clear, unobstructed width and should have no overhead structure or cable less than 4.5 metres above the ground. Emergency vehicle routes within the site should be kept clear of obstruction at all times.

The access to the site and internal road layout should be designed to maximise highway safety.

Hardstandings

7. Where possible, every caravan and item of fairground equipment should stand on a hardstanding of suitable material.

Fire Fighting Appliances/Fire Points

8. Fire points should be clearly marked, easily accessible and housed in a water proof structure. They should be established so that no caravan or site building is more than 30 metres from a fire point.

Fire fighting equipment shall be provided in a prominent position on any fairground equipment.

Suitable fire fighting equipment should be installed and suitably protected against damage by frost. Suitable fire fighting equipment can include water stand pipes with hose reels to B.S. standards, fire hydrants to B.S. standards (installed within 100 metres of any caravan standing), water extinguishers (2 x 9 litres) or a water tank of at least 500 litres capacity fitted with a hinged cover, 2 buckets and 1 hand pump or bucket pump. Access to hydrants and other water supplies should not be obstructed or obscured.

A means of raising the alarm in the event of a fire should be provided at each fire point. This must be appropriate to the size and layout of the site.

Each fire point should exhibit a notice indicating the action to be taken in case of fire, including details of the muster point, and the location of the nearest telephone. This notice should include the following:

"On discovering a fire

Ensure the affected unit is evacuated;

Raise the alarm;

Call the fire brigade (the nearest telephone is located at)

If it is safe to do so, attack the fire using the fire fighting equipment."

All alarm and fire fighting equipment should be installed, tested and maintained in working order by a competent person. A log book should be kept to record all tests and any remedial action.

Fire Hazards

9. Long grass and vegetation should be cut at frequent and regular intervals when the site is occupied to prevent it becoming a fire hazard to caravans, buildings or other installations on the site. Any such cuttings should be removed from the vicinity of caravans. The space beneath and between caravans should not be used for the storage of combustible materials.

Storage of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)

10. Liquefied Petroleum Gas storage and installations should meet statutory requirements, relevant Standards and Codes of Practice. Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders should not be positioned or secured in such a way as to impede access or removal in the event of an emergency.

Electrical Installations

11. Where feasible, sites should be provided with an electricity supply sufficient in all respects to meet all reasonable demands of the caravans and maintenance facilities. Any electrical installations which are not Electricity Board works should be installed, tested and maintained in accordance with the provisions of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) Regulations and other regulations in force at the time. Electrical installations and appliances should be worked on by competent persons and inspected periodically, as appropriate and a minimum of every three years in accordance with the recommendations in force at the time. Any overhead lines should be clearly marked.

Water Su I

12. All sites provided with a water supply should in accordance with the appropriate Water Byelaws and statutory quality standards.

Drainage, Sanitation and Washing facilities

13. Satisfactory provision should be made for foul drainage, either by connection to a public sewer or sewage treatment works or by discharge to a properly constructed septic tank or cesspool approved by the Statutory Authorities.

Properly designed disposal points for the contents of chemical closets should be provided with an adequate supply of water for cleaning the containers.

On occasion, communal toilet blocks can be provided which should be sited conveniently so that all site occupants may have reasonable access.

Refuse disposal

14. It is a duty on the local authority to collect refuse. The site shall be kept clean and free from refuse.

Parking

15. Only one car may be parked between adjoining caravans of six metres spacing, provided that the door to the caravan is not obstructed. Other car parking spaces should be made available where necessary to meet additional requirements of the occupants and their visitors.

Recreation Space

16. Some recreation space should be provided around caravans or in a specially designated area for children's games and/or recreational purposes.

MODEL SITE LAYOUT For Small Site

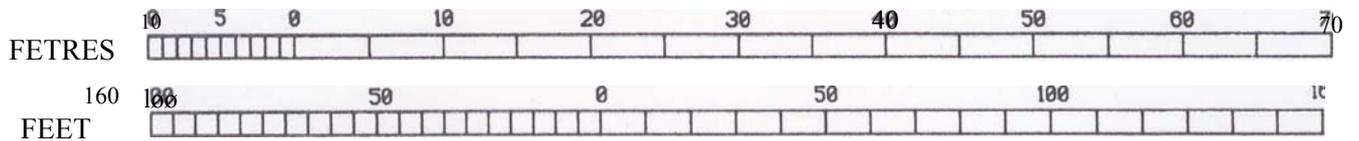


Highway

KEY

- Mobile Home
- Touring Caravan
- Specialist Caravan
- SMA Storage and Maintenance Area
- Recreational Area
- Additional Parking Area
- st Septic Tank/Cesspool (or mains drainage)
- Fire Point
- rb Rubbish Bins ab Chemical Toilet Disposal Point (Toilet-Laundrg Optional)
- Non Combustible Building
- a Awning / Pull out section

SCALES



MODEL SITE LAYOUT For Large Site

KEY

- Mobile Home
- Touring Caravan rb
- Specialist Caravan ab
- SMA Storage and Maintenance Area b
- Hydrant
- Recreational Area st
- Additional Parking Area

SCALES



Fire Point
 Rubbish Bins
 Chemical Toilet Disposal
 Point (Toilet-Laundry
 Optional)
 Non Combustible Building
 Awning / Pull Out Section
 Septic Tank/ Cesspool (or Mains
 Drainage)

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PLANNING
CONDITIONS AND
SECTION 106
AGREEMENTS

Where Local Planning Authorities are considering granting planning permission for the use of land as a travelling showpeople's site, they have the power to impose conditions which would enable the change of use to take place where it would otherwise have been necessary to refuse planning permission. The conditions should however be fair, reasonable and practicable and they should be precise and relevant, both to the planning objectives and to the development to be permitted.

By the imposition of conditions, Local Planning Authorities may well find that the use of land is more acceptable and that the development is more controlled. Conditions that have been imposed on some travelling showpeople's sites include, for example, the restriction of height for the storage of vehicles and equipment, the restriction of hours for the testing, maintenance and repair of equipment, a condition restricting the number of caravans and/or vehicles on site, and a condition ensuring that a comprehensive landscaping scheme is undertaken and thereafter maintained.

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Where further controls or obligations are deemed to be necessary, and where these controls cannot be secured by condition, a legal agreement may be entered into between the Local Authority and the travelling showpeople under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Such agreements may relate to the provision of sewerage or other services and restrictions on occupancy of the land.

APPENDIX A

OFFICES OF THE SHOWMEN'S GUILD OF GREAT BRITAIN

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