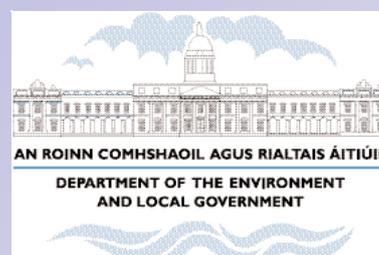
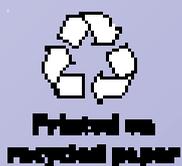


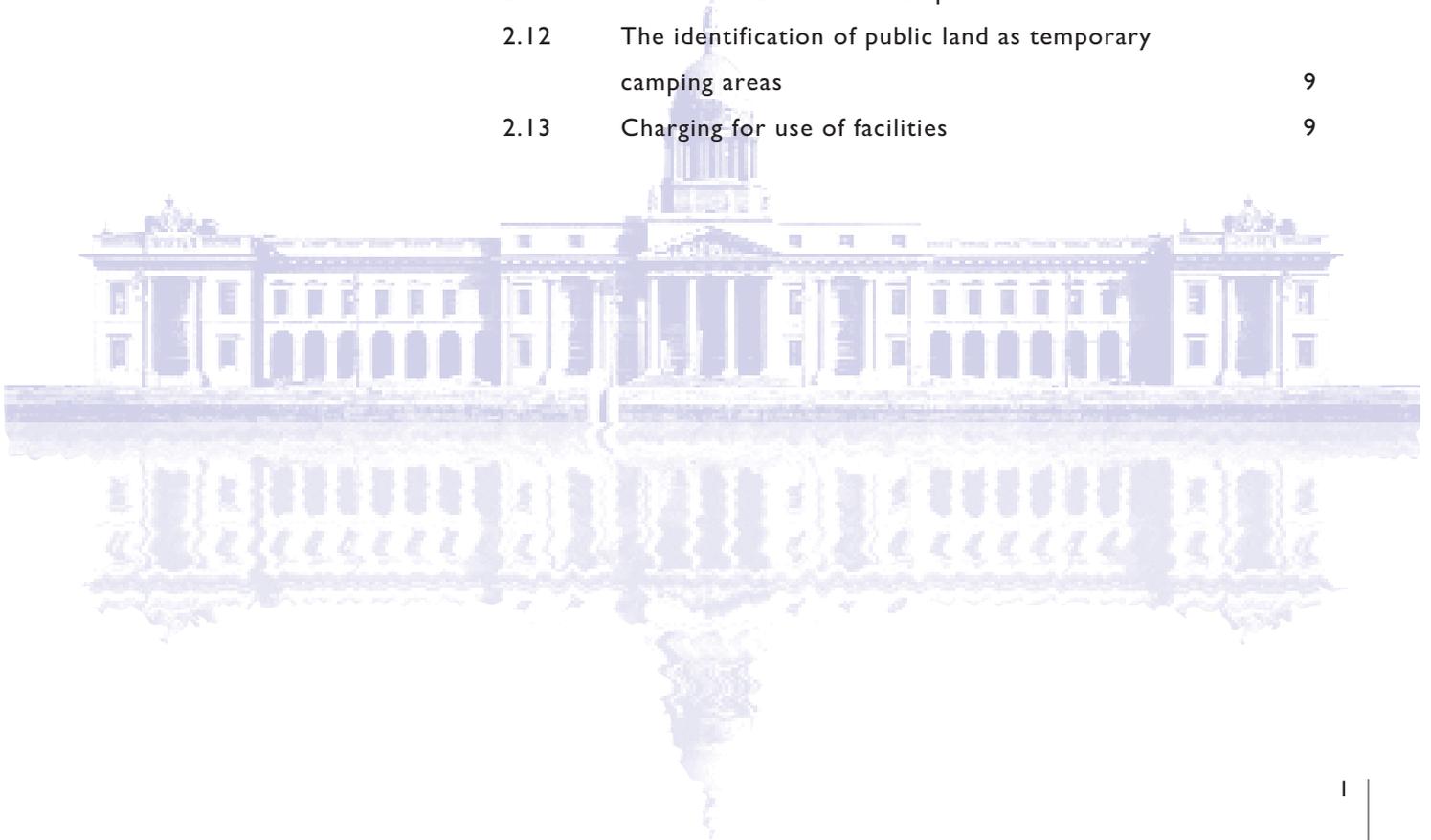
Guidelines for

Accommodating Transient Traveller Families



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1. Introduction

1.1 Guidelines issued by the Minister

Subsection (6) of section 13 of the Housing Act, 1988 as amended by section 29 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 enables the Minister to issue guidelines, including guidelines for transient sites. Guidelines for Permanent Residential Caravan Parks and Guidelines for Basic Services and Facilities for Caravans, Pending the Provision of Permanent Accommodation, have already been issued. Those Guidelines together with this document should assist local authorities in addressing Traveller accommodation needs in an integrated manner.

The Guidelines respect the validity of the distinct culture and nomadic identity of the Traveller community and seek to have this aspect of the lives of Travellers properly respected and resourced.

1.2 Purpose and Application of the Guidelines

These Guidelines are intended to assist local authorities in providing appropriate services at reasonable cost to nomadic Traveller families. They are not comprehensive in every aspect of site provision and regard should be had to other relevant requirements, advice etc. The Guidelines should be used as a basis to facilitate authorities in making decisions specific to their own particular local circumstances. It is not the intention to impose uniform solutions since situations may vary considerably in character across the country; therefore, the Guidelines should be applied in a flexible manner. Proposals for funding the construction or refurbishment of sites will be considered on their merits. The Guidelines are without prejudice to other statutory functions of local authorities including the exercise of emergency powers.

1.3 Legislative Background

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 gives statutory recognition to transient sites as one of a range of accommodation options for Traveller families. The Act reflects the recommendations contained in the

Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, which recommended that a network of transient sites be provided across the country. These sites, the Report stated, should be provided simultaneously with the other types of accommodation facilities as an integral part of a National Programme.

The following is a brief summary of the references in the Act to transient sites:

Section 6

The purpose of this section is to ensure that the statutory assessment of needs under section 9 of the Housing Act, 1988, as amended, is carried out in an integrated and comprehensive way in relation to all the accommodation needs of Travellers and in consultation with the local consultative committee. Subsection (4) provides that in assessing the need for sites for caravans the relevant housing authority must have regard to the need for sites for stays other than as the normal place of residence of Travellers.

Section 10

Section 10 provides for the form and content of accommodation programmes. Subsection (3) sets out matters to which the relevant housing authority shall have regard in preparing the programme, including under paragraph (c) the need to provide transient sites.

Section 29

Section 29 provides for the amendment of section 13 of the Housing Act, 1988, to clarify that the powers of housing authorities to provide, improve, manage and control sites, extends to sites with limited facilities such as transient sites.

2. Guidelines

2.1 Consultation with Travellers

Local authorities should avail of the consultative mechanisms provided in the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 i.e. the local Traveller accommodation consultative committee, when developing and implementing policy on accommodating nomadism. The extent of this consultation will vary depending on the circumstances under which services and facilities are to be provided. Authorities should take account of the expectations and aspirations of Travellers, subject to due regard to the need to provide for the nomadic identity of Travellers at reasonable cost.

Issues requiring consultation may include the question of site selection, design features, facilities and services, management and maintenance of sites, provision of accommodation other than through permanent or temporary transient sites.

Social workers employed to work with Travellers, either directly by the local authority, or health board or voluntary body in the area, should be fully involved in the initiation, development and implementation of proposals.

2.2. Public Consultation

The public notification procedures for local authority developments in their own functional areas are set out in Part X of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Regulations, 1994 as amended by the Local Government (Planning and Development) Regulations, 1998. Works carried out as a result of the exercise by the manager of emergency powers under section 2 of the City and County Management (Amendment) Act, 1955 as amended by section 27 of the Housing Act, 1988 are exempted from the requirements of Part X of the 1994 Regulations. The 1998 Act also provides for notifying a range of bodies concerned with the provision of Traveller accommodation when local authorities are preparing or revising five-year accommodation programmes.

Local authorities should consider what further measures,

in addition to the statutory public notification/consultation procedures, may be desirable to inform local residents or their representatives of proposals to provide services and facilities for transient families.

2.3. Accommodating transient Traveller families

Measures to be implemented by local authorities to provide services and facilities for transient families will be dependent on local circumstances and a variety of responses may be needed. These would include:

- (a) the provision of a network of transient halting sites;
- (b) accommodating families where possible at permanent halting sites and group housing schemes;
- (c) transfer arrangements between Traveller families that are negotiable with the relevant local authorities;
- (d) assisting families to make arrangements for the provision of their own accommodation;
- (e) liaising with private residential caravan parks to provide spaces for families;
- (f) the identification of public land for temporary camping purposes.

The nature of transient sites, e.g. from a planning and design perspective, necessitates their consideration in some detail. Accordingly the following guidelines, which are based on the Guidelines for Permanent Halting Sites and adjusted where appropriate, are provided.

2.4. Transient Halting Sites

2.4.1 Location of sites

Sites are intended for short stays by transient Travellers only. The occupants of such sites will not wish to locate their families in the particular area for an extended period of time and generally are on the move to fairs, festivals or trading from area to area, etc. Cognisance should be taken of traditional preferences of Travellers, including those, which have been notified to local authorities by Travellers or established in consultation with Travellers. Because of the transitory nature of the duration of the stay of the occupants the locations which are likely to be most suited to their needs will usually be peripheral to urban areas.

Authorities should liaise with adjoining authorities to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the provision of transient sites.

2.4.2 Site Investigation

A survey by appropriate technical officers should be undertaken to select a suitable site/sites on which schemes proportionate in size to the extent of the needs of the area may be planned (see para. 2.5.3 below). All sites should be inspected, approved and reported on by the appropriate professional/technical officers of the local authority. In particular, where a site is being acquired for a specific development, the authority's planning officer should carry out an appraisal of the site and provide certification that the development is consistent with the planning and development objectives for the area.

Local authorities should be satisfied that the sites selected are likely to be used by Travellers for whom they are being provided.

2.4.3 Site investigation should cover, inter alia, the following -

- planning considerations (zoning etc.);
- adjoining land and building uses (existing and proposed);
- access;
- availability of amenities and services (such as shops, churches, open space, etc.);
- availability of infrastructural services (e.g. drainage, water supply, electricity, telephone etc.)
- site survey including ground levels, geological survey, existing features (e.g. hedgerows, streams, etc.);
- access for refuse collection and emergency services;
- potential hazards including road/traffic hazards;
- rights of way, easements, etc.

2.4.4 The site survey should identify any physical characteristics of the site, which could render the development of the site uneconomic because of the high cost of site

development works. Regard should also be had to the relevant sections of "Social Housing Guidelines - Site Selection" published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

2.5. Design

2.5.1 Consultants

The designers of a transient site for Travellers, whether in-house, the National Building Agency Ltd or consultants, should be furnished with all relevant information e.g. recommended standards for sites, design objectives, densities, amenities, etc. They should be fully briefed regarding the requirements of the local authority and the Department's procedures for the preparation and submission of proposals for capital funding. Procedures and mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the consultants have access to and take account of the views of any Travellers concerned, including the views of the local Traveller consultative committee.

2.5.2 Design Brief

A design brief should be drawn up before commencing the project design to ensure that an open, attractive and comfortable environment for people to stay in is created. The brief should take account of the outcome of consultation with Travellers and cover such aspects as: -

- information on the number of bays to be constructed and the circumstances under which the site is being used;
- general planning considerations and the design approach including any

special requirements of the planning authority affecting layout and development;

- general guidance on provision for service units, including water, sanitary, emergency telephone, open space, landscaping, play space, caretaking and entrance control;
- appropriate architectural treatment which should seek to produce a design of distinct character;
- any special considerations regarding access to buildings and facilities;
- the requirements of the Building Regulations and the requirements of the fire authority;
- use of materials which should be robust and require minimal maintenance;
- cost parameters.

These details may alter as the design progresses and designers should be able to respond within reason to these changes. It should be a standard requirement in the brief that the local authority be advised at an early stage of any unusual site development costs, which could affect the viability of the site. The brief should require that the designers take full account of future management and maintenance.

2.5.3 Size of Site

As a general guide the maximum number of

families should not exceed twenty on any site. However authorities may consider it desirable to allow some flexibility having regard to local circumstances, including the desirability of accommodating members of the same family group. The question of the size of a site is a matter which should be addressed in the local consultation process.

2.5.4 Layout

Schemes should be designed on a cost-effective basis from a capital and operational cost viewpoint. The physical nature of the site along with the number of families to be accommodated, the type of facilities and amenities to be allowed (including road and service provision), will all have a bearing on the type of layout. As far as possible layout should take account of the specific preferences of Travellers, where relevant, in the arrangement and grouping of pitches/service units. Pitches could be distributed around the site taking account of the size and shape of the site and local conditions. The layout could allow for recreational use of the space when sites are not adjacent to play areas. However the layout should generally avoid the creation of spaces which are not allocated for a specific use. Long access roads should generally be avoided.

2.5.5 Internal Circulation

In the interests of minimising site development costs, internal circulation should be by way of 'one way loops', 'pull in areas' etc. for internal roads (allowing for the fact that vehicles may be towing caravans normally 7 - 8 metres long).

Sufficient space must be allowed for manoeuvring caravans into and within pitches and for access and egress of the emergency services. It is suggested that 5.6 metre wide internal roads should normally prove adequate.

2.5.6 Boundaries

A site which is pleasant to stay on and which is designed to respect the environment in which it is located will best meet the needs of the residents as well as the settled community in the area. Boundary treatment is particularly important. The objective should be to achieve a balance between securing the boundaries and maintaining a pleasant and more open environment on site. The views of the local Traveller consultative committee should be sought at an early stage in the design process and care should be taken to integrate the boundary treatment of the site into the local environment.

2.5.7 Bays

Local authorities should have regard to paragraph 4.7 of the 'Guidelines on Residential Caravan Parks For Travellers' regarding the construction of bays and paragraph 7 which deals with fire safety.

2.5.8 Service Unit

Individual service units for each bay or a central service block consisting of individual units providing services for individual families may be provided. Service units may be either a permanent structure or demountable/mobile unit providing a

washroom/shower including provision for hot water supply system and separate w.c. together with the necessary services connected to a sewer or other suitable drainage disposal system. All materials should be robust and simple requiring minimal maintenance.

Wall and floor finishes should have a high standard of durability. In view of the temporary use of facilities particular attention should be paid to matters such as ease of maintenance and cost over its lifespan. Plumbing should be concealed as far as possible. Water pipes and tanks should be lagged as necessary to prevent frost damage.

2.5.9 Electrical Supply

The ESB should be consulted at an early stage in relation to metering, wiring, etc., necessary for the site generally and for each bay in particular in order to ensure proper safety standards and to minimise the risk of interference. Consideration should be given to providing each bay with its own separate supply. The electrical installation must comply with the latest edition (including any amendments) of the National Rules for Electrical Installations (ET 101) published by the Electro-Technical Council of Ireland (ETCI), including

- Chapter 708, Electrical Installations in Caravans and Caravan Parks, National Rules for Electrical Installations, Third Edition, ET 101:2000 and
- Particular requirements for external

lighting installations (ET 102)

Public lighting should be adequate for safety and security purposes having regard to the density and overall layout of the site.

2.6. Fire Safety

Regard should be had to the relevant fire safety requirements (including the fire safety management arrangements) of the Guidelines for Residential Caravan Parks for Travellers. The fire safety provisions should be discussed and agreed with the Chief Fire Officer of the relevant fire authority.

2.7. Site Management and Maintenance

2.7.1 The importance of successful management of Traveller accommodation cannot be overemphasised. The nature of transient sites, which will be used only for short periods by individual families, pose particular difficulties for local authorities in their management. However if transient sites are to operate successfully and are used by the families for whom they are intended then proper management and maintenance is essential.

Flexible site management plans should be drawn up with particular attention paid to the involvement of the local Traveller accommodation consultative committee. Site management plans should have regard to the relevant sections of Guidelines on Best Practice in Housing Management developed by the Housing Management Group, amended and adapted, as considered necessary, to take account of the nature of the site being provided. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a Management Team made up of balanced representation from

the local authority and Travellers/Traveller organisations and additional members agreeable to both parties, who would play a role in assisting the management team to operate effectively.

Caretaker

Caretaking arrangements, whether part-time or whole time, may be considered necessary for the period during which the site is occupied. In certain situations arrangements could be put in place for Traveller families to take greater responsibility for day to day site maintenance.

2.7.2 Entrance Control

A site entrance barrier may be used as a means of controlling the entrance to the site and should be of robust design and located so as to minimise any hazard to traffic arising from vehicles/caravans entering or leaving the site and to discourage unauthorised parking. However, arrangements should be put in place to ensure that the emergency services can gain entrance to the site at all times. This will require that keys are made available to the emergency services, together with whatever other access arrangements and instructions are necessary. In any case barriers should not be located remote from the accommodation bays to ensure that the emergency services can gain access to within a reasonable distance of caravans, vehicles and buildings should a barrier prove impossible to unlock.

2.7.3 Cleansing Equipment

Standpipe connections for use with fire hydrants, together with hosing and other

cleaning equipment, should be made available for use.

2.7.4 Waste/Recycling Containers

A critical objective of any site management plan should be to ensure that arrangements are in place to prevent accumulation of waste, which would give rise to health hazards, fire risk or nuisance. The normal domestic refuse collection service should be extended to the site. Local authorities should consider what further or alternative waste collection service is required on a site by site basis. Skips should be provided for bulky items and other non-domestic waste or recycling containers. A frequent and regular system for removal of the contents of skips or containers should be maintained.

2.7.5 Admittance to sites

Priority should be given to Traveller families who reserve places on sites in advance. Following the provision of such sites families should be encouraged to ascertain the position regarding accommodation before moving to an area.

2.8. Accommodating families where possible at permanent halting sites and group housing schemes

In designing halting sites and group housing schemes the local authority should consider the opportunity to incorporate into the design, space that would facilitate Travellers visiting families who are resident on the site or living in the group housing. The extent of such space would be in proportion to the size of the permanent site or the group-housing scheme. Such space would include a hard surface for parking of a caravan, access to water, electricity and waste collection.

The particular families allowed access to such space would be a matter for agreement between the permanent residents and the local authority. The duration of stay should not exceed one (1) month except in exceptional circumstances (i.e. visiting for reasons of family illness).

The provision of this type of accommodation space responds to one of the important elements of Traveller nomadism.

2.9. Transfer arrangements between Traveller families

Arrangements between families for transfers of short duration should be facilitated. This would be subject to the agreement of the local authorities concerned and subject to consultation with the other residents on site.

2.10. Assisting families to make arrangements for the provision of their own accommodation

Local authorities that are familiar with local circumstances may be in a position to liaise with Traveller families and persons who are in a position to make space available for stays of short duration. The terms and conditions would be a matter for the parties concerned. In such circumstances the authority, when required, should consider providing a level of basic services and facilities.

2.11. Private residential caravan parks

Having regard to the purposes for which such facilities are provided, Travellers should be able to access private residential caravan parks or the network of Bord Fáilte approved camping and caravan sites provided by the private sector and run on a commercial basis. Details of such facilities can be provided by the particular local authority to enable the families to make the appropriate arrangements.

2.12. The identification of public land as temporary camping areas.

Local authorities should, in conjunction with relevant public authorities, identify suitable locations in their functional areas that would accommodate transient Traveller families for short periods. The provision of services to such sites are without prejudice to other statutory functions of local authorities and should have regard to health, fire safety, environmental, planning, legal and other implications.

Basic services and facilities could include:

- a water supply (piped or a tank);
- portable toilet and washing facilities (shower and/or wash-hand basin);
- waste collection service;
- hard surface for caravans.

In some cases it may be practicable to connect the portable toilets to an existing sewerage scheme and to provide public lighting and electric supply to families.

2.13. Charging for use of facilities

Charging for facilities is a matter for each local authority. The following criteria might be considered when determining appropriate levels:

- consistency between authorities;
- similarity to those rates applied to permanent accommodation;
- economic cost of providing facilities;

- grading of charges in favour of shorter stays;
- charges set at a level which would not act as a deterrent to using sites/facilities.

