

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	21 st November 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Win Mullen-James Lead Member for Lead Member for Local Development and Planning Angela Loftus, Strategic Planning & Housing Manager
Head of Service	Emlyn Jones Head of Planning, Public Protection & Countryside Services
Report author	Kimberley Mason, Corporate Project Manager
Title	Revision of Denbighshire's Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) (2023)

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires that an assessment of accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers must be undertaken and submitted to Welsh Government (WG) every 5 years. The Council undertook the assessment between August and October 2021, and this was submitted to WG on 24th December 2021.
- 1.2. Following Cabinet approval and WG submission of the previous Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), a family with an existing need who had previously declined to participate, contacted the Council, and asked to now be included.
- 1.3. Following a report to Cabinet Briefing on 9th January 2023, it was agreed that the assessment should be reviewed, the additional family interviewed, and their data included in a revision to be resubmitted to WG. A Task and Finish (T&F) Group was established to support work on the new assessment, and they presented their report to Communities Scrutiny Committee in October 2023.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to present the revised draft GTAA for Denbighshire as attached as Appendix 1 and to seek approval from Cabinet for re-submission to WG.

- 2.2. Local authorities are permitted to submit a revised GTAA until WG approval and as of October 2023, WG has not yet provided any feedback to any local authorities in Wales and no clear indication as to when this is likely to occur has been provided either.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That Cabinet confirms support for the approach adopted for the delivery of revision of Denbighshire's GTAA as being robust and in line with WG guidance.
- 3.2. That Cabinet approves Denbighshire's revised GTAA for submission to WG.
- 3.3. Delegate authority for the Lead Member Local Development and Planning to agree any minor editorial changes required to the draft GTAA, prior to submission to WG.
- 3.4. That Cabinet confirms that it has read, understood, and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment, attached as Appendix 4 as part of its consideration. This was completed prior to the first assessment submission in 2021 and has been reviewed in 2023.

4. Report details

Background

- 4.1. The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 places a legal duty on Local Authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers (Section 101), produce a report detailing how the assessment was carried out and submit to WG for approval of the authority's assessment (Section 102) and subsequently meet those needs (Section 103). An up to date GTAA is also a requirement for the replacement Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 4.2. WG have published detailed statutory guidance '*Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments*'¹. WG will assess the completed GTAA against this methodology. The GTAA is required to identify accommodation needs in Denbighshire, in terms of permanent residential and transit needs. It is not required to identify locations for sites to meet any needs identified.
- 4.3. The WG methodology allows for external consultants to be engaged to undertake the Accommodation Needs Assessment. Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned to undertake the assessment on behalf of Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/undertaking-gypsy-and-traveller-accommodation-assessments.pdf>

Borough Council. Separate reports have been developed for each authority and they have carried out the additional work at this time for Denbighshire.

- 4.4. A robust project management approach was re-established in 2022 with a Member-led Project Board, with the Lead Member working with Senior Officers to direct this work ensuring Member involvement, openness, and transparency.

Task and Finish Group

- 4.5. Elected Members and Scrutiny Committee had previously raised concerns regarding the level of consultation with Gypsy and Traveller communities and the need for early engagement with Members. Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed at its meeting on 13th May 2021 to establish a T&F Group to provide support to the development of the new GTAA and this group was re-established in March 2023 to support with the additional work for the GTAA revision. The T&F Group's Terms of Reference are attached as Appendix 2.

Denbighshire GTAA 2023 Findings and Conclusions

- 4.6. A wide range of methods were used to raise awareness of the GTAA and to engage with the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) community in line with the Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan when the initial work was carried out in 2021. For the revised assessment, the consultants, ORS contacted the additional family for inclusion in the resubmission, assessing their needs using the survey questionnaire provided within the WG methodology. ORS also contacted the existing families interviewed in 2021 to ensure their circumstances had not changed and that their information was updated accordingly.
- 4.7. The revised draft Denbighshire GTAA concludes that:

Based upon the evidence presented in ORS' study the estimated additional pitch provision needed for Gypsies and Travellers in Denbighshire for the first 5 years of the study period (2023/24 - 2028/29) is for **16 permanent residential pitches**.

Based on the need by 2033, the end of the Denbighshire replacement LDP period, is for a further **2 permanent residential pitches** for future household growth.

This gives a total need for the whole period across Denbighshire for **18 permanent residential pitches** which is **an increase of 6 permanent residential pitches from the previous GTAA completed in 2021.**

There is **no evidence of need for a permanent transit site**, due to the low numbers of unauthorised encampments, short term nature of these encampments and the fact that

interviews with Gypsies and Travellers did not identify there was a need for permanent transit provision locally.

4.8. If approved by Cabinet, the next step will be to submit the revised GTAA to WG for its approval.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Completion of the GTAA will contribute to Denbighshire's Well-being and Equality Objective: *A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs* by identifying the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Consultants were procured jointly with Conwy County Borough Council to undertake the GTAA. Denbighshire's commitment of £5,500 has been met from the LDP budget. Any costs incurred from this additional work will be funded through the original commission and the LDP budget.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well-being Impact Assessment was carried out for the project in 2021 and reviewed in 2023 for this additional work and is attached as Appendix 4. This concludes that the overall impact was and remains positive.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. The T&F Group reviewed the GTAA data analysis and summary findings at its meeting on 21st September 2023 and agreed that they were satisfied that the WG methodology had been applied appropriately to the analysis of need.

8.3. The T&F Group concluded that the arrangements and process undertaken by the group had worked well and requested that the same group membership be involved in the site selection for pitches, when required, in the next phase of this project.

8.4. The T&F Group reported back to Communities Scrutiny Committee with their final report and the revised draft GTAA was considered at Communities Scrutiny Committee on 19 October 2023. Scrutiny endorsed the conclusion of the T&F Group that the WG methodology has been applied appropriately to the analysis of need, that the approach adopted for the delivery of

Denbighshire's GTAA was robust and in line with WG guidance and recommended to Cabinet that the revised draft GTAA should be approved for re-submission to WG.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

As set out in Section 6, Denbighshire's commitment of £5,500 has been met from the LDP budget. It is welcome that the initial costs of Consultants have been taken account of within existing budgets.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

A number of risks to the project have been identified and have been included in the full project business case risk assessment. A lack of political support has been identified as a significant risk which has led to the engagement of the Leader and Lead Member in the project from the start. The establishment of the T&F Group and reports to Scrutiny have aimed to ensure wider Member involvement in the project.

11. Power to make the decision

[Section 101 - Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)

[Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000](#)

[Section 7.4.1 and Section 7.4.2 \(d\) of the Council's Constitution](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Revised GTAA for Denbighshire 2023 [Redacted]

Appendix 2 – Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference 2023

Appendix 3 - Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) Task and Finish Group Report October 2023

Appendix 4 – GTAA Well-Being Impact Assessment 2021 (reviewed in 2023)