



Fingal County Council

Traveller Accommodation Programme

2014 – 2018





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Introduction

The County of Fingal covers an area of 173 square miles (450 square kilometres) and stretches from the River Liffey and the city boundary up to and north of Balbriggan. The county is both urban and rural in character with a number of urban areas, including Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Mulhuddart, Clonsilla, Balbriggan, Donabate, Swords, Skerries, Malahide, Portmarnock, Baldoyle, Sutton and Howth. The remainder of the county is mainly rural in character and includes the villages of Lusk, Rush, Ballyboughal, Oldtown, Naul, Balrothery, Garristown and St. Margaret's. The population in the County has grown from 239,992 in 2006 to 273,991 in 2011.

Our Services to the Travelling Community

The Council's Housing and Community Department implements the Traveller Accommodation Programme including the assessment of need, the management and maintenance of traveller specific accommodation as well as planning and delivering new accommodation.

Background and Legal Basis

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 came into operation on the 11th of September, 1998. The Act is designed to put in place a legislative framework to assist Local Authorities in meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers normally resident within their administrative areas.

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 requires housing authorities, in consultation with Travellers and with the general public, to prepare and adopt a five year Traveller Accommodation Programme or for a shorter period as the Minister may direct, to meet the existing and projected needs of travellers in their area. The current accommodation programme covers the period 2009-2013. Circular Housing letter



26/2013 issued by the Minister has directed that the new programme will cover the period from 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2018 inclusive. The latest date for the adoption of the accommodation programme is 30th April 2014. The Act contains the following provisions:

- a) In the event that the members fail to adopt a programme the manager will be required to adopt the programme, by order, within one month of the latest date for its adoption by the members.
- b) To provide for a public notification and consultation process in respect of the preparation of traveller accommodation programmes;
- c) To require housing authorities to take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of traveller accommodation programmes;
- d) To provide for the establishment of the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee;
- e) To provide for the establishment of a local traveller accommodation consultative committee to facilitate consultation with travellers;
- f) To extend statutory backing for the provision of financial support to housing authorities for the provision and management of traveller accommodation;
- g) To extend the range of housing options available to Travellers so as to secure a variety of appropriate accommodation.
- h) To extend the powers available to housing authorities to control unauthorised temporary dwellings;
- i) To implement the provision of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 2000, to ensure that county and urban development plans specifically include objectives concerning the provision of Traveller accommodation.



- j) To provide that annual reports prepared by County Councils and County Borough Corporations include details of the steps taken to secure implementation of traveller accommodation programmes and information concerning the proceedings of the relevant Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.
- k) To extend to halting sites the powers available to local authorities under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1997 relating to anti-social behaviour

This provides for a national approach where every housing authority must prepare an accommodation programme and is obliged to implement it in the same period. This will help to redress the situation where Travellers migrated to areas which attempted to take a positive approach to provide accommodation for Travellers.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Council to provide group and standard housing options as well as residential caravan park bays, for the accommodation of Travellers who are indigenous to the administrative county of Fingal in accordance with the assessment of need carried out under the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. In so providing the Council recognises Travellers' cultural identity as a minority group some of whom may travel, and strives to accommodate Travellers in a culturally appropriate way catering for their social needs.

The Government has indicated in its policy document "Building for the Future" (2011), that approved housing bodies (AHB) have a key role to play in the provision and management of social housing in Ireland. The Housing Department will engage with interested AHBs to explore possible roles for this sector in Traveller accommodation in



the County – with respect to the provision of new sites and the management/maintenance of existing sites.

Indigenous Policy

It is Fingal County Council's policy to provide Traveller specific accommodation only for the county's indigenous Travelling community. For the purpose of this programme, the Council will only regard a Traveller household as "indigenous" where the household has been permanently resident in the county for not less than three years immediately prior to the adoption of Fingal County Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018.

Strategy Statement

Fingal County Council is the implementing authority in this County for the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018. The Traveller Section within the Housing and Community Department has been designated to deal with all matters arising from the implementation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. This section is responsible for ensuring that all parties concerned with Traveller accommodation are kept informed with regard to the development of proposals for permanent Traveller specific accommodation in this programme.

The need for Traveller specific accommodation and the changing preferences of Travellers to standard housing as an ideal housing option are detailed within the plan.

This Plan will address the need to maximise usage of existing resources including occupancy of existing accommodation, management and maintenance of existing sites and establishing structures to encourage greater resident participation in building active and inclusive communities.

A formal review of this plan, to be presented to the Council, will be carried out not later than 31st December 2016 as set out by the Minister in Circular 26/2013.



Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) advises the Council in relation to the provision and maintenance of accommodation for Travellers. The membership of the LTACC consists of 3 Councillors, 3 Traveller Group Representatives and senior officials from the Council's Housing Department. The Committee has 6 scheduled meetings per year – every 2 months. At these meetings all issues in relation to Traveller accommodation are discussed. The Committee conducts its business having regard to its standing orders and the "*Guidelines for the Operation of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees*" issued by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Traveller Interagency Group

Members of our Traveller section are active participants in the formulation and implementation of the strategies and objectives of the Fingal Traveller Interagency Group. Meetings between the stakeholders are held regularly - the current Chairperson of the group is the Council's Director of Housing & Community. Fingal County Council is the lead agency on the Traveller Interagency Group's accommodation objectives addressing issues such as consultation, tenant participation and estate management.



Review of Traveller Accommodation Provision

The Council has provided a considerable number of high quality Traveller specific accommodation sites (Group Housing Schemes and Halting Sites) over the life of the previous and current programmes. In addition many Traveller families have been accommodated, as requested by the families, in standard housing. A brief synopsis is outlined below.

Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005 -2008

During the lifetime of the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme (2005 – 2008) the Council delivered the following new units of Traveller specific accommodation:

- Lissenhall Green: 14 dwelling group housing scheme
- Hazelwood Cottages: 5 dwelling group housing scheme
- Sillogue: 3 bay temporary halting site
- Moyne Park: 1 additional bay provided

In addition 39 families were accommodated in standard social units, 4 families in existing group housing and 16 families in existing bays.

Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 -2013

To date, during the current Traveller accommodation programme (2009 – 2013) the Council has delivered the following new units of Traveller specific accommodation:

- Baskin Court, Swords: 10 dwelling group housing scheme
- Ardla, Skerries : 10 dwelling group housing scheme
- Barnlodge, Castleknock: 10 bay halting site



In addition 17 families were accommodated in standard social units, 7 families in existing group housing and 19 families in existing bays. The halting site at St. Christopher's was closed and the families moved to the new site at Barnlodge.

To date Fingal County Council has provided over 300 units of accommodation to Traveller Families in the County.



Ardla Group Housing Scheme

Not all of the new sites included in the 2009 - 2013 program have been provided and these will be carried forward to the 2014 - 2018 program. The timeline for the delivery of projects adapts as the project progresses through site selection (in consultation with the families), feasibility, planning, procurement and construction etc.



Capital and Revenue Expenditure

Capital Investment

The previous paragraphs show that the Council has delivered a very significant amount of accommodation to Traveller families over the last two programs and in particular has provided 6 new Traveller specific sites in the County. The capital spend per year on this provision since 2007 is shown in Table 1.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Capital Expenditure</i>
2007	€877,500
2008	€1,838,370
2009	€2,288,960
2010	€3,017,400
2011	€216,300
2012	€63,500
Total	€8,401,900

Table 1: Capital Spend on Provision of Traveller Accommodation

Revenue Spend

In addition to the capital investment, the revenue expenditure on the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation since 2007 is shown in Table 2

<i>Year</i>	<i>Revenue Expenditure €</i>
2007	1,749,428
2008	1,651,866
2009	1,245,489
2010	1,199,910
2011	1,104,808,
2012	1,386,907
2013 (adopted budget)	1,187,500
Total	9,525,908

Table 2: Revenue Expenditure 2007 - 2013



Number of Traveller Families

Section 6 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 – as amended by Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 - requires housing authorities to carry out an assessment of the accommodation needs of Traveller households for whom accommodation will be required during the period of the Programme. This assessment must also include an assessment of the need for transient sites. Notice of the carrying out of the assessment was published in the national press on 12th August 2013 and was also sent to the relevant statutory and non statutory bodies and the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

In addition and in accordance with the Guidelines issued by the Minister, regard was had to the Statutory Housing Needs Assessment, which was carried out in May 2013 and the Annual Count of Traveller Families in November 2012.

A survey of Traveller families living in the County was carried out in September 2013. Staff from the Traveller unit visited halting sites, group housing schemes and those Travellers currently in standard social accommodation to interview as many Travellers as possible in the County to determine the ideal accommodation preference type of each family. All Travellers currently residing in Traveller specific accommodation were visited individually by staff of the Traveller Section. Travellers currently residing in standard local authority housing were initially contacted by telephone. If contact was not made a second telephone call was attempted. Finally if telephone contact could not be made families were visited in person by a staff member of the Traveller Section. Travellers currently residing in private rented accommodation were contacted using the same telephone procedure used for families in standard local authority housing. If contact could not be made a questionnaire was issued by post with a request to return it directly to the Traveller section. The Council estimates that there are 172 families in private rented accommodation in the County. The total number of Traveller families surveyed (411) is in line with the number of Traveller families contained in the Annual Count of Traveller Families (422) carried out in November 2012. The result of this survey and all family preferences have been recorded in Table 3



Future Accommodation Needs

In accordance with the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and the Minister’s direction an assessment of the projected accommodation needs of Traveller families arising during the duration of the Programme i.e. 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2018 has been carried out. This assessment (conducted during the accommodation preference survey outlined above) indicates that 105 children will reach the age of eighteen in the years 2014 to 2018. It is estimated these children will lead to an additional requirement of 26 units of accommodation.

In addition there are 45 sons and daughters who have already reached 18 currently living with their parents, it is estimated that 50% of these will require their own accommodation during the life of the programme. This represents 22 units of accommodation

Assessment of Accommodation Needs

An assessment of accommodation need will be in line with the Council’s Allocation Scheme for Social Housing Support which was adopted on June 15th 2011.

The Assessment of Need completed in September 2013 indicated that 411 Traveller families currently reside in Fingal. All families were surveyed and 303 of the total families (74% return) canvassed expressed varying preferences for accommodation within Fingal County.

The participating families were asked for their ideal accommodation preference and their responses are detailed in Table 3

Accommodation Type Preference of Families				
	Remain in Current Accommodation	Standard Housing	Group Housing	Halting Sites
Number of Families	147	100	50	6
Percentage	49%	33%	17%	2%

Table 3: Housing Preferences of Traveller Families



It can be seen that the predominant demand is for standard housing and group housing. There is an ongoing shift away from halting sites as an accommodation of preference. This is inline with the results of the Statutory Assessment of Housing Needs carried out in May 2013 i.e. 7 families expressed a requirement for a halting site bay.

Having regard to the survey results and projected future needs, the accommodation requirement is set out in Table 4 - (assuming the same preference breakdown for the new families and those who did not complete the accommodation survey as those that expressed an actual preference during the survey).

<i>Accommodation Type</i>	<i>Number of New Units Required</i>
Standard Housing	167
Group Housing	64
Halting Site	0
Total	231

Table 4: New Units of Accommodation Required



Statutory-Public Consultation Process

Following the statutory consultation process formal submissions were received as follows:

- Respond! Housing Association
- Finglas Traveller Development Group
- Traveller Resource Centre Balbriggan
- Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group Dublin 15
- Irish Traveller Movement

In addition to the consideration of the above submissions a formal meeting was held with the parties and members of the LTACC where opportunities were afforded to expand on their submissions.

Each participating party made a detailed and expanded oral submission on their respective submissions which presented opportunities for discussion, clarification and consensus. All submissions received are considered in the preparation of this plan.



Transient Sites

In accordance with the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme, proposed under the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, it is an objective of the Council to consider the provision of transient accommodation in the County during the term of the current Traveller Accommodation Programme.

It has generally been agreed that in the Greater Dublin Area, transient accommodation would be provided as part of a network of transient sites throughout all of the neighbouring metropolitan Authorities – in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner. Discussion in this regard is ongoing between all four Local Authorities.

It is understood that work is ongoing at a National level to identify/quantify the need and locations of transient sites and to develop specifications and management models for them. The Council awaits the outcome of this work.

Further, recognising the existing financial constraints, the main focus of the Council will be to meet the need for permanent accommodation and that the provision of a transient site should be considered when this permanent demand is delivered. It is proposed to continue to work with the 4 metropolitan authorities to determine the need for and, if necessary, identify suitable locations for such provision so as provide for a co-ordinated and integrated approach to provision in the Dublin region.



Proposed New Programme of Provision

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018 is ambitious having regard to the limited funding currently available for the housing capital programme - it is assumed that this situation will improve during the lifetime of the programme. Other challenges such as suitable site identification and selection in areas of choice and completion of the planning process may cause delays in delivery. The planned refurbishment programme is also dependent on available resources

Standard Housing

167 families have indicated a preference for standard social housing. Allocations will be in accordance Fingal County Council's Allocations Scheme for Social Housing Support which is based on "Date in Need". This is defined as the date on which the Council determines that the household is qualified for Social Housing Support.

Traveller Specific Accommodation

All capital works for Traveller Specific accommodation are 100% funded by the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government. Thus all the projects listed below are dependent on funding availability from the Department. As detailed later it is the intention to modernise the provision of electricity in all halting sites except Barnlodge. The site specific details are outlined below:

Collinstown Park Replacement Site

The current site will be required by the Dublin Airport Authority for airport expansion purposes. Accordingly it is proposed to provide a 14 unit, group housing scheme to accommodate the tenants of the existing scheme. Feasibility studies are currently being carried out on three separate sites to this end.



Moyne Park:

It is intended to refurbish all bays in this site and the caretakers' house.

Baskin Court & Park

It is intended to refurbish 3 units on this group housing scheme

Cappagh Lands

The Cappagh Road Local Area Plan made provision for traveller specific accommodation in the development of the lands. It is proposed to make provision for a 14 unit group housing scheme in this area. Consultation is ongoing with a family group to firm up on exact requirements. The provision of this site is a priority for the Council,

St Mary's

The redevelopment/refurbishment of this site is being considered with a view to providing permanent accommodation.

Parslickstown Gardens

It is proposed to refurbish this existing 4 unit group housing scheme and to provide an additional 2 dwelling units as part of the refurbishment works.

St Brigid's Lawn

This five bay halting site will be refurbished and upgraded to provide upgraded service units (including heating systems) and enhanced boundary treatment.

Silloogue-Permanent Site:

It is proposed to deliver a four unit group housing scheme for a single family grouping who are currently accommodated on an adjacent three bay halting site.

Bill Shelly Park

It is the Council's intention to refurbish 4 units at this group housing scheme.

St Philomenas Park halting site

It is proposed to carry out extensive refurbishment works on this 10 bay site (plus caretaker's house) to include the provision of upgraded service units and heating systems, along with enhanced public lighting.



St Philomenas Court – group housing scheme

It is proposed to refurbish the vacant unit on this site.

Morgan Place

It is proposed to refurbish 2 vacant units on this site.

Mulhuddart/Castleknock

It is proposed to identify and secure lands to accommodate a 6 unit group housing scheme of Traveller specific accommodation to meet the needs of the family group indigenous to this area.

Meakstown Close

It is proposed to carry out investigative works to ascertain if any of the existing dwellings require extension to accommodate increase in family sizes, whilst at the same time delivering upgrade works to the site as required. It is intended to refurbish the damaged housing unit on this site. It is also proposed to examine the possibility of removing the two existing bays on the site and replacing them with housing units.

Lissenhall Green

It is proposed to examine the possible replacement of the waste management system within the site to ensure the long term sustainability of the facility.

Howth Road

The provision of a 5 unit group housing scheme as part of an integrated housing project remains an objective of the Council

Moyne Road

Lands have been transferred to the Council and the Council may construct a 10 unit group housing scheme adjacent to the existing site.

Donabate

A suitable site has yet to be identified for the accommodation of a 10 unit group housing scheme.

Gardiner's Hill

It is proposed to examine the feasibility of refurbishing this scheme with a view towards the provision of up to a 5 unit group housing scheme.



Utilities Upgrade on Halting Sites

It is proposed to modernise the provision of electricity supply to families living in halting sites so that they will be in a better position to manage and control their individual usage, thus removing the requirement to purchase utility tickets from Council Inspectors and delivering increased independence to the families. This work needs to be done on all our Halting Sites except Barnlodge, where families already have their own individual electricity supplies.

As stated earlier, the delivery of the above program is dependent on all necessary consents, planning approvals and funding.

Annual Targets

The annual targets for the delivery of Traveller specific accommodation are shown in Table 5

	Number of Units				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Group Housing (new)		16	12	14	30
Group Housing (Refurbishment)	6	4	9	4	
Halting Site Refurbishment	11	26	5		
Total	17	46	26	18	30

Table 5: Traveller Specific accommodation – Annual Targets

The successful implementation of Fingal County Councils' Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 is dependant on the Council being able to secure the required funding from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the identification and acquisition where necessary of lands required for the construction of new Traveller specific accommodation.



Tenant Induction

During the period of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 – 2013, 17 families have been accommodated in standard housing – both Council owned stock and leased units under the Rental Accommodation and long-term leasing schemes. The policy of prerequisite tenant induction courses prior to allocation is an important part of the service the Council provides to new tenants. This provides the new tenant with information in relation to their new home, their obligations and responsibilities under the tenancy agreement and the Council’s commitment to them as tenants. It also gives tenants an opportunity to meet with their new neighbours, community representatives and local agencies including public health nurse, community Garda and local teachers.

Management and Maintenance

Fingal County Council continues to invest significant financial resources for the management and maintenance of traveller specific social housing accommodation - this is inline with our management of standard housing schemes. Nevertheless there are considerable difficulties in some areas and it is proposed to have a particular focus to this issue during the lifetime of this Plan.

All tenants of official halting sites/group housing schemes are required to sign a licence agreement/tenancy agreement prior to taking up occupation of Traveller accommodation. The conditions contained in such licence agreements/tenancy agreements are explained in detail to every new tenant. Tenants receive a copy of the standard tenant handbook outlining responsibilities of both tenant and local authority.



Caretakers Cottage – St. Macullin's Park

All requests for maintenance of Traveller accommodation are noted and recorded in an electronic maintenance recording system. All maintenance requests are logged as soon as they are received by the Travellers section. This system sets a “target completion date” automatically depending on how the request is categorised e.g. routine, urgent, emergency, etc. This enables the Travellers section to monitor and ensure that maintenance works are carried out within a specific timeframe. Works of an emergency nature will continue to be awarded priority status, such work include electrical repairs and maintenance issues of a health & safety nature.

Non- essential repairs and routine maintenance will not be carried out where rent accounts are in arrears of ten weeks or more, where no arrears payment programme is active.



Environmental works, including hard and soft landscaping, to improve the living environment of residents and general appearance of the sites are augmented on an annual basis as part of the Traveller specific maintenance programme.



Environmental Enhancements at Traveller Specific Accommodation



Tenant Participation/Estate Management

The Travellers section encourages tenant participation in the management and maintenance of accommodation wherever practicable. A residents association at Ardlia Cottages, Skerries has been formed with the assistance of Fingal County Council Community Department and Fingal Travellers Organisation (North East) and meets on a regular basis with members of Council staff, to highlight issues and work to resolve them in a spirit of partnership. It is intended that this pilot scheme will be rolled out across other sites on a phased basis.

Community Facility

A management team incorporating Fingal County Council Staff, residents and Fingal Traveller Organisation (North East) has been established to oversee the running of the community facility at St Macullins Park. This centre is being successfully used on a daily basis for the provision of primary health care training, adult education and residents meetings.

Estate Management

Fingal County Council fosters close working links with Traveller representative groups in an effort to reduce anti-social behaviour and estate management issues. This work is principally carried out through the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

Significant engagement and consultation also occurs with families prior to and during construction work on new schemes.

Anti-social behaviour impacts negatively on local residents, the wider community and Fingal County Council staff. In addition anti-social behaviour such as, but not limited to, criminal damage, waste dumping etc places unacceptable burdens on financial



resources. It is Council policy that anti social behaviour will not be acceptable in any Council, Traveller specific or standard housing accommodation.

The Council adopted its Anti-social Strategy in October 2010 and this strategy applies to all Traveller sites and underpins the Council's approach to the prevention and tackling of anti-social behaviour.

All tenants are required to pay a rent for the type of accommodation they occupy. Tenants of halting sites are required to pay a flat/nominal weekly rent while tenants of group housing schemes will be required to pay a rent in accordance with the Council's differential rent scheme. The nominal rent payable for halting sites is revised from time to time. Non payment of rent will result in repossession proceedings being initiated as is the policy with standard housing. A tenant evicted for non-payment of rent will be deemed to have rendered themselves homeless.

Traveller section staff will meet residents associations or other community groups to discuss matters relating to the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation located in their area.

Unauthorised Encampments

The law regarding unauthorised sites is outlined in the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002. The Council will continue to use these powers where appropriate.

In Fingal unauthorised traveller encampments can generally arise in two ways:-

At certain times of the year, particularly during the summer months, travellers can congregate at various locations throughout the county. Many of these travellers leave accommodation allocated to them by other local authorities and are attracted to Fingal and other areas of Dublin by the large concentrations of population where they can earn money from trading and other activities such as tree-topping, gutter repairs etc.



Travellers voluntarily leave accommodation allocated to them by Fingal County Council and other local authorities.

Under present legislation, the Council is empowered to move travellers from unauthorised encampments if a vacancy exists on an official halting site within five miles. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 also allows local authorities to deal with unauthorised encampments within a mile radius of any traveller accommodation. The Council will continue to use these powers where appropriate. In addition, the Council will continue to seek high court injunctions for the removal of unauthorised encampments where the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 are not applicable.

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 introduces new offences relating to entering and occupying land without consent. Powers in relation to these matters are exercised by the Garda Síochána. The Roads Act 1993 prohibits the placing of temporary dwellings on particular roads. The powers in relation to this are also utilised where appropriate.