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Limerick City Council

Traveller Accommodation Programme

2005 – 2008

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Environment published a Traveller Accommodation Strategy (1996) following the publication of the Final Report of the Task Force of the Travelling Community (1995). The Task Force recommended that a comprehensive strategy be put in place to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. Arising from this strategy, specific legislation relating to Traveller Accommodation was introduced and a National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Group and Special Unit for Travellers were established.

In September 1998, a commencement order brought into operation most sections of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998. The purpose of the act was to establish a legislative framework to implement the Government's commitments on Traveller Accommodation.

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 amended the Housing Acts, 1996 to 1997, the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts 1963 to 1998.

The main provisions of the Act include:

- The adoption of a five-year Traveller Accommodation Programme by every Local Authority. This programme was to be developed in consultation with travellers.
- The adoption of the five-year Programme will be a reserved function and will be adopted by Resolution of the Members of the Council. In the event, that the members fail to adopt a programme, the Manager will be required too adopt the programme.
- The requirement for public consultation in the preparation and amendment of the Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- The requirement of Local Authorities to take the appropriate steps to secure the implementation of this programme in their functional areas.
- The establishment of the Local Accommodation Consultative Committee on which Local Authority Members, Officials and Travellers are represented.
- The establishment of the National Traveller Accommodation Committee on a statutory basis to advise the Minister on aspects of Traveller accommodation.

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- To extend statutory backing for the provision of financial support available to Housing Authorities and the Voluntary Sector for provision of management of Traveller Accommodation.
- To extend options available to Travellers to acquire appropriate accommodation through the introduction of a Statutory Framework for Housing Authority Loans for caravans for sites for caravans.
- To amend Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts 1963 to 1998 to include objectives concerning Traveller Accommodation in development plans.
- To improve powers of Local Authorities to deal with unauthorised temporary dwellings where alternative serviced accommodation is available, or within one mile of existing accommodation regardless of whether alternative accommodation is available.
- To apply relevant provisions of Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1997 in particular relating to anti-social behaviour to halting sites provided by local authority or by voluntary bodies with the assistance of the Local Authority.

Limerick City Council drew up a Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 2000-2004.

By Circular letter TAU 2/04 dated 24th June, 2004 the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government directed that a new accommodation programme to cover the period 1st January, 2005 –31st December, 2008 be drawn up.

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TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The current membership of the Committee is as follows:

Chairman: Cllr. Ger Fahy

Elected Members: Cllr. Jim Long
Cllr. Kieran Walsh
Cllr. James Houlihan
Cllr. Michael Hourigan

Travellers: Ms. Elizabeth O'Donoghue, Rhebogue
Mr. Martin O'Reilly, Childers Road
Mr. Connie Faulkner, Longpavement
Mrs. Catherine Casey, Clonlong
Mrs. Josephine Doyle, Bawney's Bridge
Mr. Billy Casey, Toppins Field

*Limerick Travellers
Development Group:* Ms. Bridget Casey

Officials: Ms. Caroline Curley, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Anne O'Donnell, Administrative Officer
Mr. Dermot O Connell, Traveller Services Coordinator
Mr. Pdraig Ryan, Social Worker for Travellers
Representative from Social Inclusion Unit

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The role of the committee is as follows:

- Advising Limerick City Council on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers.
- Providing liaison between Travellers, Elected Members and Officials.
- Informing when requested Limerick and Clare County Councils on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers.
- Advising Limerick City Council on the preparation and implementation of the accommodation programme within its functional area

To facilitate a more effective functioning of the Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, Limerick City Council proposes:

- To organise quarterly meetings of the Travellers Consultative Committee where a review of the workings of the committee can be discussed
- To seek representation the Traveller Consultative Committee from the Traveller Health Unit of the Mid-Western Health Board in order to promote an inter agency approach to Traveller health/traveller accommodation.

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STATEMENT OF POLICY

- Limerick City Council is dedicated to enabling Traveller households to have a dwelling suited to their needs in an acceptable environment and at a price of rent they can afford. The Council realises that those Traveller Families who can afford to do so should provide their own accommodation.
- Limerick City Council recognises that it is through acceptance of mutual responsibility and actions that the Traveller Accommodation Programme can be advanced.
- Limerick City Council will continue to offer accommodation to Traveller families indigenous to Limerick City who present themselves to the Housing Department and are assessed as being in need of and actively seeking housing. The accommodation offered will be:
 - Permanent Halting Sites
 - Standard Housing
 - Group Housing

Limerick City Council will continue to offer standard housing to any Traveller family presenting to the Housing Department for standard housing and who is assessed by the Housing Authority in need of and actively seeking housing.

- The definition of indigenous for the purposes of the accommodation plan shall be Traveller families who have resided in Limerick City for one year and who have a direct link to Limerick City in that self, mother, father, brother or sister was born in Limerick City and that they are not included in the accommodation programme of another local authority.
- Limerick City Council will not offer accommodation to Traveller families provided with accommodation in the functional area of another local authority. It is the opinion of the Council that Traveller families cannot expect duplicate provision to be made by the Council.
- Limerick City Council will consider all applications for accommodation by Traveller families in accordance with the Scheme of Letting Priorities (Appendix 1), the Statement of Policy on Anti-Social Behaviour (Appendix 2), the Housing Acts 1996 to 2002 and the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

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- The City Council will consult with Travellers families in relation to the proposed design of Traveller accommodation and the specific needs of individual families when providing accommodation. The construction and refurbishment of accommodation shall be in accordance with the Department of Environment's Guidelines on Halting Site and Group Housing Scheme Accommodation and the relevant Building and Planning Regulations.
- Limerick City Council does not consider that there is a need for a transient site with its limited administrative boundary.
- Limerick City Council will fully implement the provisions of Section 10 of the Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1992 as amended by Section 32 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 in relation to unauthorised encampments. The Council will support the Garda Siochana, when dealing with trespass under the 2002 amendment to the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 and take account of any further legislation regarding same. The Council recognises that the enforcement of this legislation will protect both residents in existing Traveller Accommodation and other residents in the vicinity of the Traveller Accommodation.
- Limerick City Council will fully implement the provisions of the Housing Acts, 1966 to 1998 as they refer to anti-social behaviour in conjunction with the Council's Statement of Policy on Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Limerick City Council will not include provision of accommodation for horses in any proposals regarding Traveller Accommodation. It is the opinion of the Council that horses are the responsibility of the owner and as such it is for the owner to arrange suitable accommodation. Limerick City Council will implement the provisions of the Control of Horses Act, 1996.
- Limerick City Council recognises that the proper management and maintenance of traveller accommodation is a significant challenge. It is envisaged that through ongoing consultation and encouragement of partnership arrangements with Limerick Travellers Development Group and other statutory and voluntary agencies that improved management of sites can be achieved. Limerick City Council will continue to look more closely to estate management principles and tenant participation in relation to management of traveller specific accommodation. Pre-tenancy courses and estate management courses will be designed and delivered where appropriate.

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- Limerick City Council support the principle that Housing Officers of the Local Authorities in The Mid-West Region liaise with regard to the provision of Traveller Accommodation and that each authority take a regional perspective and seek to support each other in meeting the growing demands of the travelling community.
The Council will initiate discussions with Limerick County Council and Clare County Council in order to advance this principle.
- Limerick City Council currently offers the services of a Social Worker to support and advise families living in accommodation provided by the City Council.
- Limerick City Council has appointed a Traveller Services Coordinator to work directly with the travellers and to provide support to them in the improved management of their accommodation provided by the City Council.. The Traveller Services Coordinator will seek to identify a resident in each site to act as caretaker for that site. Currently there are 3 residents appointed as caretakers.
- Limerick City Council is committed to the promotion of Voluntary Housing within its functional area. Reflecting the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 the Council will offer assistance to Traveller and Voluntary Groups interested in developing and managing housing for Travellers.

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STRATEGY FOR SECURING IMPLEMENTATION

Limerick City Council is the implementing authority for the four year Accommodation Plan. The Council will continue to take all reasonable steps required to secure its implementation. Limerick City Council recognises that it is through acceptance of mutual responsibility and actions that the Traveller Accommodation Programme can be advanced.

Accommodation Options

Limerick City Council will inform Travellers, Traveller Support Groups and other voluntary organisations concerned with Traveller Accommodation of the range of options available to Traveller households seeking accommodation. The Council will encourage and facilitate traveller organisations to avail of these options.

- Rented Social Housing
- Private Ownership
- Private Rented Accommodation
- Tenant Purchase
- Shared Ownership
- Improvements Works to cater for disabled members of the family or additional person
- Loans for Improvement Works
- Traveller Specific Accommodation
- Rural Resettlement Programme
- Sale of Sites

Principles

The key principle in achieving the range of accommodation for Traveller families will be consultation, co-operation and co-ordination. Limerick City Council will continue to consult, co-operate and co-ordinate with any other body concerned with the accommodation of Travellers to secure the implementation of the programme. The Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will remain the main focus for this consultation, co-operation and co-ordination.

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Management and Maintenance

The effective management and maintenance of all Traveller sites is essential. The Council requires all tenants to sign a tenancy agreement, which will clearly outline the responsibilities of the respective tenant in the City Council area.

Limerick City Council acknowledges that an effective system of management in all Traveller Specific Accommodation is required and will endeavour at all times to operate the best practice in estate management and in particular will use the Strategy Document on Estate Management in so much as it applies to the Travelling Community.

Limerick City Council established during the life of the last Plan the post of Travellers Services Coordinator. The role of the Coordinator is to provide ongoing informal links with the Limerick Traveller Development Group, to supervise the maintenance and management of all traveller accommodation and to support the development of estate management practices in traveller specific schemes. To date there has been 3 residents appointed to act as caretakers. It is intended to ensure all schemes will be likewise managed.

Limerick City Council is committed to promoting a safe and secure environment so that its residents are able to live peacefully in their own communities. The Council will implement its Statement of Policy on Anti- Social Behaviour in both standard and traveller specific accommodation.

Periodic Review and Measurement

Limerick City Council will monitor the implementation of the four year Traveller Accommodation Plan in association with the Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. The Council can review the Traveller Accommodation Programme as the need arises in consultation with the Travellers Accommodation Consultative Committee.

Measurement will be made against targets as set out under specific proposals.

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ASSESSMENT OF NEED

In compiling this Traveller Accommodation Programme, the Council carried out an assessment of need in relation to traveller families. At October, 2004 there were 53¹ Traveller Families living in traveller specific accommodation in the City. The living arrangements of these families are as follows: -

- Living on Halting Sites (Temporary and Permanent)
- Sharing with relatives in traveller specific accommodation
- Living in Caravans on the Roadside adjacent to traveller specific accommodation

Breakdown of Existing Need	53
Seeking Group Housing	38
Seeking Halting Site Accommodation	9
Seeking Refurbishment	6

Limerick City Council is responsible for the provision of accommodation to persons over the age of eighteen years. There are 35 travellers currently over the age of 18 years and 28 travellers who will reach the age of 18 by the year 2008. All of these travellers are currently living with parent and have not formed separate family formations to date.

Limerick City Council recognises that while some of these young people will seek accommodation with the Council others will move away and seek accommodation with other local authorities. The Council also recognises that new families will become indigenous to Limerick City during the five-year period who will require accommodation. The Council will work on the assumption that fifty per cent of this number will be seeking accommodation in the five-year period. The Council therefore anticipates that approximately twenty six new households will need to be provided with accommodation in the next five years.

The majority of these persons have indicated to the Council that they wish to be accommodated in traveller specific accommodation and do not wish to be accommodated in standard housing.

While it is estimated that there may be 26 new family formations during the life of the Plan, it should be noted that these new family formations will be from various different family groupings. The Council recognises that best practice on the provision of traveller accommodation is that family groupings are not mixed.

¹ Final number subject to outcome of Court proceedings.

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Limerick City Council will continue to assess the accommodation needs for any future family formations in the City and will seek to provide appropriate accommodation to meet their needs. Having regard to the possible future need as outlined, the Council will not be in a position to provide fully for this need. Given the current traveller population and geographical distribution in the City any further expansion and/or additional provision of large-scale traveller specific accommodation can only take place within the greater Limerick City Area and its environs.

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SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

1. Clonlong Group Housing Scheme

The existing accommodation consists of three bungalows and two bays. Three family groupings (comprising 13 households) currently live on the Clonlong Group Housing Scheme.

Group One consists of 4 households and 4 units of accommodation will be required.

Group Two is interested in being relocated to an alternative site in conjunction with their extended family. This requires a minimum of 6 units. The Council will seek to identify a suitable site(s) to meet their housing needs.

Group 3 consists of 4 households and have expressed a preference to remain at this location. This family grouping requires 4 units of accommodation.

Limerick City Council will not be providing accommodation for horses as part of any accommodation proposals that arise from Clonlong and the traveller families have been advised to seek suitable grazing land.

2. Toppins Park Permanent Halting Site

Five households are currently living in Toppins Park permanent halting site. These families maintain their nomadic culture during the summer months. One of the five households is from a different family grouping and this has caused difficulties in the proper management of the site. The Council proposes to build a 5 unit Group Housing scheme on the site with space for storage of the families touring caravans.

Limerick City Council will not be providing accommodation for horses as part of the proposed redevelopment of Toppins Park and the traveller families have been advised to seek suitable grazing land.

Limerick City Council will continue to assess the accommodation needs for any future family formations from this site and will seek to provide appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

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3. Childers Road Permanent Halting Site

Ten families reside on this site. All are from one extended group. The Council is committed to converting Childers Road Halting Site into a ten-unit group-housing scheme with space for storage of touring caravans owned by the families who are tenants in the site.

The Council will not be providing accommodation for horses as part of the proposed re development of Childers Road and the traveller families have been advised to seek suitable grazing land.

A resident of the site has been appointed as caretaker for the site.

Limerick City Council will continue to assess the accommodation needs for any future family formations from this site and will seek to provide appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

4. Long-Pavement Temporary Halting Site

Nine families were living on this site during the assessment. The halting site contains six bays currently. There have been a number of transient families availing of this site and the Council has housed a number of families off the site.

The 2000 – 20004 Plan proposed to construct a permanent halting site at an alternative location for the long-term residents. An alternative site has not been identified. Following further discussions with the Travellers it has been agreed that the existing site should be converted to a permanent halting site. Permanent bays will be provided to meet the existing need.

A resident of the site has been appointed as caretaker for the site.

Limerick City Council will continue to assess the accommodation needs for any future family formations from this site and will seek to provide appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

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5. Bawney's Bridge Permanent Halting Site

The existing accommodation is an eight bay halting site. Nine families currently live on the Bawney's Bridge Halting Site. It is proposed to construct nine group houses on this site to meet the existing accommodation needs of the families on the site.

Limerick City Council is currently in the process of acquiring additional land adjacent to the site to allow for the construction of 9 housing units at this site.

Limerick City Council will continue to assess the accommodation needs for any future family formations from this site and will seek to provide appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

6. Rhebogue Group Housing Scheme

The scheme consists of six houses. Currently seven families occupy this scheme. It is the Council's intention to refurbish these houses.

Space on this site is very limited and the Council is examining options with regard to the improved management and upgrading of this site.

A resident of the scheme has been appointed as caretaker for the scheme

Limerick City Council will continue to assess the accommodation needs for any future family formations from this site and will seek to provide appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

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TIMESCALE

Permanent Halting Sites	Number of Bays				
		2005	2006	2007	2008
Longpavement		0	9	0	0
Total			9		

Group Housing	Number of Units				
		2005	2006	2007	2008
New group housing units		Nil			Nil
Toppins Park			5		
Bawney's Bridge			9		
Childers Road				10	
Clonlong Group 2		Identify site		6	
Refurbished group housing units		Nil		Nil	Nil
Rhebogue			6		
Total		Identify site	20	16	NIL

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- Appendix 1 Scheme of Letting Priorities
- Appendix 2 Statement of Policy on Anti-Social Behaviour