



Milton Keynes City Council  
Gypsy and Traveller Transit Study

Draft Final Report  
January 2024



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The primary objective of this study is to update the outcomes of the November 2021 Milton Keynes City Council's (the Council) Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in relation to a detailed review of the need for current and/or future transit provision.
- 1.2 The primary reason for the need to update the GTAA in respect of transit provision is due to the perception of a recent increase in the number of encampments recorded in Milton Keynes, and to determine the potential need for any formal transit provision, or alternative arrangements.
- 1.3 As well as seeking to identify permanent accommodation needs for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, the 2021 GTAA also sought to identify need for transit provision. Due to the complex nature of assessing the need for transit provision in Milton Keynes the GTAA Report contained the following recommendations for further work that would be required:

*Due to historic low numbers of short-term unauthorised encampments, it is not recommended that there is a need for a formal public transit site in Milton Keynes at this time.*

*The situation relating to levels of short-term unauthorised encampments should continue to be monitored. As well as information on the size and duration of the encampments, this monitoring should also seek to gather information from residents on the reasons for their stay in the local area; whether they have a permanent base or where they have travelled from; and whether they have any need or preference to settle permanently in the local area. This information could be collected as part of a Welfare Assessment (or similar).*

*It is recommended that a review of the evidence base relating to unauthorised encampments, including the monitoring referred to above, should be undertaken. This will establish whether there is a need for investment in any new transit provision or emergency stopping places, or whether a managed approach is preferable.*

*In the short-term the Council should continue to use its current approach when dealing with unauthorised encampments and management-based approaches such as negotiated stopping agreements should continue to be considered.*

- 1.4 Whilst not a full GTAA, the study has taken into account, where appropriate, the Government's most up-to-date policies for the planning of Traveller sites in particular the PPTS (2015 – revised December 2023) which included a revised planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson and a need to set pitch targets for Gypsies and Travellers and plot targets for Travelling Showpeople, which address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of Travellers in their area; the Housing and Planning Act (2016) which introduced the requirement to assess need for all caravan and boat dwellers; and the NPPF (2023) which requires a specific assessment of need for Gypsy and Traveller households that do not meet the PPTS planning definition of a Traveller. The GTAA update will also be fully compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Freedom of Information and any other statutory requirements.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### Overview of transit provision

- 2.1 GTAA studies require the identification of demand for transit provision. While the majority of Gypsies and Travellers have permanent bases either on Gypsy and Traveller sites or in bricks and mortar, other members of the Travelling Community either travel permanently or for part of the year.
- 2.2 Due to the mobile nature of the population a range of sites can be developed to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers on a temporary basis as they move through different areas. These include:
  - » **Permanent transit sites** - full facilities where Gypsies and Travellers might live temporarily (for up to three months) – for example, to work locally, for holidays or to visit family and friends.
  - » **Temporary/emergency stopping places** – similar to transit sites but with more limited facilities.
  - » **Temporary sites and stopping places** - temporary provision to cater for events such as horse fairs.
  - » **Negotiated stopping places** - agreements which allow caravans to be sited on suitable specific pieces of ground for an agreed and limited period of time.
- 2.3 Transit sites serve a specific function of meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller households who are visiting an area temporarily, or who are passing through on the way to somewhere else.
- 2.4 A permanent transit site typically has a restriction on the length of stay of around 12 weeks and has a range of facilities such as water supply, electricity and amenity blocks. They do not have a function in meeting local need which must be addressed on permanent sites.
- 2.5 An alternative to a transit site is a temporary/emergency stopping place. This type of site also has restrictions on the length of time for which someone can stay on it but has much more limited facilities with typically only a source of water and chemical toilets provided.
- 2.6 Some local authorities in England also provide transit compounds which are similar in nature to temporary/emergency stopping places in respect of the facilities that are provided but are larger in size to accommodate more caravans and vehicles.
- 2.7 More recently Councils are starting to use management-based/short-term toleration approaches such as negotiated stopping agreements to address problems caused by encampments. The term negotiated stopping is used to describe agreed short-term provision for Gypsy and Traveller caravans. It does not describe permanent built transit sites but negotiated agreements which allow caravans to be sited on suitable specific pieces of ground for an agreed and limited period of time, with the provision of limited services such as water, waste disposal and toilets. Agreements are made between the Council and the (temporary) residents regarding expectations on both sides. See [www.negotiatedstopping.co.uk](http://www.negotiatedstopping.co.uk) for further information.
- 2.8 Temporary transit provision can be made available at times of increased demand due to horse fairs or cultural celebrations that are attended by Gypsies and Travellers. A charge may be levied as determined by

the local authority although they only need to provide basic facilities including: a cold-water supply; portaloos; sewerage disposal point and refuse disposal facilities.

- <sup>2.9</sup> The presence of a transit provision in an area can potentially speed up enforcement of encampments, with households facing committing an offence if they do not move on to the site or leave the area. However, we would note that Local Authorities are not able to use transit provision on private sites as part of their enforcement action policies and therefore while it does provide an option for visiting households it is at the discretion of the site owner who is allowed on to the site.
- <sup>2.10</sup> The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (Section 62a) is particularly important with regard to the issue of Gypsy and Traveller transit site provision. Section 62a of the Act allows the Police to direct trespassers to remove themselves and their vehicles and property from any land where a suitable transit pitch on a relevant caravan site is available within the same local authority area (or within the county in two-tier local authority areas).
- <sup>2.11</sup> Consideration will also have to be given to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act which came in to force in June 2022. Part 4 of the Act now gives the Police additional powers to deal with encampments through new offences relating to residing on land without consent in or with a vehicle and new powers in relation to the seizure of property.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

- 3.1 Having completed detailed transit studies for other local authorities and regions in England this Transit Study has sought to address the following issues and objectives:
- » A review and analysis of primary and secondary data on encampments and transit movements – including the DLUHC Traveller Caravan Count and locally recorded instances of encampments.
  - » Engagement with key stakeholders who are involved in managing encampments in Milton Keynes.
  - » To gain a greater understanding of the nature and composition of encampments in Milton Keynes, including a potential need for permanent pitches.
  - » A review of options to address current and future transit needs in Milton Keynes.
  - » Recommendations on how to meet identified transit need in Milton Keynes including recommendations on broad locations for new transit sites if a need is identified.

### Review of primary and secondary data

- 3.2 ORS have collated and analysed primary and secondary data from the following sources:
- » Records of encampments that are collected by the Council's Environmental Crime Practitioners.
  - » Information from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)<sup>1</sup> Traveller Caravan Count.
- 3.3 Analysis of this data includes numbers of unauthorised caravans recorded in the Traveller Caravan Count; numbers of recorded encampments; the size of encampments; the duration of encampments; number of caravan days; and any seasonal variations.

### Stakeholder engagement

- 3.4 ORS have spoken at length with individuals involved in managing and potentially enforcing against encampments in Milton Keynes.
- 3.5 This primarily involved discussions with members of the Council's Environmental Crime Unit, members of the Council's Planning Enforcement Team, and other members in the Council's Planning Department.
- 3.6 The outcomes of these discussions have helped to identify instances where households/family groups/Traveller groups have been recorded on multiple encampments having been asked to move on; instances of past enforcement action that has been taken against some of these groups; and whether there

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

may be a need for permanent pitches as opposed to transit pitches to meet the accommodation needs of some of these groups.

3.7 A review has also been completed of interviews that have been completed with Officers in neighbouring local authorities to gain a better understanding of how they address transit issues and whether there are any cross-border issues with Milton Keynes. This included a review of interviews that have been completed by ORS to support GTAA studies in the following areas:

- » Bedford
- » Buckinghamshire
- » Central Bedfordshire
- » Luton
- » North Northamptonshire
- » West Northamptonshire

## Traveller engagement

3.8 ORS had proposed to conduct a selection of interviews with households on encampments in Milton Keynes in order to get a better understanding of the nature of encampments; the reasons households are choosing to come to Milton Keynes; where they have travelled from; where they are planning to move on to; whether they have a permanent base; whether they would use more formal transit provision; and whether there is a potential need for permanent pitches.

3.9 However, it was possible to obtain sufficient information from the engagement with Stakeholders to provide a narrative to the information on numbers of recorded encampments.

## Transit study

3.10 ORS had also proposed to complete a 3-month study of encampments and transit movements in Milton Keynes. This would have included further analysis of primary data and interviews with households on encampments, as well as efforts to better understand the reasons for the encampments; attitudes towards enforcement actions; and efforts to track the movement of households across the study area.

3.11 Again, it was possible to obtain sufficient information from the engagement with Stakeholders to support this element of the study.

## Review of options to address transit needs

3.12 ORS will provide the Council with an appraisal of options appropriate to the need identified that could be put in place to address encampments. This will include a review of relevant best practice from other local authorities both in terms of practical options to provide transit provision, as well as any policies and protocols that they have put in place.



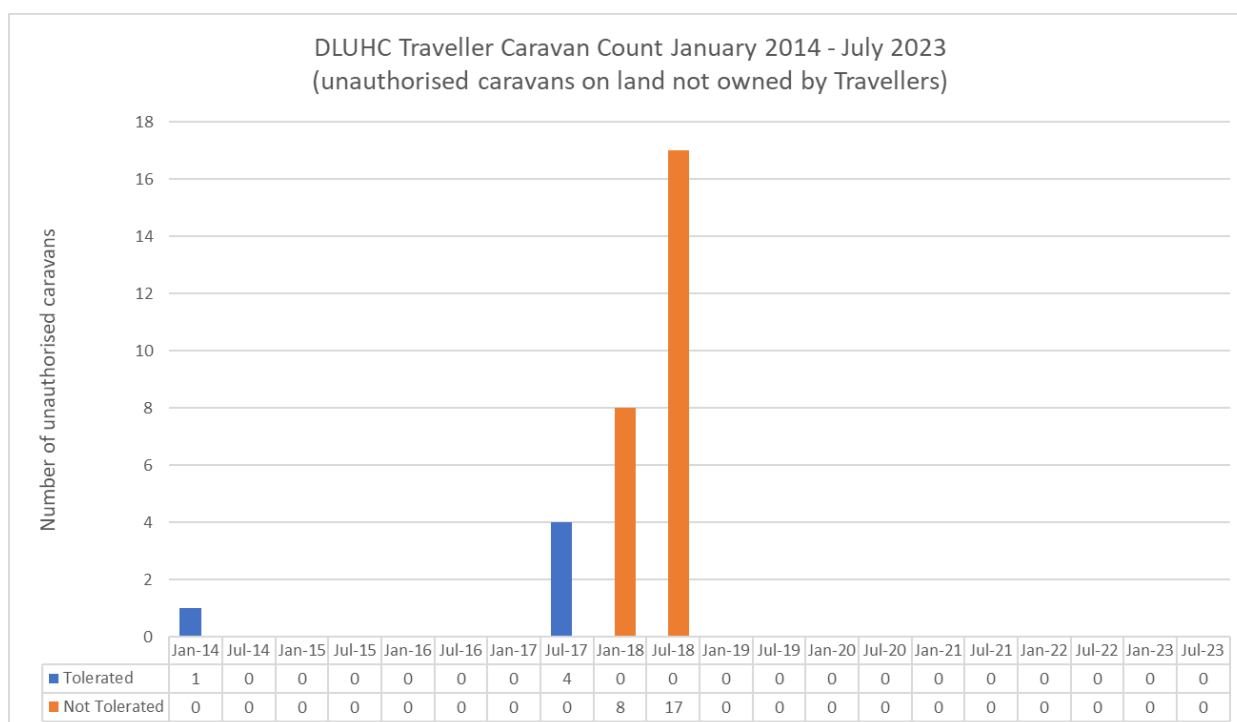
## Recommendations on how to meet identified transit need

- <sup>3.13</sup> The final part of the study will be a series of recommendations on how identified transit need could be met across Milton Keynes including recommendations on broad locations for new transit sites if a need is identified.

## 4. OUTCOMES

### DLUHC Traveller Caravan Count

- 4.1 Another source of information available on the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople population is the bi-annual Traveller Caravan Count which is conducted by each Local Authority in England on a specific date in January and July of each year and reported to DLUHC.
- 4.2 This is a statistical count of the number of caravans on both authorised and unauthorised sites across England. With effect from July 2013, the Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count was renamed the Traveller Caravan Count due to the inclusion of information on Travelling Showpeople caravans.
- 4.3 As this count is of caravans and not households, it makes it more difficult to interpret for a study such as this as the count is merely a snapshot in time conducted by the Local Authority twice each year, and any encampments which occur on other dates will not be recorded.
- 4.4 The most relevant information recorded in the Traveller Caravan Count are numbers of caravans on land not owned by Travellers – both tolerated and not tolerated.
- 4.5 The chart below shows the outcomes from the Traveller Caravan Count between January 2014 and July 2023 in relation to unauthorised caravans on land not owned by Travellers. This shows that there have only been 4 instances where unauthorised caravans have been recorded since January 2014 – 1 tolerated caravan in January 2014; 4 tolerated caravans in July 2017; 8 not tolerated caravans in January 2018; and 17 not tolerated caravans in July 2018.
- 4.6 When compared to the locally collected information on reported and recorded encampments that is set out in the following section of this report it is clear that the Traveller Caravan Count is not a robust indication of numbers of encampments in Milton Keynes.

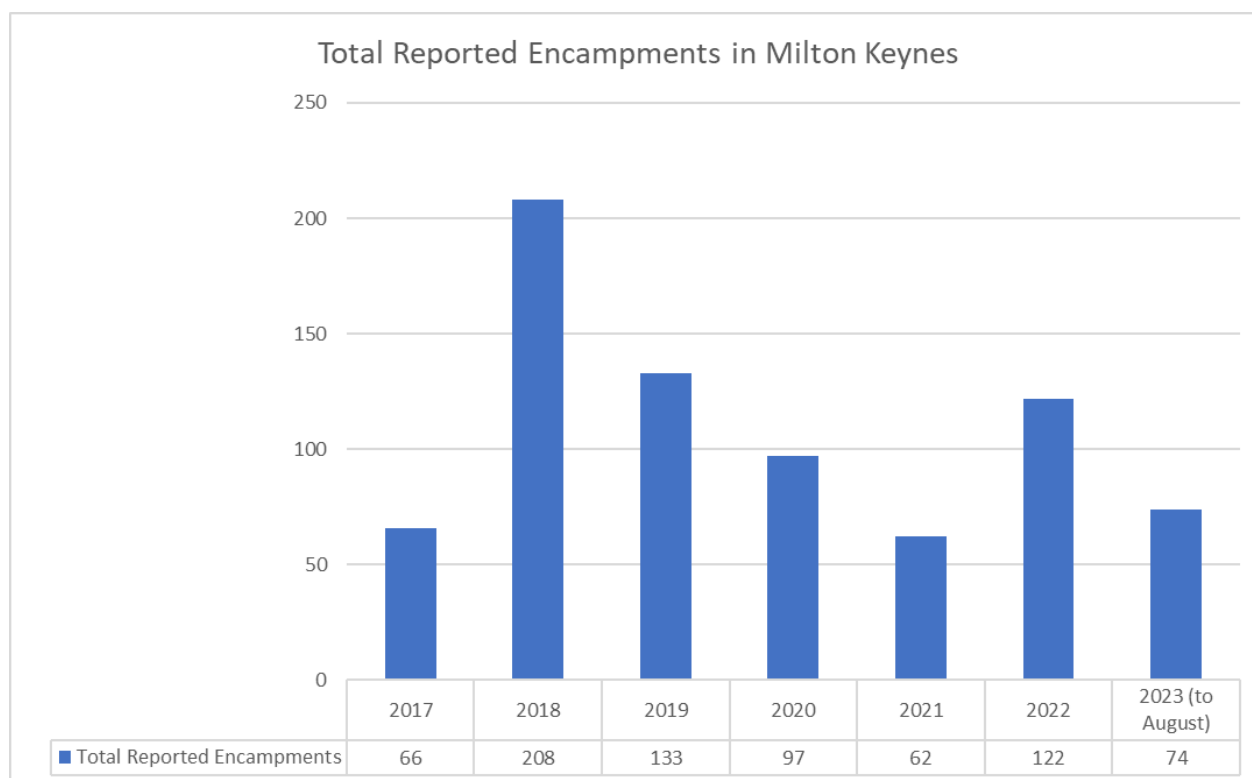


## Locally reported and recorded encampments

- 4.7 In Milton Keynes local residents and businesses are able to report instances of (potential) encampments either by contacting the Council's Contact Centre or by reporting online via the Council's website.

### Locally reported encampments

- 4.8 ORS have been provided with details of all encampments that have been reported to the Council between January 2017 and August 2023. This information records the date that the potential encampment was reported; the location of the potential encampment; and details of the potential encampment – for example the number of caravans and other vehicles.
- 4.9 The chart below shows the number of potential encampments that have been reported to the Council each year since 2017. This shows a peak of 208 potential encampments that were reported in 2018, and then a gradual decrease in the number of reported encampments through to 2023 (to August). It should be noted that nationally across England and Wales, numbers of encampments did fall during the periods of covid-19 lockdowns and other related travel restrictions so the figures from 2020 and 2021 may not be fully representative, but still show a continued decrease between 2018, 2019 and 2022.

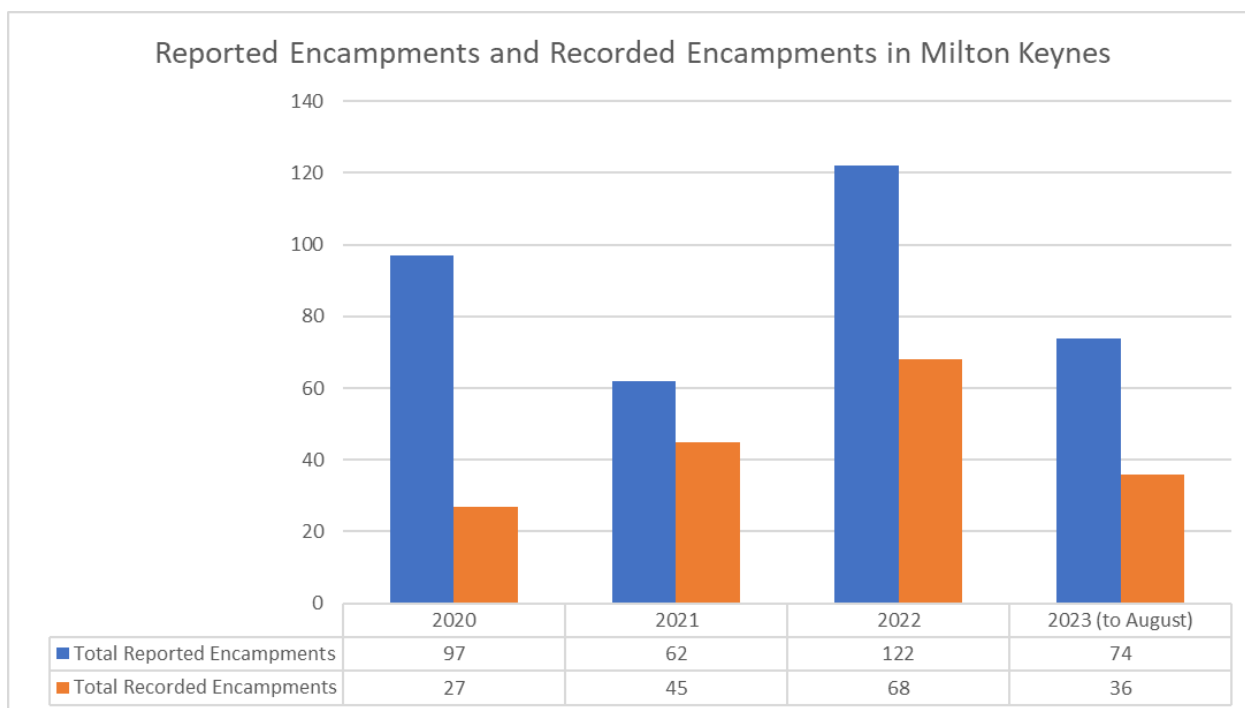


### Locally recorded encampments

- 4.10 Reported encampments are passed on to the Council's Environmental Crime Unit or Environmental Health Team for further investigation and potential enforcement action. Once a visit has been made to investigate potential encampments, those that are found to still be present (many are found to have moved on between being reported and being visited) and occupied by Travellers (many are found to be non-

Travellers) are formally recorded in order to take further action as necessary and where possible appropriate Welfare Assessments are completed – particularly in relation to health issues and the welfare of any children that may be present on an encampment.

- 4.11 This information has been provided by the Council to ORS for 2020 – 2023 (to August). The chart below shows that the number/proportion of recorded encampments where further action may be required differs year on year with 28% of reported encampments recorded for further action in 2020; 73% of reported encampments taken forward for further action in 2021; 56% of encampments taken forward for further action in 2022; and 49% (to date) taken forward for further action in 2023. Overall over the period January 2020 to August 2023 a total of 176 (50%) of reported encampments were taken forward for further action.



## Location of recorded encampments

- 4.12 The information provided by the Council to ORS also includes the locations of encampments. The tables below show the locations of encampments that have been recorded 2 or more times. Over the period between January 2020 and August 2023 the most frequented locations for recorded encampments were Watling Street (18), Groveway V10 to V11 (13), Bletcham Way (9), Steinbeck Crescent (9), Snelshall Street H7 to H8 (6), Timbold Drive (6), Bottle Dump Roundabout (5), Buckingham Road (5), Delaware Drive (5), and Kelvin Drive (5).

2023	No. of Recorded Encampments
Chaffron Way V1 To V4	4
Tattenhoe Street H7 To H8	3
Buckingham Road	2
Great Monks Street	2
Timbold Drive, Kents Hill Park	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>

2022	No. of Recorded Encampments
Watling Street	7
Bletcham Way	5
Steinbeck Crescent	5
Buckingham Road	3
Millers Way V4 To V5	3
Pendeen Crescent	3
Timbold Drive	3
Bedford Road	2
Chicheley Road	2
Delaware Drive	2
Gog Lane	2
Great Monks Street H1 To Stratford Road	2
Kelvin Drive	2
Sherington Road	2
Simpson Road	2
Snelshall Street H7 To H8	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>

2021	No. of Recorded Encampments
Watling Street	7
Grovelway V8 To V10	5
Lynmouth Crescent	4
Bottle Dump Roundabout	3
Steinbeck Crescent	3
Chestnut Crescent	2
Katrine Place	2
Kelvin Drive	2
Osier Way	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>

2020	No. of Recorded Encampments
Grovelway V10 To V11	6
Bletcham Way A5 To V10	3
Delaware Drive	3
Michigan Drive	3
Snelshall Street H7 To H8	3
Watling Street H7 To H8	3

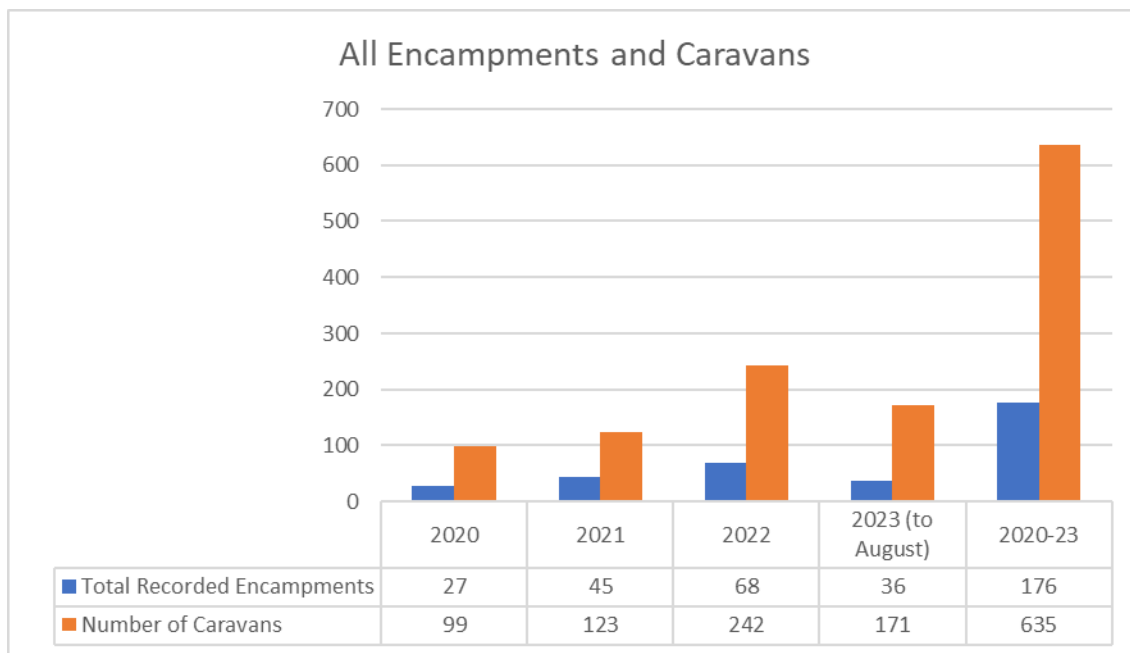
Bottle Dump Roundabout	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>

2020-2023	No. of Recorded Encampments
Watling Street	18
Groeway V10 To V11	13
Bletcham Way	9
Steinbeck Crescent	9
Snelshall Street H7 To H8	6
Timbold Drive	6
Bottle Dump Roundabout	5
Buckingham Road	5
Delaware Drive	5
Kelvin Drive	5
Chaffron Way V1 To V4	4
Great Monks Street	4
Lynmouth Crescent	4
Michigan Drive	4
Millers Way V4 To V5	4
Osier Way	4
Pendeen Crescent	4
Tattenhoe Street H7 To H8	4
Bedford Road	3
Katrine Place	3
Sherington Road	3
Blackmoor Gate	2
Bourton Low	2
Brickhill Street	2
Chestnut Crescent	2
Chicheley Road	2
Gog Lane	2
Gun Lane	2
Howard Way	2
Newport Road	2
Simpson Road	2
Standing Way V1 To V2	2
Yeomans Drive	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146</b>

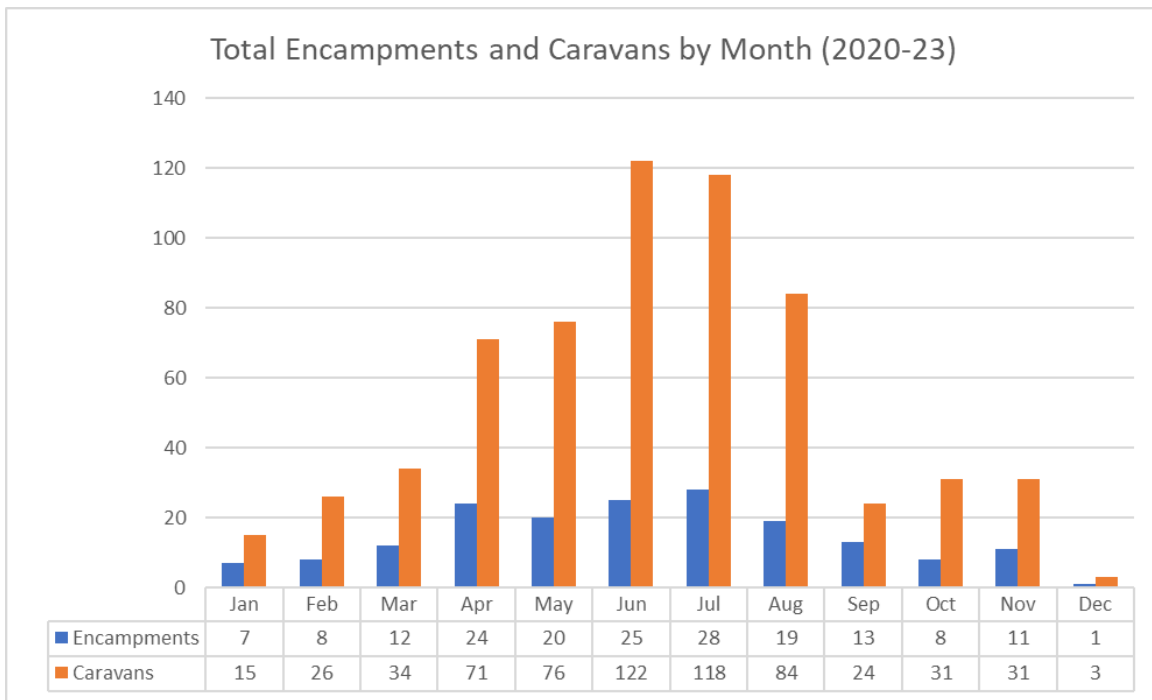
## Number of caravans recorded

4.13 As well as the number of encampments and the location of encampments, another important metric in the evaluation of need for transit provision is the size of encampments – i.e. the number of recorded caravans. This is important as if a need for transit provision is identified it will help the Council to determine the capacity of this provision in relation to numbers of caravan spaces.

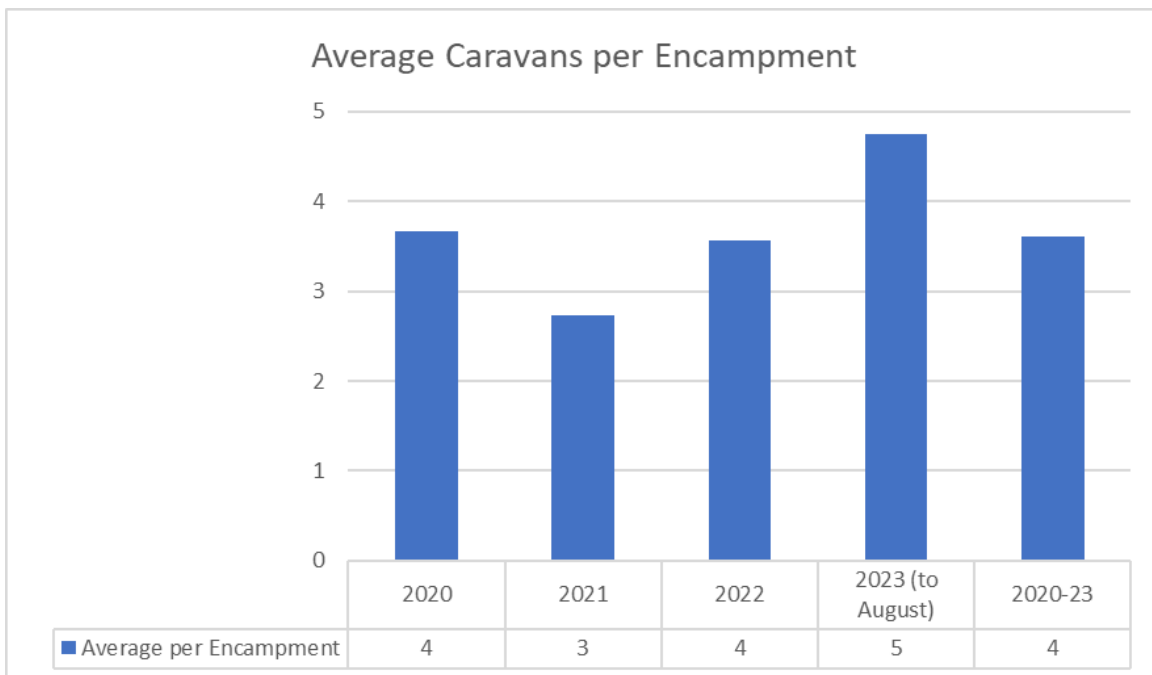
4.14 The chart below shows the total number of encampments and the total number of recorded caravans by year from January 2020 to August 2023. This shows that the number of recorded encampments and caravans increased year on year from 2020 to 2022 and has fallen in 2023 – although there is only currently data to August, but the following chart suggests that number of recorded encampments and caravans in Milton Keynes are much lower between September and December so it would be expected that this downward trend would continue.



4.15 The chart below shows the total combined number of encampments and caravans by month from 2020 to 2023. This clearly illustrates that there are significant seasonal variations between the summer and winter months in Milton Keynes, with the peak months for both numbers of encampments and numbers of caravans being between April and August. Two thirds (66%) of encampments and three quarters (74%) of caravans have been recorded over this period over the last 4 years.

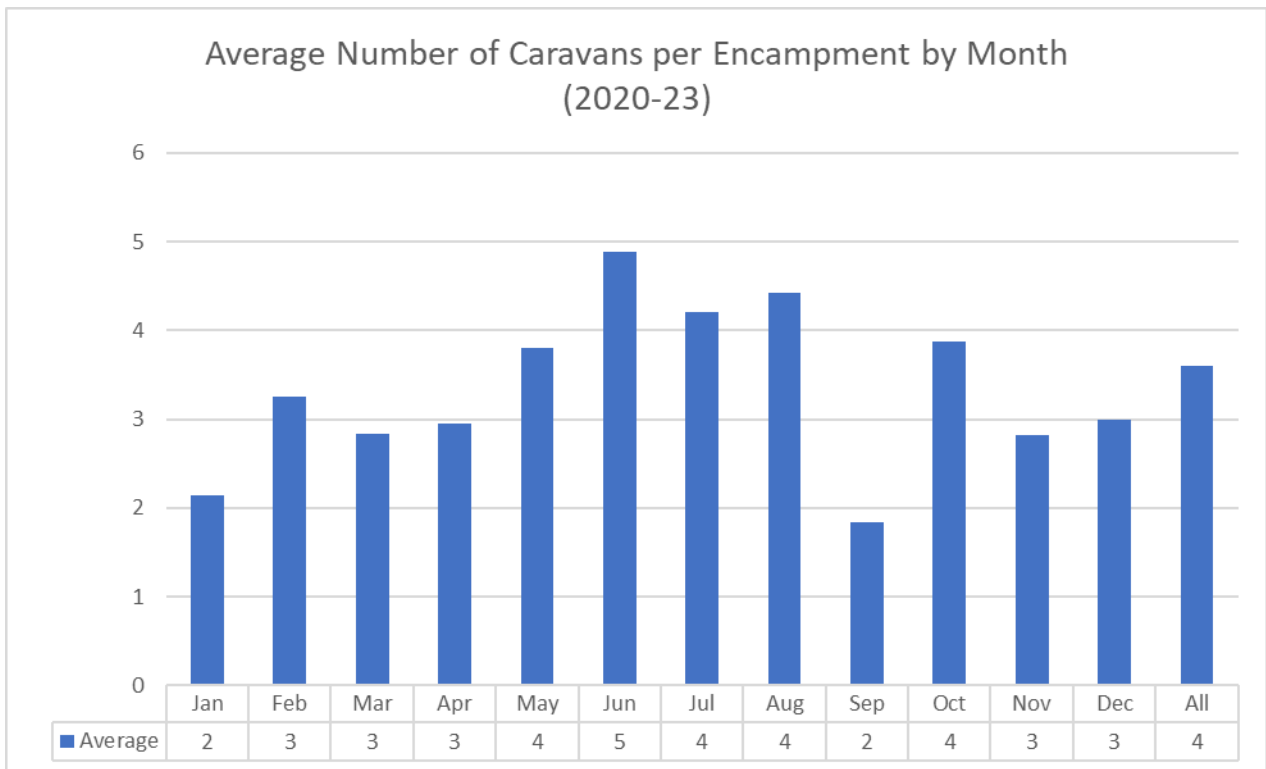


4.16 The chart below shows the average number of caravans per encampment each year from 2020 to 2023 and shows that there has been very little change over this period of time.

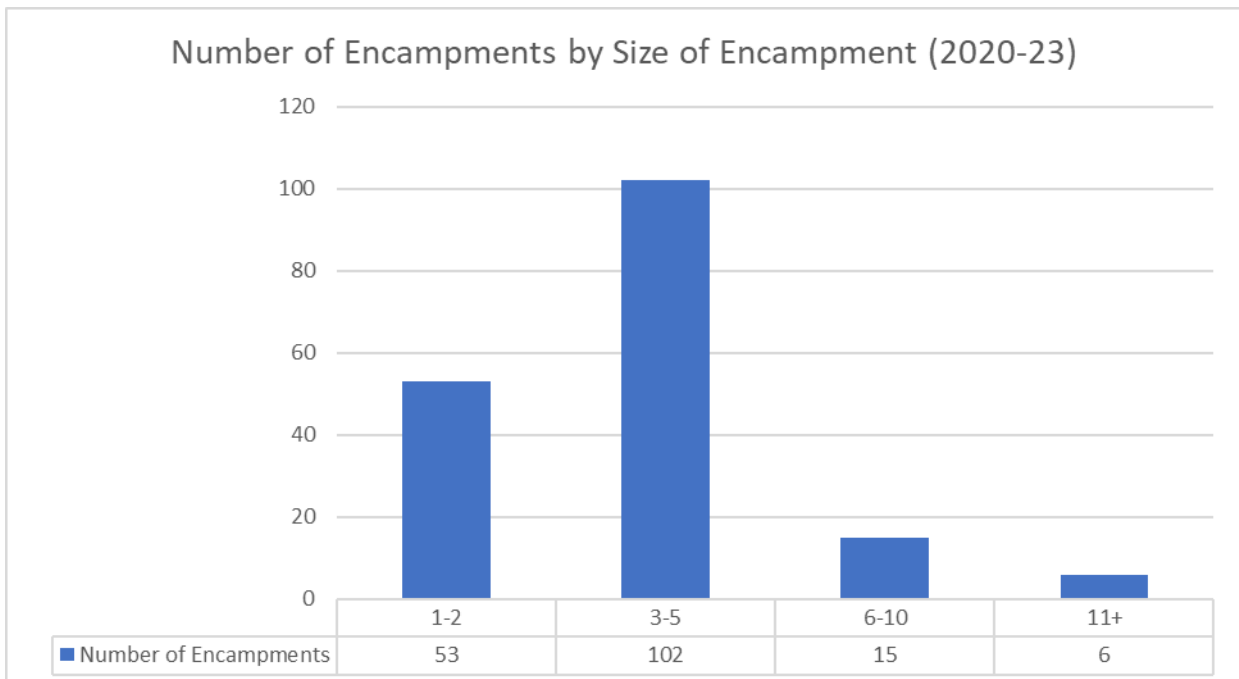


4.17 The chart below shows the average number of caravans per encampment by month for the period 2020 to 2023. This again shows that there is a seasonal variation in the size of encampments on a month-by-month basis, again with larger numbers of caravans recorded over the late spring and summer periods.



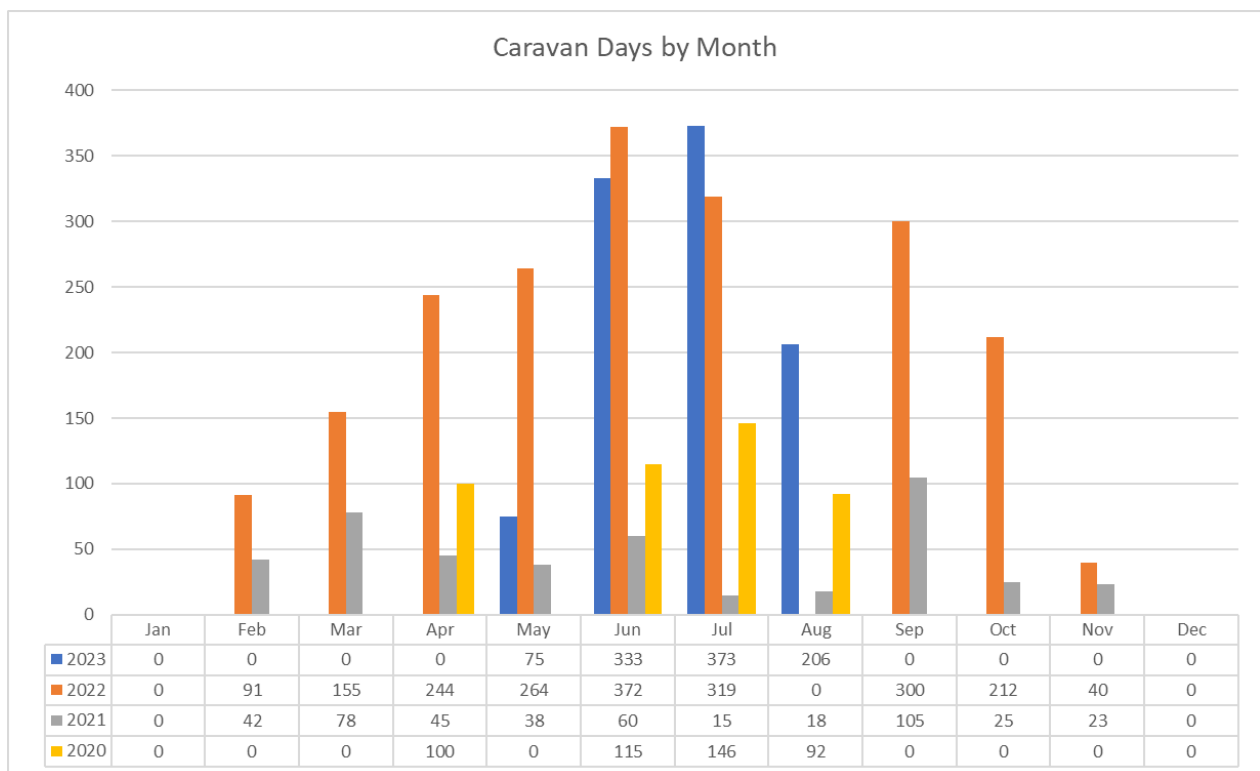


4.18 The chart below shows the total number of encampments by size of encampments (number of caravans) from 2020 to 2023. This shows that the vast majority (88%) of encampments have comprised 5 or less caravans, with almost a third (30%) being single caravans. Just 12% of encampments were made up of 6 or more caravans, with only 3% (6 encampments) being made up of 11 or more caravans. These are all recent encampments – Tattenhoe Street August 2023 (16 caravans); Watling Street H7 to H8 June 2022 (15 caravans); Chaffron Way V3 to V4 June 2023 (12 caravans); Timbold Drive July 2023 (11 caravans); The MK Bowl July 2023 (11 caravans); and Kelvin Drive August 2023 (11 caravans).



## Caravan days

- 4.19 Another important metric that needs to be considered in relation to potential transit provision is caravan days. This is a simple calculation for each encampment based on the number of caravans and the length of occupancy in a particular location. As well as the number of encampments and the number of caravans/vehicles, this information can help a local authority to determine the size of any potential transit provision that may need to be provided.
- 4.20 When looking at caravan days only the active encampments have been considered as it has been determined through the stakeholder engagement (see following section in this report) that several of the Traveller groups who have been recorded on encampments in Milton Keynes either do not travel there anymore; have injunctions against them to prevent them travelling to Milton Keynes; or have expressed a desire to move to bricks and mortar accommodation.
- 4.21 For those Traveller groups who are still identified as visiting Milton Keynes on a regular basis the chart below shows the number of caravan days by month from January 2020 to August 2023.
- 4.22 This again shows that the highest number of caravan days are recorded during the summer months which ties in with the months when the highest number of encampments have been recorded.



## Stakeholder engagement

- 4.23 ORS have spoken at length with individuals involved in managing and enforcing against encampments in Milton Keynes.
- 4.24 This involved discussions with members of the Council's Environmental Crime Unit, members of the Council's Planning Enforcement Team, and with other members in the Council's Planning Department.
- 4.25 As well as enabling ORS to get a better understanding of the data for reported and recorded encampments, these discussions also identified that the majority of encampments that have occurred in Milton Keynes in recent years have been occupied by a number of groups of Travellers who are well known to the Council.
- 4.26 Only 14 of the 176 recorded encampments between 2020 and 2023 were occupied by unknown Travellers and these only stopped off for short periods of time.
- 4.27 A summary of the identified groups of Travellers is set out below:
- » **Group 1:** 53 recorded encampments between April 2020 and August 2023. Have permanent pitches on sites in other local authorities and visit Milton Keynes for work.
  - » **Group 2:** 16 recorded encampments between April 2020 and September 2020. Now have a permanent pitch on a site in another local authority and have not returned since 2020.
  - » **Group 3:** 27 recorded encampments between March 2022 and June 2023. The Council have obtained an injunction against these households prohibiting them from returning to Milton Keynes until 2025.
  - » **Group 4:** 35 recorded encampments between February 2022 and August 2023. All households are seeking bricks and mortar accommodation in Milton Keynes.
  - » **Group 5:** 9 recorded encampments between January 2022 and August 2023. Want to be housed on a public site in Milton Keynes.
  - » **Group 6:** 8 recorded encampments between June and July 2023. Have permanent pitches on sites in other local authorities and visit Milton Keynes for work.
  - » **Group 7:** 3 recorded encampments between September and October 2022. Have permanent pitches on a site in Milton Keynes.
  - » **Group 8:** 2 recorded encampments between December 2022 and January 2023. Have permanent pitches on a site in another local authority and visit Milton Keynes for work. Only stay for short period of time in Milton Keynes.
  - » **Group 9:** 2 recorded encampments in June 2023. Live in bricks and mortar in Milton Keynes.
  - » **Group 10:** 4 recorded encampments between June and July 2023. Have permanent pitches on a site in another local authority and visit Milton Keynes for work.
  - » **Group 11:** 3 recorded encampments between November 2022 and June 2023. Have permanent pitches on a site in another local authority and visit Milton Keynes for work. Only stay for short period of time in Milton Keynes.
  - » **Unknown Groups:** These are all large groups of Travellers stopping off for short periods of time (1 or 2 days) in Milton Keynes for work.

## Neighbouring local authorities

4.28 A review has been completed of interviews that have been completed by ORS with Officers in neighbouring local authorities to gain a better understanding of how they address transit issues and whether there are any cross-border issues with Milton Keynes. This included a review of interviews that have been completed to support recent GTAA studies in the following areas:

- » Bedford
- » Buckinghamshire
- » Central Bedfordshire
- » Luton
- » North Northamptonshire
- » West Northamptonshire

4.29 A summary of the outcomes of these interviews is set out below:

- » **Bedford:** Short-term encampments in the area occur for many reasons, such as for family occasions, holidays, work opportunities, and also as a result a lack of pitches for locals to settle on. There is no public transit provision within Bedford as the public transit site was closed several years ago following trouble with a group of Travellers. It is felt that a temporary stopping place within Bedford could be beneficial, although it was acknowledged that sufficient resources would be needed to ensure it was managed effectively.
- » **Buckinghamshire:** There is currently no public transit provision in the new Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority. The Council are awaiting the outcomes of a new GTAA that is currently being prepared before making any decisions about future transit provision. Numbers of recorded encampments have dropped in recent years.
- » **Central Bedfordshire:** Short-term encampments do occur in the area. The Council has initial approval to build and develop temporary stopping provision to provide a safe location to stop in whilst in Central Bedfordshire. The project for this site is currently in the initial stages of development. The Council otherwise move on Gypsy and Traveller encampments as they occur in accordance with normal procedures of law.
- » **Luton:** There are encampments from time to time but there appears to be evidence that it is reducing in recent years. However, it is still an issue for the authority in terms of costs of site clearance. These encampments tend to happen more in the summer months, often families moving around to different events.
- » **North Northamptonshire:** Short-term encampments do occasionally pass through the area. The Countywide Traveller Unit usually deal with these as they are mainly on Council owned land.
- » **West Northamptonshire:** There are records of short-term unauthorised encampments dating back to December 2003. Historically, the area witnesses a high number of encampments each year. The same family groups will often stop in the area each year,

often in the same locations. The size of encampments varies from large to small groups, usually averaging around 6 – 12 caravans.

4.30 In addition, work that has been completed by ORS in other local authorities in England in relation to the potential uptake and use of transit provision has concluded:

- » Most Travellers feel that opportunities for them to legally stop off on land have been significantly reduced in recent years and decades, and that they have no choice but to stop off on the roadside to enable them to fulfil their traditional and cultural way of life.
- » Many Travellers are reluctant and unwilling to pay for formal transit provision – i.e. permanent transit sites or temporary stopping places.
- » Even if they were to consider making use of formal transit provision, many Travellers are reluctant and unwilling to share with other groups of Travellers.
- » Many Travellers would be willing to move to more suitable short-term tolerated locations to stop off (i.e. locations that they do not need to pay to stay on) and would like basic facilities to be provided for them such as toilets, water bowsers, and skips/refuse collections. Most would be willing to pay or contribute towards these facilities.

4.31 Engagement with West Midlands Police for a study into transit need in Birmingham identified a number of reasons why Officers felt that numbers of encampments were increasing across the country. These included:

- » Many areas have always attracted Travellers.
- » Areas where there are good road networks.
- » Areas where there are a lot of work and employment opportunities.
- » Changes to the PPTS planning definition means that more households are travelling to demonstrate that they meet the definition.
- » Changes to legislation in Ireland in relation to Travellers making it more attractive for Travellers to travel in England.
- » Fewer brownfield sites are now available so Travellers are now forced to use more sensitive areas where they would not previously have moved on to (carparks, parks, schools etc.) and therefore needing to be moved on more quickly.
- » Injunctions against named and unnamed Travellers in neighbouring areas which may be pushing Travellers into other areas.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of outcomes

- 5.1 This study has sought to complete an in-depth analysis of a range of information relating to encampments that have occurred in Milton Keynes in recent years.
- 5.2 Data from the DLUHC Traveller Caravan Count has been found to significantly under-estimate the number of caravans that are recorded by the Council each year on land not owned by Travellers, as such no further consideration will be given to data from the Traveller Caravan Count.
- 5.3 Analysis of data on reported and recorded encampments provided by the Council indicated that approximately 50% of reported encampments are very short-term and transient and have moved on to other local authorities before the Council is able to investigate them.
- 5.4 The number of recorded encampments in Milton Keynes increased year-on-year between 2020 and 2022 from 27 in 2020 to 68 in 2022. Numbers decreased to 36 in 2023 but data was only available up to August this year. However, the analysis has shown that in previous years the number of recorded encampments between September and December have been significantly lower than in other months so it would be anticipated that the overall number of recorded encampments for the whole of 2023 will be lower than for 2022.
- 5.5 Locations where the highest number of repeat encampments were recorded between January 2020 and August 2023 were Watling Street (18); Groveway V10 to V11 (13); Bletcham Way (9); Steinbeck Crescent (9); Snelshall Street H7 to H8 (6); Timbold Drive (6); Bottle Dump Roundabout (5); Buckingham Road (5); Delaware Road (5); and Kelvin Drive (5).
- 5.6 In relation to the number of caravans recorded, this has also increased year-on-year between 2020 and 2022 from 99 in 2020 to 242 in 2022. Again, figures decreased in 2023 to 171 but this was only up until August so is expected to be lower for the whole year than in 2022.
- 5.7 As far as seasonal variations in numbers of recorded encampments and caravan number are concerned, the peak months are between April and August with 66% of encampments and 74% of caravans recorded over these months between 2020 and 2023.
- 5.8 Overall, the average number of caravans per encampment has not changed significantly between 2020 and 2023, increasing slightly from 4 in 2020 to 5 in 2023, with an overall average of 4 between 2020 and 2023.
- 5.9 Looking at the number of encampments by size of encampment for the overall period 2020 to 2023 shows that 88% of all encampments comprised 5 or less caravans, with almost a third (30%) being single caravan encampments. Only 3% (6 encampments) comprised 11 or more caravans and these are all recent encampments, with the majority being recorded in summer 2023 and who are believed to be the same Traveller group moving around Milton Keynes - Tattenhoe Street August 2023 (16 caravans); Chaffron Way V3 to V4 June 2023 (12 caravans); Timbold Drive July 2023 (11 caravans); The MK Bowl July 2023 (11 caravans); and Kelvin Drive August 2023 (11 caravans).
- 5.10 With regard to caravan days the outcomes of this analysis mirror the encampment and caravan data with the highest number of caravan days being recorded during the summer months.

- 5.11 The outcomes of the stakeholder engagement indicated that the vast majority of recorded encampments have been occupied by a small number of Traveller groups who are known to the Council. The primary reasons for stopping off in Milton Keynes are for work purposes.
- 5.12 Only one Traveller group have expressed a need for a pitch on a public site in Milton Keynes, and one Traveller group are seeking to move to bricks and mortar accommodation.
- 5.13 Several Traveller groups who were identified on encampments no longer visit Milton Keynes as they have either now found permanent accommodation in other local authorities or have been served injunctions preventing them from visiting Milton Keynes.
- 5.14 The majority of encampments that have been recorded in recent years are from a single Traveller group who are understood to have permanent pitches on sites in other local authorities. They stop off in Milton Keynes for work purposes.
- 5.15 In 2023 this group occupied 15 encampments with between 3 and 16 caravans and a total of 821 caravan days were recorded. In 2022 this group occupied 25 encampments with between 2 and 15 caravans and a total of 1,997 caravan days were recorded.
- 5.16 It was identified that neighbouring local authorities also have recorded encampments, but not on the scale of those recorded in Milton Keynes. The majority of these encampments are short-term and for work purposes. None of these local authorities have any formal public transit provision. Some are considering temporary/emergency stopping places; and others have management-based/enforcement approaches in place to deal with encampments and are considering other approaches such as negotiated stopping agreements.
- 5.17 In addition, work that has been completed by ORS in other local authorities in England in relation to the potential uptake and use of transit provision has concluded:
- » Most Travellers feel that opportunities for them to legally stop off on land have been significantly reduced in recent years and decades, and that they have no choice but to stop off on the roadside to enable them to fulfil their traditional and cultural way of life.
  - » Many Travellers are reluctant and unwilling to pay for formal transit provision.
  - » Even if they were to consider making use of formal transit provision, many Travellers are reluctant and unwilling to share with other groups of Travellers.
  - » Many Travellers would be willing to move to more suitable locations to stop off and would like basic facilities to be provided for them such as toilets, water bowsers, and skips/refuse collections. Most would be willing to pay or contribute towards these facilities.
- 5.18 Engagement with West Midlands Police for a study into transit need in Birmingham identified a number of reasons why Officers felt that numbers of encampments were increasing across the country. These included:
- » Many areas have always attracted Travellers.
  - » Areas where there are good road networks.
  - » Areas where there are a lot of work and employment opportunities.
  - » Changes to the PPTS planning definition means that more households are travelling to demonstrate that they meet the definition.

- » Changes to legislation in Ireland in relation to Travellers making it more attractive for Travellers to travel in England.
- » Fewer brownfield sites are now available so Travellers are now forced to use more sensitive areas where they would not previously have moved on to (carparks, parks, schools etc.) and therefore needing to be moved on more quickly.
- » Injunctions against named and unnamed Travellers in neighbouring areas which may be pushing Travellers into other areas.

## Review of options to address transit needs

<sup>5.19</sup> As set out earlier in this report there are a number of options that the Council could consider to deal with encampments in Milton Keynes. In summary these include a mixture of infrastructure-based options and a mixture of management-based options:

- » **Permanent transit sites** - full facilities (up to 15-20 pitches) where Gypsies and Travellers might live temporarily (for up to three months) – for example, to work locally, for holidays or to visit family and friends.
- » **Temporary/emergency stopping places** – similar to transit sites but smaller (5 or less caravans spaces) and with more limited facilities.
- » **Transit compounds** – similar to temporary/emergency stopping places but with a larger caravan capacity (up to 20 caravan spaces).
- » **Temporary sites and stopping places** – short-term temporary provision to cater for events such as horse fairs.
- » **Management-based approaches/negotiated stopping places** - agreements which allow caravans to be tolerated on suitable specific pieces of land for an agreed and limited period of time. Basic facilities can also be considered.

<sup>5.20</sup> Several of the options set out above would also enable the Police to make use of Section 62a powers, or other powers to allow them to formally move Travellers on and to require them to leave Milton Keynes.

<sup>5.21</sup> Other options that the Council could consider would be to seek injunctions against known groups of Travellers to prevent them stopping on areas of publicly owned land in Milton Keynes.

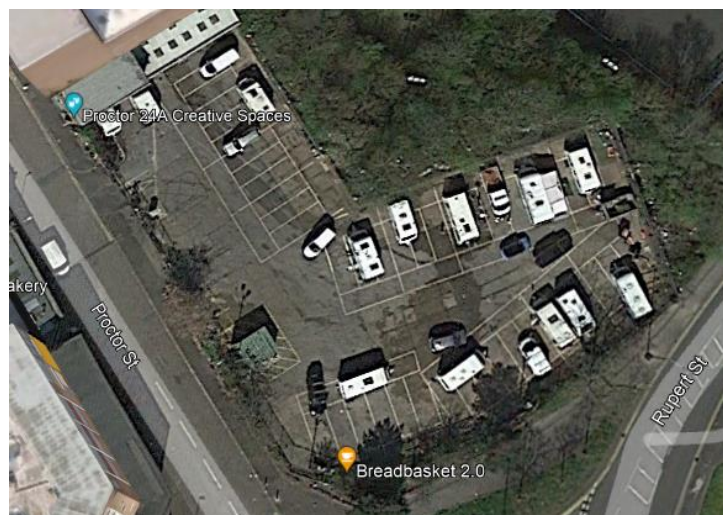
<sup>5.22</sup> Many other local authorities have Encampment Protocols in place, often in partnership with the Police. For example, Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Police have a *Joint Protocol for Managing Encampments*. Under this Protocol, where circumstances do not warrant the making of a request to West Midlands Police, or the Police deem circumstances are such that currently there is no justification for the use of Police powers (Section 62a for example), the Council Enforcement Team serve a Notice to Vacate Land (2 day) or a Notice to Vacate Land (7 day) Order'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>5.23</sup> In response to an identified need for transit provision, Birmingham City Council have also developed a very basic transit site which provides spaces for 1 caravan and 1 vehicle, and basic facilities including a toilet/shower block. The photo below shows the layout of this transit site on Proctor Street in Birmingham.

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<sup>2</sup>[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/5735/joint\\_protocol\\_for\\_managing\\_unauthorised\\_encampments](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/5735/joint_protocol_for_managing_unauthorised_encampments)





- 5.24 Another option to consider is often referred to as the *Sandwell Model*. In response to increasing numbers of encampments, and a lack of any public transit facilities to enable the Police to use Section 62a powers, the Council built a basic transit site/compound. Caravan spaces on the site/compound can be used for a maximum of 28 days and the rates for each pitch are a refundable deposit of £250 per caravan and a weekly rent of £80 per caravan. The facility provides basic facilities including 34 caravan spaces to accommodate 1 caravan and 1 vehicle, water, toilets, monitored CCTV, and refuse collections. Through the use of, or threat of, legal powers the number of encampments fell significantly following the opening of the new facility from 49 recorded encampments to just 7. In addition, many of the problems associated to these encampments (anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping for example) were also significantly reduced. However, it is also understood that few, if any, households have actually made use of the transit site/compound and that the vast majority simply leave Sandwell and move to other local authorities. The photo below is of the transit compound in Sandwell on Foundry Lane.



## Recommendations on how to meet identified transit need

- 5.25 The final part of the study is a series of recommendations on how identified transit need could be met across Milton Keynes.
- 5.26 There are a number of issues for the Council to consider in order to address transit related issues and it is felt that no single option would be sufficient to adequately deal with the range of transit related issues that the Council is facing in Milton Keynes.
- 5.27 In summary:
- » There are relatively high numbers of encampments recorded in Milton Keynes, but the analysis completed by ORS has indicated that these numbers have fallen in recent years – due to a degree by injunctions that have been served to prevent specific households stopping off in Milton Keynes, or as a result of households securing permanent accommodation in other local authorities.
  - » The majority of recent recorded encampments are short-term and transient and comprise small numbers of caravans, with a third of encampments being single caravans.
  - » The majority of larger encampments that make up the majority of recorded encampments, and recorded caravans and caravan days associated with these encampments, are from a small number of known Traveller Groups who are understood to have permanent pitches in other local authorities.
  - » The Council currently have in place good and established enforcement approaches to deal with encampments when they do occur i.e. through the use of S77 and S78 powers.
  - » There is also a Joint Encampment Protocol in place with Thames Valley Police and there is understood to be a good working relationship in place between the Council and the Police.
- 5.28 Recommendations:
- » ORS could recommend that the Council should consider identifying land for and developing a large transit site and/or a transit compound in Milton Keynes. However, based on experience from other local authorities it is highly likely that a facility such as these would be under-utilised and difficult to manage. However, they would enable the Council/Police to exercise various legal powers and potentially move Travellers away from Milton Keynes.
  - » Another option that the Council could consider would be the use of Negotiated Stopping Agreements. However, discussions with the Council suggest that this would not be a viable options due to difficulty in identifying sufficient areas of land that could be used.
  - » As such, the preferred approach recommended by ORS is for the Council to explore establishing a hybrid approach to managing smaller encampments building on elements of the Negotiated Stopping model (i.e. short-term toleration of encampments), supplemented by a number of smaller temporary stopping places or compounds – see Paragraph 5.19 for more details. This could help to deal with the smaller encampments that make up the majority of recorded encampment in Milton Keynes, and would also allow Police powers to be used to move people on.

- » However, it should be acknowledged that the hybrid approach set out above would not be suitable for dealing with the smaller number of large encampments that have made up the majority of recorded caravan days in Milton Keynes in recent years. These encampments are occupied by large groups of Travellers who are known to the Council and ORS are of the opinion that it is unlikely that they would use any type of formal transit provision. As such, in these cases the Council should consider serving Injunctions against these groups of named Travellers and should also continue to improve defences on areas of land that they are known to occupy.