

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

FOR

COUNTY OFFALY

2014 - 2018



Adopted by Offaly County Council on 17th February 2014

Table of Contents

Section 1	2
1.1 Introduction.....	2
1.2 Structure of Accommodation Programme.....	2
1.3 Background to Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998	2
1.4 Progress under Previous Programmes	3
Section 2	5
2.1 Consultation	5
2.2 Local Consultation Structures.....	5
2.3 Information/awareness and consultation	5
Section 3	7
3.1 Statement of Policy	7
3.2 Provision of accommodation	7
3.3 Provision of back-up, training and support.....	8
3.4 Meeting distinct needs and family circumstances	8
3.5 Unauthorised encampments.....	8
3.6 Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.....	9
3.7 Horses	9
3.8 Homeless Services.....	9
Section 4	11
4.1 Strategy Statement	11
4.2 Implementing authorities	11
4.3 Financing the Programme.....	11
4.4 Co-operation & co-ordination between authorities/bodies	11
4.5 Provision of Accommodation	11
4.6 Assistance to approved housing bodies	11
4.7 Development of accommodation proposals	12
4.8 Management and maintenance of the accommodation	12
4.9 Procedures for resolving difficulties.....	13
4.10 Review of progress	13
Section 5	14
5.1 Assessment of Accommodation Need	14
Section 6	16
6.1 Measures for Implementation.....	16
6.2 Group Housing Scheme & Halting Site Accommodation	17
6.3 House/Caravan purchase loans	18
6.4 Voluntary housing	18
6.5 Rental Accommodation Scheme & Social Leasing.....	18
6.6 Private rented accommodation	18
Section 7	19
7.1 Conclusion.....	19
APPENDIX I	20
APPENDIX II	21
APPENDIX III	22
APPENDIX IV	23

Section 1

1.1 Introduction

Under the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Offaly Local Authorities are required to prepare, adopt and implement a Traveller Accommodation Programme. The term of the existing Programme, which took effect from 1st January 2009 will expire on 31st December 2013. A new Programme to replace the current Programme and to cover the period 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2018 is now required.

1.2 Structure of Accommodation Programme

Section 1 of this Programme deals with the legislative framework which governs the requirements for all Housing Authorities to develop a Traveller Accommodation Programme and outlines progress under the previous Programmes.

Section 2 outlines the consultation structures adopted by Offaly Local Authorities to facilitate meaningful engagement with Travellers, agencies and the general public.

Section 3 sets out Offaly Local Authorities Policy in relation to meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers.

Section 4 sets out a Strategy Statement which details Offaly Local Authorities approach for securing the implementation of the programme.

Section 5 deals with the assessment of existing and projected need for Traveller accommodation during the lifetime of the Programme.

Section 6 details the measures for implementation and the proposals for the forthcoming five years.

Section 7 outlines some conclusions.

1.3 Background to Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 came into effect on 10th September, 1998. The primary purpose of the Act is to provide a comprehensive legislative framework which requires housing authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers normally resident within their administrative areas.

The provisions of the Act play an integral part in promoting social inclusion and equality and counteracting discrimination that may be experienced by members of the Traveller community. The Act further provides for a comprehensive and planned response by housing authorities in meeting the varying accommodation needs of the Traveller community, a process underpinned by a thorough consultative process with all concerned interests.

A summary of the main provisions of the 1998 Act, the primary legislation under which this Programme is prepared, is outlined as follows:-

- To provide that each housing authority must prepare and have adopted a programme of Traveller accommodation in their area;

- Adoption of a Programme is a reserved function. However, in the event of the members failing to adopt a Programme within the specified timeframe, the County Manager is required to adopt the Programme by way of Managers Order;
- To provide for an extensive public notification and consultation process in respect of the preparation of a Traveller Accommodation Programme;
- To require housing authorities to take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of Traveller Accommodation Programmes;
- To provide for the establishment of the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee;
- To provide for the establishment of a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to facilitate consultation with Travellers;
- To amend the local government planning code to ensure that county and town development plans specifically include objectives concerning the provision of Traveller accommodation;
- To extend to halting sites the powers available to local authorities under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1997, relating to anti-social behaviour and estate management.

1.4 Progress under Previous Programmes

In June 1999, Offaly Local Authorities appointed its first Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. The Committee meets quarterly. The current membership of the Committee is outlined in **Appendix I**.

The first Traveller Accommodation Programme under the 1998 Act was adopted to cover the period 2000–2004. The Programme contained ambitious targets and 91 families were accommodated during the lifetime of the Programme.

The second Programme, adopted on 21st March 2005, covered the period 2005–2008. This Programme was amended in December 2007. Under this amendment, the 2008 target of a 16-bay Halting Site in Tullamore was replaced with two 8-bay Halting Site/Group Housing Schemes or a combination of both, and a 4-unit Group Housing Scheme in the Tullamore environs. A total of 74 families were accommodated under this Programme.

The third Programme, adopted on 20th April 2009, covered the period 2009–2013. This Programme was reviewed and amended in December 2011. Under this amendment, the target date for completion of the Group Housing Scheme in Birr was amended from 2011 to 2013 with the number of units increased from 4 to 9. In addition, the target of 20 units of Traveller specific accommodation in the Tullamore environs was reduced to 15 units, 8 of which were deferred until 2013. A total of 42 families were accommodated under this Programme up to 31st December 2013.

Circular Letter Housing 26/2013 issued by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on the 2nd August 2013 requires housing authorities to prepare for adoption and implementation of a fourth Accommodation Programme to cover the period 1st January 2014 to the 31st

December 2018. The Minister has directed that the latest date for the adoption of Accommodation Programmes is **30th April 2014**.

Plans were already at various stages of advancement on a number of developments towards the end of 2013 and it is intended that some elements of the previous programme will be carried forward to the new Traveller Accommodation Programme.

This Programme was prepared in consultation with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, within the context of the guidelines and the specific directions issued by the Minister, which also requires an assessment of the projected accommodation needs of Traveller families in County Offaly for the duration of the Programme. An assessment of the need for sites in the county was also included as part of the process.

The core principle of this Programme is an acknowledgement that not all Traveller housing needs can be met through the provision of standard housing. Accordingly the ongoing provision of existing halting site accommodation and new group housing schemes, as a preferred alternative, represents a significant element of this Programme in response to the specific needs identified through the assessment of need process. It is anticipated that 64 families will be accommodated during the life of this Programme.

Section 2

2.1 Consultation

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 requires that an extensive and thorough consultation process underpin the preparation and implementation of the Accommodation Programme with all interests concerned. Accommodation Programmes are required to be prepared and implemented in consultation with: other local public authorities; community groups and other bodies; Travellers both directly and via the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC); Traveller Support Groups; and the public in general.

The purpose of this consultation process is to ensure that the interests of all concerned with or affected by proposals for Traveller Accommodation are considered and to facilitate a planned and comprehensive response by housing authorities to the accommodation needs of Travellers.

2.2 Local Consultation Structures

Section 21 of the Act provides for the establishment of Local Traveller Consultation Committees to advise on general matters in relation to accommodation for Travellers.

Local Housing Authorities appoint these committees to advise on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers, including the preparation and implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programmes. The membership of the committees comprises elected representatives, officials and Traveller representatives. The membership and role of the Offaly Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee is detailed in **Appendix I**

2.3 Information/awareness and consultation

Section 8 of the Act provides requires local authorities, before preparing a draft accommodation programme, to give notice in writing of their intention to do so.

Notice of the intention to carry out the Assessment of Need and to prepare the Draft Accommodation Programme was given to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Midlands HSE and all 7 adjoining Housing Authorities as required and to other voluntary bodies as deemed appropriate. Notice was also published in the Midland and Tullamore Tribune and submissions were invited at an early stage in the process.

In preparing the Draft TAP 2014-2018 regard was had to submissions from the following:

- Irish Traveller Movement
- Offaly Traveller Movement
- Mr. Edward & Mrs. Margaret Molloy
- Mrs. Patricia Molloy
- Mr. Thomas & Mrs. Mary Reilly
- Harbour Drive Residents Association
- Mr. Tom Brady
- Mr. Billy & Mrs. Phil Hanley

Section 9(1) requires local authorities to publish in not less than one newspaper circulating within the functional area of that relevant housing authority stating its proposal to adopt, amend, replace the accommodation programme with regard to submissions received in writing in relation to the Draft Programme.

The Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018 was made available for inspection in accordance with statutory requirements by all appropriate bodies, Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the general public. Submissions were invited in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

Housing authorities are required to implement the best practice guidelines as developed by the National Traveller Consultative Committee in 2008 in the development of all new Traveller specific accommodation projects or in the refurbishment of Traveller specific accommodation. The objectives of the new guidelines are to ensure that:

- as far as is practicable the best fit accommodation option possible, appropriate to Traveller culture and accommodation needs, can be provided as speedily and as effectively as possible;
- the parties involved have available to them this model, including recommended operational procedures, which facilitate the achievement of the first objective;
- the parties to the process understand the possibilities and constraints which determine the accommodation to be provided;
- the parties are aware of the responsibilities and requirements on each of the parties to the consultation mechanism.

There will also be ongoing consultation via the Planning Consultation Process which the Council will be obliged to go through in respect of each of the proposed developments.

Consultation with Travellers and their support groups will be an essential element of the Programme especially with regard to detailed design specifics of each individual development with a view to meeting in full the accommodation needs of the Traveller families who will occupy them.

Section 3

3.1 Statement of Policy

The policy of the Council with regard to the provision of accommodation for Travellers derives from a number of statutory policy documents of Offaly Local Authorities, in particular the following:-

- Offaly County Council County Development Plan 2009–2015
- Draft Offaly County Council County Development Plan 2014–2020
- Offaly Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2010–2014

Specific reference is made to the Traveller Community and objectives around meeting accommodation needs in the County Development Plan. The wider but related issues of social inclusion and equality are also referred to throughout the documents.

Offaly County Council County Development Plan 2009–2015

It is Council policy to respect the distinctive culture of the Travelling Community and assist in the process of integration with the settled community.

Draft Offaly County Council County Development Plan 2014–2020

It is Council policy to provide a good and well-managed living environment for the Travelling Community including recommended standards of accommodation, sanitary facilities, and pre-school education facilities, where feasible and on sites approved by the relevant housing authority only.

It is an objective of the Council to provide adequate accommodation for Travellers in accordance with the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme for County Offaly. Further it is an objective of the Council to take a flexible approach to the location of this accommodation for Travellers.

3.2 Provision of accommodation

The provision of accommodation for Traveller families, normally resident within the administrative area of Offaly, who have been living on the roadside or unofficial sites without services and who are unable to provide accommodation from their own resources will be given priority. In particular, priority will be given to families who have not received a reasonable offer of accommodation to date.

This Accommodation Programme will include the provision of standard housing in urban and rural environments and Traveller group housing as well as halting site accommodation in certain circumstances. The preferred option of Offaly County Council is to provide group housing where this is practicable.

The Council may facilitate the provision by Traveller families of their own accommodation by way of housing loans where families are in a position to meet repayments on such loans. The provision of housing for Travellers by Voluntary Housing Associations will be encouraged at all times.

In the provision of halting site/group housing accommodation for Travellers, Offaly Local Authorities will have regard to:-

1. Consultation and participation of Travellers in planning and design of Traveller specific accommodation to ensure their distinctive needs are met.
2. The involvement of Travellers in management and maintenance arrangements for their accommodation through Offaly Local Authorities' estate management programmes.
3. The inclusion of appropriate facilities such as adequate parking, storage spaces, amenity areas and waste and recycling facilities.

3.3 Provision of back-up, training and support

Offaly Local Authorities currently employs a full-time Social Worker with specific responsibility for Travellers. The Council also works closely with other statutory agencies including the Health Service Executive, Midlands Area; local voluntary organisations and Traveller support groups to secure the provision of identified training and support and also to avoid any unnecessary overlap and duplication of resources.

It should be noted however that many of the needs of the Traveller Community are not accommodation related. Health and education, for example, are outside the remit of the Local Authority but nevertheless play a very important part in the overall welfare of families. The Local Authority tries to ensure that such issues coming to its attention are referred to the relevant support agencies for appropriate action so as they can be dealt with in a holistic manner.

3.4 Meeting distinct needs and family circumstances

The individual family circumstances and distinct needs of families will be ascertained by the Council when specific accommodation for these families is being considered. The Council will implement an effective consultation process leading to inclusive, informed and accountable decision-making which will ensure that the views of the Traveller families directly affected by the project are fully considered and taken into account.

The design of Traveller specific accommodation will be in accordance with Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government guidelines and will be undertaken in consultation with the relevant families at all stages of the process.

3.5 Unauthorised encampments

The Council discourages the establishment of unauthorised encampments and to this end will use appropriate powers and measures as provided for in legislation, where unauthorised encampments give rise to public health, safety, planning compliance or criminal trespass issues. The main legislation in this regard is as follows:-

- Housing Act 1992
- Road Act 1993
- Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998
- Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002
- Planning & Development Act 2000 (As Amended)

Cognisance will be taken of any new legislative requirements in this regard that may be enacted after the Programme has been adopted.

3.6 Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

The Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy, adopted by Offaly County Council on 18th October 2010, deals with anti-social behaviour in local authority estates and also covers tenants of halting sites and group housing schemes. Appropriate action will be taken where instances of anti-social behaviour have been identified in these locations.

3.7 Horses

Offaly Local Authorities will not include provision of accommodation for horses in 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. Offaly Local Authorities will implement the provisions of the Control of Horses Act, 1996. The Council may continue to make lands available for letting where appropriate, and members of the Traveller Community can avail of short-term land lettings in certain locations subject to compliance with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine registration of equine premises regulations.

New Control of Horses Bye Laws will be presented to Offaly County Council for adoption Quarter 1 2014. The new Bye Laws are intended to reinforce and augment powers provided under the Control of Horses Act 1996 and the previous Bye Laws adopted in 1998.

The policy proposes that the owners of horses seized by Offaly County Council must now comply with the following requirements when reclaiming their animals:

1. Evidence of identity of person claiming horse/s- Drivers License/Passport, etc
2. Proof of ownership of horse – Valid Horse Passport
3. Payment of all fees in respect of the detention of the horse
4. Proof of availability of sufficient lands to keep horses (land deed, lease agreement)
5. Evidence of registration of Equine Premises under Diseases of Animals Act 1966

3.8 Homeless Services

The planning and delivery of Homeless Services is directed by the provisions of Part 2, Chapter 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and the Housing Act 1988. The 2009 Act provides the statutory framework for the Regional Homeless Fora and the Homeless Action Plans.

The Midlands Homeless Action Plan 2013-2016 was adopted by Offaly Local Authorities in March 2013. The Action Plan is supplemented by a detailed Implementation Plan of homeless services in the Midlands with more specific identification of the nature and extent of homeless services, facilities and arrangements required during the life of the plan.

All persons needing to avail of homeless services should present to Offaly Local Authorities where they will be referred to the range of services in the Midlands.

Section 4

4.1 Strategy Statement

Section 10 (2) (d) requires that an accommodation programme should specify a strategy for securing the implementation of the programme.

4.2 Implementing authorities

Offaly County Council currently has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Programme in the County. The Town Councils of Birr and Tullamore will, as housing authorities, continue to have responsibility for the provision of housing accommodation for Travellers within their respective areas until the abolition of the Town Councils as provided for under the Local Government Bill 2013.

The Local Government Bill 2013 provides for the replacement of Borough and Town Councils by Municipal Districts. Due consideration of these developments and their implications has been given during the preparation of the Programme. The Implementation Programme has been prepared across the proposed three Municipal Districts in Offaly. The map of the Municipal Districts is shown in **Appendix II**.

4.3 Financing the Programme

The delivery of the Accommodation Programme will be subject to the provision of appropriate levels of capital funding to a) provide for improvements to existing accommodation and b) to maintain the facilities to a high standard. Limited capital funding may be available from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government for Traveller specific projects. In this regard Offaly Local Authorities will engage with the Department to source funding to progress the Accommodation Programme. It is anticipated that funding will be limited throughout the duration of the Programme and the accommodation targets outlined have reflected this reality.

4.4 Co-operation & co-ordination between authorities/bodies

Offaly Local Authorities will consult regularly with all authorities and bodies to ensure that the needs outlined in the Programme are fulfilled. Consultation will include regular meetings between the Offaly Housing Authorities, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, and other bodies providing accommodation for Travellers.

4.5 Provision of Accommodation

The acquisition/identification of suitably located serviced/serviceable land for the provision of accommodation for Traveller families is one of the greatest challenges faced by Housing Authorities. Local authority lands may be used for this purpose if appropriate and additional lands may be acquired, if needed, in order to implement the Accommodation Programme, subject to available funding.

4.6 Assistance to approved housing bodies

Applications by Approved Housing Bodies to the Council to directly provide accommodation will be expected to have regard to the needs of Traveller families, in accordance with this Accommodation Programme.

4.7 Development of accommodation proposals

The provision of group housing and halting sites involves a number of key steps: -

- (i) Identify suitable sites for the accommodation type and location identified in the Programme's objectives
- (ii) Prepare preliminary design for accommodation proposed where suitable lands have been obtained and agreed
- (iii) Obtain approval in principal and commitments regarding funding from the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government.
- (iv) Consult with Traveller families with regard to the proposed development particularly at design stage. It is therefore important that a tenant selection process takes place at an early stage so as the eventual tenants have had an opportunity for meaningful input into their future accommodation
- (v) Facilitate public consultation in conjunction with the planning process for the proposed accommodation
- (vi) Following completion of the consultation and planning process, tenders will be sought for the construction of the accommodation
- (vii) Prospective tenants will be kept informed of progress on an on-going basis
- (viii) Pre-tenancy training will be organised at the earliest possible opportunity and following this, an estate management forum will be established to ensure continuation of dialogue and consultation with the local authority in a structured format when the accommodation has been allocated
- (ix) Accommodation will also be provided from standard local authority housing and voluntary housing stock as appropriate. Rural houses may be purchased to meet specific family needs.
- (x) Approved Housing Bodies will be encouraged and facilitated in submitting proposals for the specific provision of accommodation for Travellers

4.8 Management and maintenance of the accommodation

It is essential that adequate arrangements are put in place for the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation. Issues of policy and allocation of bays are addressed by the Housing Officer in conjunction with the Social Worker and Housing & Social Co-ordination Officer who will consider the views of other Travellers through Estate Management forums in particular on compatibility issues. Two Caretakers are currently employed to oversee the management and maintenance of the three permanent halting sites in Birr and Tullamore. These positions are of central importance in the appropriate management of facilities.

It is a primary objective of the Council that involvement by Travellers in the estate management of their halting sites and group housing schemes will be fully promoted and supported through the Council's Community Liaison Officer. It is accepted by both the Local Authority and the members of the Travelling community in the existing sites that this is the most effective way to engage in meaningful consultation and tackle issues that arise from time to time.

4.9 Procedures for resolving difficulties

Council personnel involved in the provision of Traveller accommodation will be available to provide assistance in the event of any specific difficulties arising with regard to the accommodation programme, e.g. Social Worker, Technical Design Team, and the Housing, Social & Community Co-ordination Officer.

Where difficulties cannot be resolved through local consultation and dialogue, appropriate mediation services will be availed of by agreement.

4.10 Review of progress

An annual review of progress on the Programme will be presented to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and Housing Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) of the Council particularly in relation to the implementation of the Accommodation Programme. This will include a report on the number of families accommodated and the number of units and type of accommodation provided.

Progress on accommodation proposals will also be made available to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee at their quarterly meeting. A statutory review of the Programme will be carried out after three years taking into account the most recent annual census and appropriate amendments incorporated into the Programme.

Section 5

5.1 Assessment of Accommodation Needs

The Minister has under Section 6 (1) of the 1998 Act, directed that relevant Housing Authorities make an assessment of the needs for sites in the functional area concerned. The Minister has given direction under section 6 (5) of the 1998 Act, specifying that relevant Housing Authorities shall make an estimate of the projected accommodation needs of Traveller families arising during the duration of the programme (1st January 2014 to 31st December 2018)

In accordance with Section 6 of the Housing Act 1988, the Housing Authority is required to make an assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers who are assessed under Section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as being qualified for housing support, including the need for sites. The assessment also takes account of the likely increase in the need for accommodation arising from the growth in the numbers of Traveller families.

Regard is given to the assessment of social housing need which was carried out in May 2013 pursuant to Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. The results of this assessment outlined in **Table 5.1.1** were taken into consideration by the Council in preparing this current Programme.

Table 5.1.1 – Housing Needs Assessment - May 2013

	BTC	TTC	OCC
Halting Site	2	9	8
Group Housing Scheme	4	1	0
Standard Housing	13	40	40
Isolated Rural Housing	0	0	2
Total	19	50	50
Total	119		

Regard is also given to the census of Travellers undertaken on the 29th November 2013. The results of the census are detailed in **Table 5.1.2**. The census indicated that 277 Traveller families were living in County Offaly, up from 272 in 2012. Of these 277 families, 83 were living in local authority housing, 21 live in privately owned houses, 83 families reside in private rented accommodation, and 6 families reside in accommodation provided by a voluntary housing organisation. 22 families were living in three permanent halting sites in Birr and Tullamore with 9 families sharing accommodation with relatives in these sites on a temporary basis. 5 families were sharing accommodation in standard housing. In total 36 families were living on the roadside or on un-serviced unofficial halting sites. The location of these families identified in the November 2013 census is set out in **Appendix III**.

Table 5.1.2 Census of Traveller Families – 29th November 2013

Type of Accommodation	No of families
Local Authority Housing	83
Local Authority Group Housing	4
Houses acquired or improved with LA Assistance	21
Privately Owned Houses	4
Private Rented	83
Voluntary Housing	6
Permanent Halting Sites	22
Basic service bays	4
Shared accommodation in standard housing	5
Shared accommodation on Halting Sites	9
Roadside or un-serviced unofficial sites	36
Illegally occupying bays	0
Total	277

The numbers and locations of families change frequently. The main concentration of families has traditionally centred around Tullamore and environs, Birr and to a much lesser extent, Edenderry.

From time to time the Traveller population in the County increases in number through the arrival of Travellers from other parts of the country, particularly during the summer months. Parking generally takes place on the roadside or on public areas. Over the past 5 years, Travellers have also accessed an unofficial site at Kilmucklin, Clara from time to time. A number of families have remained at this location on a permanent basis. The Council has sought closure of this facility.

While it is difficult to accurately predict the level of Traveller family formation in the county, based on recent trends, it is estimated that over the lifetime of the programme the number of families will increase by approximately 13.

Table 5.1.3 gives a detailed assessment of need broken down by area and type of housing. This assessment is based on the statutory assessment of social housing need and on local consultation. This assessment forms the basis for the targets in the Accommodation Programme 2014-2018.

Table 5.1.3 Assessment of need based on consultation and housing applications

Area	Birr Town	Kilcormac	Shinrone	Banagher	Tullamore Town	Tullamore Area	Edenderry	Portarlinton
Halting Site	3	0	0	0	10	9	0	0
Group Housing Scheme	9	0	0	0	8	0	0	0
Standard Housing	16	2	2	2	44	0	1	2
Isolated Rural Housing	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Improvement Works in Lieu	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	28	5	2	2	62	10	1	3
Total	113							

Section 6

6.1 Measures for Implementation

A range of accommodation options will be required to meet the needs of Travellers. These options may include:

- standard local authority/voluntary/rural housing
- group housing schemes
- permanent halting sites
- house purchase loans
- private rented accommodation
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) & Social Leasing

The following local authority accommodation units are proposed for the period of the programme:-

Table 6.1.1 Targets under Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018

Area		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total	
Birr Municipal District	HS		1		1		2	20
	GHS					6 ¹	6	
	SH/RAS/SL/PR	2	1	2	2	2	9	
	IR/IWIL	1	2				3	
Tullamore Municipal District	HS	10 ²	1	0	1		12	40
	GHS		4 ³		4 ⁴	4 ⁵	12	
	SH/RAS/SL/PR	7	2	2	2	3	16	
	IR/IWIL						0	
Edenderry Municipal District	HS						0	4
	GHS						0	
	SH/RAS/SL/PR		1	1	1		3	
	IR/IWIL	1					1	
Total		21	12	5	11	15	64	64

*H.S. – Halting Site G.H.S. – Group Housing Scheme S.H. – Standard Housing
I.R. – Isolated Rural RAS – Rental Accommodation Scheme P.R. – Private Rented
S.L.- Social Leasing IWIL – Improvement works in lieu*

Birr Municipal District includes the towns of Birr, Banagher, Kilcormac, Shinrone & Ferbane and their rural environs. Edenderry Municipal District includes the towns of Edenderry and Portarlinton and their rural environs. Tullamore Municipal District includes the towns of Tullamore & Clara and their rural environs.

A further breakdown of the targets by area and town is available in **Appendix IV**. Table 6.1.2 gives a breakdown of the targets by type of accommodation by year.

¹ Refers to possible group housing scheme at unspecified location

² Refers to existing halting site at Kilcruttin, Tullamore

³ Refers to group housing scheme at unspecified location

⁴ Refers to group housing scheme at unspecified location

⁵ Refers to group housing scheme at unspecified location

Table 6.1.2 Targets under Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018

Breakdown by type of accommodation by year						
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
HS	10	2	0	2	0	14
GH	0	4	0	4	10	18
SH/RAS/PR	9	4	5	5	5	28
IWIL/IR	2	2	0	0	0	4
Total	21	12	5	11	15	64

6.2 Group Housing Scheme & Halting Site Accommodation

Millbrook Park Halting Site

The conversion of the Millbrook Park Halting Site in Birr from a residential caravan park to a Group Housing Scheme was a feature of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013. The project was not completed under the previous programme. Concerns were raised by the LTACC about the conversion of the halting site to a group housing scheme and given the ongoing demand for halting site accommodation it was considered that it would not be in the best interest of the community to reduce the number of halting sites in Birr from 2 to 1. It is not intended to provide for this in the 2014-2018 Programme. However consideration will be given to the upgrade of Millbrook Park Halting Site to include additional living/sleeping spaces.

Group Housing Scheme, Birr

The development of a 6-unit (maximum) Group Housing Scheme in Birr is included subject to a suitable site being found, and planning permission and funding being granted.

Group Housing Scheme, Tullamore

The development of three 4-unit Group Housing Schemes in the Tullamore Municipal District is included in this Programme and a number of sites for the Scheme are under consideration. The developments are subject to planning permission and funding being granted.

Halting Site Accommodation

Improvement works to the Permanent Halting Site at Kilcruttin, Tullamore have been approved under the 2009-2013 Programme. The works commenced in late 2013 and will be concluded in Quarter 1 2014. As a result of this ten tenancy allocations will take place in 2014.

Applications are received on an ongoing basis for residential caravan accommodation in Birr and Tullamore. It is not proposed to provide any additional halting site spaces in the towns of Birr and Tullamore.

Suitable families will be considered for accommodation as casual vacancies arise on the existing sites. Families will also be considered for housing support in the form of a combination of standard social housing, Rental Accommodation Scheme units, social leasing and private rented accommodation.

Given the current funding constraints and the significant demand for permanent traveller-specific accommodation it is considered that priority should be given to delivering the permanent accommodation requirements identified in this Programme. Therefore there is no provision for Transient accommodation in the 2014-2018 Programme.

6.3 House/Caravan purchase loans

Travellers who indicated that they are in a position to assist towards the provision of their own accommodation will be encouraged to acquire their own dwellings either from their own resources or with the assistance of Council loans.

Section 25 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 provides that a housing authority may make a loan for the acquisition or repair of a caravan within the meaning of section 13 of the 1988 Act. The revised Caravan Purchase Loan Scheme was approved by the Housing SPC of Offaly Local Authorities on the 29th September 2009. A total of 66 loans were provided between 2000 and 2012. The Scheme was reviewed by the Housing SPC in October 2012 and, given the current financial environment and the level of arrears owing, the Scheme was suspended for the foreseeable future. The Housing SPC will review the suspension of the Scheme in 2014.

6.4 Voluntary housing

The Council will seek to ensure that the voluntary housing sector will provide accommodation for Travellers who wish to be considered for standard housing in the area in question. The Council will encourage and support any approved Voluntary Housing Association involved in the provision of Traveller specific accommodation.

6.5 Rental Accommodation Scheme & Social Leasing

The Rental Accommodation Scheme and Social Leasing may also be utilised by appropriate Traveller applicants in order to provide suitable private rental accommodation to meet their long-term housing needs. RAS and Leasing are currently the predominant form of housing allocation for all tenancies and it is anticipated that this will remain the case over the lifetime of this Programme.

6.6 Private rented accommodation

The short to medium term accommodation needs of some Traveller families can be met by the private rented sector with assistance in appropriate cases under the Supplementary Rent Allowance Scheme⁶ operated by the Community Welfare Section of the Midland Health Services Executive.

⁶ Rent Supplement to be replaced by Housing Assistance Payment administered by Local Authorities from 2015.

Section 7

7.1 Conclusion

Achievement of the objectives outlined in this Programme present a real challenge to Offaly Local Authorities. The most effective means of implementing the Programme will be through a process of partnership with the Traveller community and widespread consultation with all interested parties.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will also have an important role to play in the process. It will provide, in particular, a structured forum for dialogue between Travellers and the Council.

The Council is confident that the approach set out in this Programme to address the provision of suitable accommodation and living conditions for Travellers has potential to succeed subject to the following:-

1. Central Government commitment to providing the necessary capital resources.
2. The availability of a five year structured programme setting out clear, focussed accommodation targets and objectives and a practical approach to implementation and achievement of these objectives
3. An ethos and acceptance by all parties that consultation must be meaningful and relevant
4. The availability of dedicated specialist staff in Offaly Local Authorities
5. A successful estate management forum process
6. A pro-active Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
7. A good working relationship between the Local Authority and settled Traveller community in the county

**LOCAL TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION
CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

ROLE OF COMMITTEE:-

1. Advise the local authority in relation to the preparation and implementation of any Accommodation Programme for its functional area;
2. Advise on the management of accommodation for Travellers;
3. Provide a liaison mechanism between Travellers and members and officials of the council.
4. The Committee must be consulted by the Council in relation to the assessment of needs and the accommodation programme.

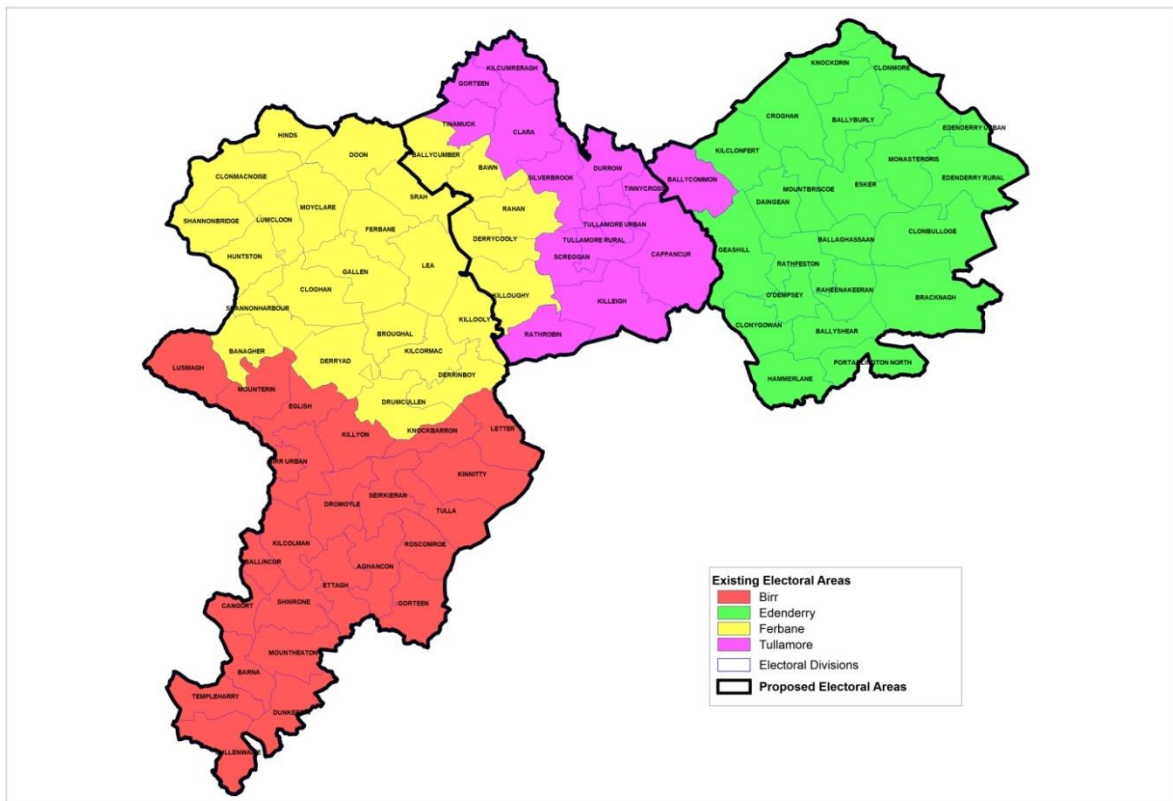
MEMBERSHIP

The current membership of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee is outlined below:-

Sector	Member
Elected Members:-	Molly Buckley (Chair) Sinead Moylan Ryan Tony McLoughlin John Leahy
Traveller Representatives:-	Emma Gilchreest (Offaly Traveller Movement) Thomas McDonagh (Offaly Traveller Movement) Elizabeth Doyle Lily Kavanagh
Council Officials:-	Sean Murray, Director of Services James Hogan (Birr Town Council) Martin Daly (Tullamore Town Council) Bernadette Hanley (Social Worker, Offaly County Council) Jackie Finney (Administrative Officer, Offaly County Council)

APPENDIX II

Municipal Districts in Offaly



APPENDIX III

Number of families living on the roadside or unserviced sites in County Offaly, as per most recent Census taken on the 29th November, 2013

Kilmucklin, Clara	14
Kilcruttin, Tullamore	15
Roadside, Kilcormac	1
Private Site, Kilcormac	3
Roadside, Tullamore	1
Roadside, Portarlington	2
Illegally occupying bays On permanent site, Tullamore	0
Total	<hr/> 36 <hr/>

APPENDIX IV

Targets broken down by type and area and year

Birr Town	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Halting Site		1		1		2
Group Housing Scheme					6	6
Standard Housing	1				1	2
Isolated Rural Housing						
Improvement Works in Lieu						
Total -	1	1		1	7	10

Kilcormac	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Halting Site						
Group Housing Scheme						
Standard Housing	1	1				2
Isolated Rural Housing	1					1
Improvement Works in Lieu		2				2
Total -	2	3	0	0	0	5

Shinrone	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Halting Site						
Group Housing Scheme						
Standard Housing			1	1		2
Isolated Rural Housing						
Improvement Works in Lieu						
Total -			1	1		2

Banagher	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Halting Site						
Group Housing Scheme						
Standard Housing			1	1	1	3
Isolated Rural Housing						
Improvement Works in Lieu						
Total -			1	1	1	3

Tullamore Town	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Halting Site	10	1		1		12
Group Housing Scheme		4		4		8
Standard Housing	3	2	2	2	3	12
Isolated Rural Housing						
Improvement Works in Lieu						
Total -	13	7	2	7	3	32

Tullamore Area	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Halting Site						
Group Housing Scheme					4	4
Standard Housing	4					
Isolated Rural Housing						
Improvement Works in Lieu						
Total -						8

Edenderry	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Halting Site						
Group Housing Scheme						
Standard Housing		1				1
Isolated Rural Housing						
Improvement Works in Lieu						
Total -						1

Portarlinton	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Halting Site						
Group Housing Scheme						
Standard Housing		1	1			2
Isolated Rural Housing	1					1
Improvement Works in Lieu						
Total -						3

Total						64
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