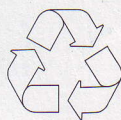


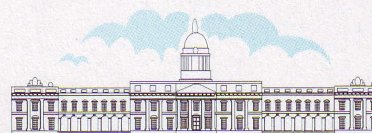
GUIDELINES FOR TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

BASIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR CARAVANS PENDING THE PROVISION OF PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION

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AN ROINN COMHSHAOIL AGUS RIALTAIS ÁITIÚIL

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**



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I INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Government is committed to providing the necessary legal and financial supports to facilitate local authorities in meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers. The Housing Acts, 1966 to 1998, place responsibility on local authorities for the provision of accommodation for those in need, including the provision of serviced caravan sites, basic services and facilities for caravans* pending the provision of permanent accommodation, transient sites and standard and group housing for Travellers.

1.2 GUIDELINES ISSUED BY THE MINISTER

Section 13 of the Housing Act, 1988, as amended by section 29 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, enables housing authorities to provide sites for caravans for Travellers. Subsection (6) of section 13 of the 1988 Act empowers the Minister for the Environment and Local Government to issue Guidelines for the purposes of that section and to which housing authorities shall have regard. Guidelines for Permanent Residential Caravan Parks, which were first issued in October, 1997, are being re-issued and circulated with these guidelines.

1.3 PURPOSE AND APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES

Essentially, design, site selection, planning, environmental, technical and social aspects in relation to halting sites, are matters for local authorities. These Guidelines are intended to assist local authorities in providing a reasonable standard of services at reasonable cost and set out guiding principles on selecting suitable sites, formulating a design brief, making arrangements for site maintenance and management, and meeting fire, safety and emergency requirements. They are not comprehensive in every aspect of site provision and regard should be had to other relevant requirements, advice etc. The Guidelines should be used as a basis to facilitate authorities in making decisions specific to

their own particular local circumstances. It is not the intention to impose uniform solutions since situations may vary considerably in character across the country; therefore, the Guidelines should be applied in a flexible manner. Proposals, which depart from the Guidelines as a result of local circumstances and requirements, will be considered on their merits. The Guidelines are without prejudice to other statutory functions of local authorities, including the exercise of emergency powers. The Guidelines will be kept under periodic review and amended, if necessary.

1.4 OTHER ACCOMMODATION

In as far as is practicable and appropriate, the advice contained in these Guidelines, particularly that in relation to procedures for consultation with Travellers, should be applied to the development of other Traveller specific accommodation such as the basic services and facilities for transient sites and group housing schemes, pending the issue or approval of further guidelines in respect of these latter developments.

1.5 SOCIAL HOUSING GUIDELINES

Account should also be taken, in so far as is appropriate, of Guidelines prepared by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in relation to Social Housing generally.

* The term "caravan" for the purposes of these Guidelines means any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another, whether by towing or transport on a vehicle or trailer, and includes a motor vehicle so designed or adapted and a mobile home, but does not include a tent.

PART II Consultation and information

2. CONSULTATION WITH TRAVELLERS

2.1 There should be consultation between authorities and/or their consultants, and local Travellers and Traveller organisations, in so far as is practicable, from the initiation of the proposal through to the implementation stage. The extent of this consultation will vary depending on the circumstances under which the basic services and facilities are to be provided. Authorities should take account of the expectations and aspirations of Travellers, subject to due regard to the need to provide sites at reasonable cost. Early identification of the families for which the site is being designed and consultation with the families is desirable. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, provides for the setting up of local Traveller accommodation committees, representative of elected members, local authority officials and local Travellers and Traveller organisations. It is expected that these committees will play a key role in the consultation process.

2.2 Issues requiring consultation may include the question of site selection, design features, boundary treatment, facilities and services. Any special needs of families who will be occupying the site should be established and built into the design at the outset. In particular, regard should be had to the needs of any elderly and disabled people and account taken of the likely turnover on the site.

2.3 Social workers or community workers employed, either directly by the local authority or health board or by a voluntary body in the area, to work with Travellers, should be fully involved in the initiation, development and implementation of proposals.

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND INFORMATION

The public notification procedures for local authority developments in their own functional areas are set out in Part X of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Regulations, 1994. Under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Regulations, 1998 (S.I. No. 124 of 1998) the procedures also apply to sites for caravans where work commenced or contracts were signed

after 31 May, 1998. Works carried out as a result of the exercise by the manager of emergency powers under the City and County Management (Amendment) Act, 1955, as amended by section 27 of the Housing Act, 1988, are exempted from Part X of the 1994 Regulations. Local authorities should consider what further measures may be desirable to inform local residents or their representatives about proposals to provide such sites, whether permanent or temporary, within their area. This is without prejudice to the exercise by managers of their emergency powers.

PART III Basic services and facilities for caravans pending the provision of permanent accommodation

4 PURPOSE AND APPLICATION

4.1 These Guidelines relate to the provision of basic services and facilities for short term occupancy and temporary sites for caravans, pending the provision of permanent accommodation. The priority is the provision of permanent accommodation to an acceptable standard to meet the needs of Travellers. Temporary accommodation is not generally desirable. However, it is recognised that local authorities may face practical difficulties in providing permanent accommodation, including situations where proposals have been approved by the relevant authorities, and where the provision of temporary services or sites for caravans offers an interim solution which will have real benefit for the families concerned. The number of temporary sites to be provided should be limited as the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, which requires the needs for permanent accommodation to be addressed under local programmes, is implemented.

4.2 The Guidelines are without prejudice to other statutory functions of local authorities, including the exercise by the county or city manager under the City and County Management Acts of emergency powers.

5. SITUATIONS COVERED

The following situations can arise:

- (a) the need during the construction or redevelopment of permanent sites for short term basic services and facilities, where families have to move from an existing site to allow work to proceed,
- (b) the need in other circumstances for basic services and facilities either for short or longer term stays pending the provision of permanent accommodation e.g. under a 5 year accommodation programme.

In the case of the circumstances at (b) it would be expected that when accommodation programmes have been adopted that the duration of stays on such temporary facilities would not exceed 4/5 years.

6. BASIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES DURING CONSTRUCTION PERIODS

6.1 Many existing sites for caravans are being refurbished or redeveloped in line with the improved standards of accommodation as set out in the Guidelines for Permanent Residential Caravan Parks. This gives rise to the need to provide basic services on a short term basis for the families concerned during the refurbishment/construction period. Depending on the scale of the work periods of up to 40/50 weeks could be involved and basic essential services and facilities should be provided to take account of this.

6.2 In this situation the minimum which should be provided is a potable water supply, portable toilet and washing facilities (i.e. shower and/or wash-hand basin), waste collection service (domestic refuse collection system and/or covered skip), and sufficient hard stand for caravans, preferably adjacent to the proposed permanent accommodation. In some cases it may be practicable to connect the portable toilets to an existing sewerage scheme and to provide public lighting and electric supply to families. Fire and other safety considerations are important - see also para.s 7.1 to 7.11 of the Guidelines for Permanent Residential Caravan Parks for Travellers.

7. BASIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

7.1 Local authorities have powers to control unauthorised encampments or nuisances arising in connection with such encampments. However there may be situations where a local authority could provide basic services and facilities to Travellers who are awaiting permanent accommodation having regard to health, fire safety, environmental, planning, legal and other implications.

7.2 In these situations the minimum which should be provided is a potable water supply (piped or a tank), and portable toilets. The local domestic waste removal service should be extended to the families concerned. Where this is not practicable, a covered skip should be provided and emptied regularly.

8. OTHER TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PENDING THE PROVISION OF PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION

8.1 GENERAL

There are other circumstances under which local authorities may wish to provide more long term services and facilities, including circumstances where it is not appropriate to provide for basic services and facilities under para.s 7.1/7.2. Because of the longer stays envisaged the capital investment in the accommodation to be provided will be higher. Local authorities will have to consider the longer term plans for such accommodation where provided. The important consideration is that the duration of stays of individual families should not exceed 4/5 years i.e. the maximum period for the provision of permanent accommodation under the 5 year programme (without prejudice to any higher priority given to the provision of accommodation in such programmes).

8.2 SITE SELECTION AND DESIGN ISSUES

Site selection, design, planning, environmental, technical and social aspects in relation to temporary sites for caravans are matters for local authorities. Site selection and design matters are dealt with comprehensively in para.s 3.1. to 4.2 of the Guidelines for Permanent Residential Caravan Parks. Local authorities should have regard to the contents, as appropriate, of these paragraphs and the relevant sections of "Social Housing Guidelines - Site Selection" published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. The significant difference is the level and cost of the services to be provided. Particular attention should be given to these sections dealing with the selection of suitable sites, the preparation of a design brief, if appropriate, arrangements for site management and maintenance, and meeting fire, safety and emergency requirements. Local authorities should also ensure that suitable locations for temporary accommodation for Travellers are identified, inspected, approved and reported on by the appropriate professional/technical officers of the local authority.

8.3 SIZE OF SITE

As a general rule the maximum number of families should not exceed 20.

8.4 SPECIAL NEEDS

If possible any special needs of families who will be occupying the site should be established and built into the design at the outset. In particular, regard should be had to the needs of any elderly and disabled people and account taken of the likely turnover on the site having regard to the temporary nature of the facilities.

8.5 BAY

The area of each bay should be related, in so far as is practicable, to the needs of the occupants i.e. space for one or two caravans as appropriate. Where the space required is for one caravan and a towing vehicle an area not exceeding 108m² would be sufficient.

8.6 SERVICE UNIT

As accommodation for up to 4/5 years may be required, pending the provision of permanent accommodation, a higher standard of services is therefore appropriate. If the facility is temporary, the service unit should preferably be mobile or demountable. A unit of up to a maximum area of 15m², providing w.c. a shower and wash hand basin with hot and cold water; and sink/cooking area with the necessary services connected to a sewer or septic tank should be provided. Units should also have provision for a cooker and a washing machine. Units should normally be located adjacent to the front boundary of the bay in order to reduce sewer runs, watermains, ESB, etc.

A satisfactory means of space and water heating should be provided in the service units to allow full use of all facilities. If solid fuel heating or cooking facilities are proposed, a suitable hearth, flue and chimney stack, constructed in accordance with the Building Regulations, and external fuel storage space will be required. Cooking or heating appliances whether solid fuel, oil or gas should comply with the relevant Irish or equivalent standard and be installed in accordance with the requirements of the Building Regulations.

PART III Basic services and facilities for caravans pending the provision of permanent accommodation

Wall and floor finishes should have a high standard of durability while at the same time having regard to the need for comfort and to facilitate use. Particular attention should be paid to matters such as ease of maintenance and cost over its lifespan. Plumbing should be concealed as far as possible. Water pipes and tanks should be lagged as necessary to prevent frost damage.

The design layout of one example of this type of accommodation is set out at Appendix I for information. Further information is available from the Community Department of South Dublin County Council which developed the unit.

8.7 BOUNDARIES

A site which is pleasant to stay on and which is designed to respect the environment in which it is located will best meet the needs of the residents as well as the community in the area. Walls and boundaries should be kept to the minimum consistent with fire safety requirements. Fencing is preferred to walling for boundary treatment because of the temporary nature of such sites.

8.8 CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

Consideration should be given to the provision of a play area, having regard to actual need e.g. the availability of other facilities nearby and the number of children likely to be accommodated on the site. Where such an area is provided it should be visible or capable of being supervised from some of the caravans, be located so as to minimise risk from vehicular traffic and be inaccessible to vehicles (except for emergency and maintenance vehicles). It should be fenced to prevent dumping or use for scrap storage.

8.9 CARETAKER'S STORE

A simple store for a caretaker may be provided if required and located adjoining the entrance.

8.10 PUBLIC LIGHTING

Public lighting should be adequate for safety and security purposes having regard to the density and overall layout of the site.

8.11 WASTE DISPOSAL

Domestic waste collection services in operation locally should be extended to the site. Where additional facilities for disposal of larger amounts of waste are required or where no domestic service is in operation, covered skips should be provided. They should be suitably located within easy reach of but screened from individual pitches or other buildings on site.

8.12 ELECTRICAL SUPPLY

The ESB should be consulted at an early stage in relation to wiring, etc., necessary for the site generally in order to ensure proper safety standards and to minimise the risk of interference. The electrical installation must comply with the National Rules for Electrical Installations (ET 101), published by the Electro-Technical Council of Ireland (ETCI), including, where appropriate,

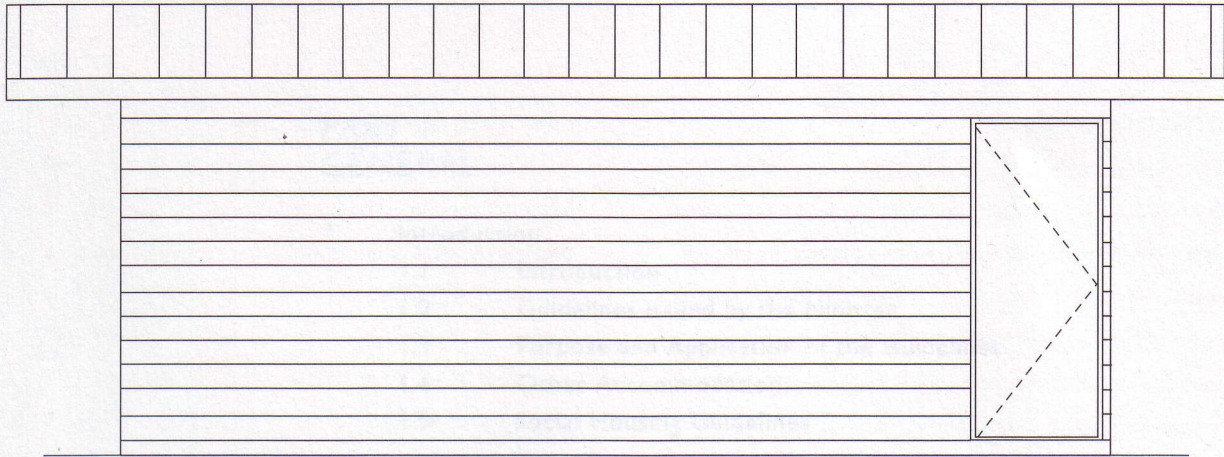
- (Part 2.8) Particular requirements for leisure accommodation vehicles, caravans and caravan parks (ET 103), and
- (Part 2.3) Particular requirements for external lighting installations (ET 102).

8.13 SITE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

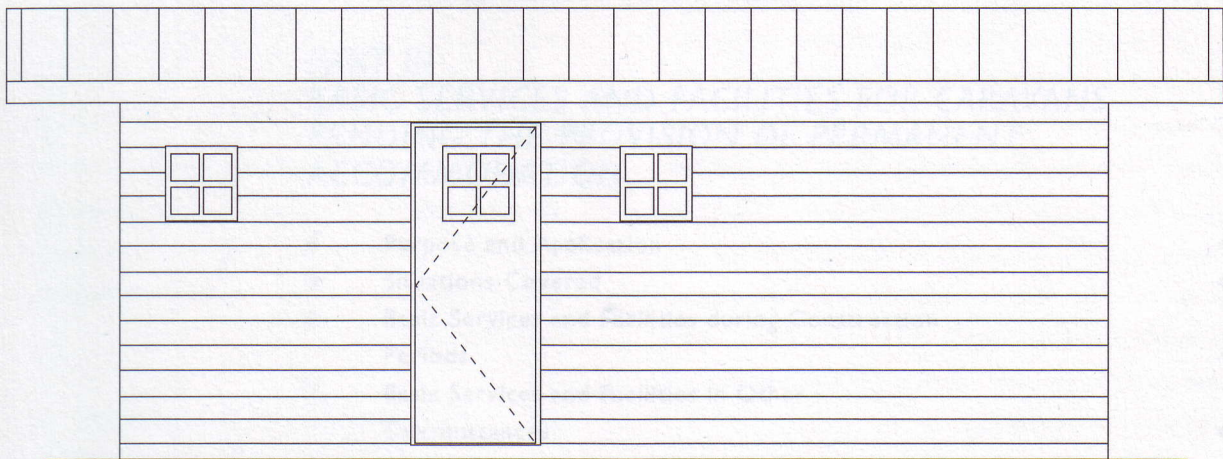
Cost effective management and maintenance of the basic services and facilities and temporary sites should be an essential consideration at all stages of the development. Travellers should be facilitated or encouraged to participate in the management and maintenance of sites on a partnership basis with the local authority - see also paragraphs 6.1 to 6.6 of the Guidelines for (Permanent) Residential Parks for Travellers.

8.14 FIRE SAFETY

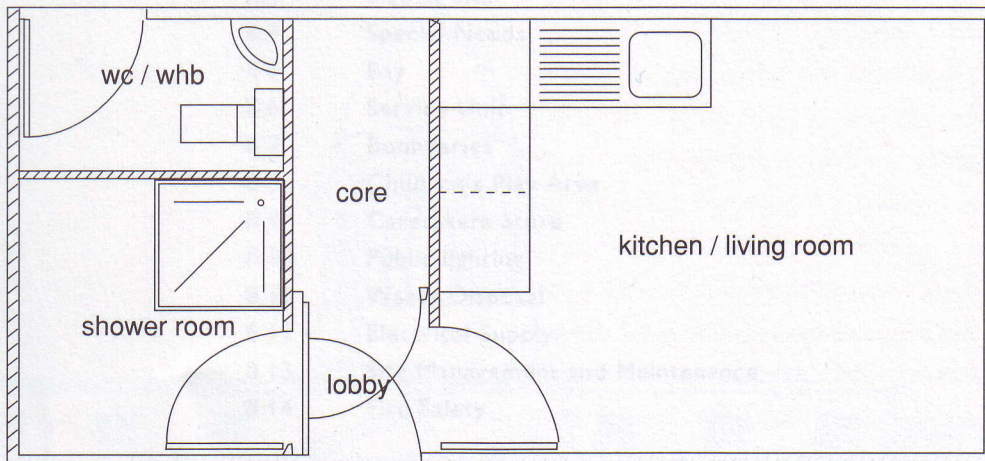
The location of caravans should be such as to reduce the risk of fire spread between caravans and a building, or from a building to a caravan. Generally, there should be a minimum separation distance of 6m between caravans and 9m between a caravan and a building or other structure. These distances may be reduced by the use of suitably located screen walls which can provide a barrier to the spread of fire - see section 7 of the Guidelines for (Permanent) Residential Caravan Parks for Travellers for further information on fire safety aspects.



RERE ELEVATION



FRONT ELEVATION



FLOOR PLAN

Area 15m² maximum

