

# Strategic Needs Assessment for Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation in Midlothian

## Table of Contents

Strategic Needs Assessment for Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation in Midlothian .....	1
1 Introduction and Strategic Links.....	2
1.1 Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021.....	2
1.2 Improving Gypsy/Traveller sites: guidance on minimum sites standards and site tenants' core rights and responsibilities .....	2
1.3 Managing unauthorised camping by Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: guidance for local authorities.....	2
1.4 Local Housing Strategy.....	2
1.5 Midlothian Local Development Plan .....	3
1.6 South East of Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment.....	3
2 Profile of Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation in Midlothian.....	3
2.1 Whitecraig Site .....	3
2.2 Unauthorised Encampments .....	5
2.3 National and Local Statistics .....	6
3 Local Development Plan 2 Housing Evidence Report.....	8
3.1 Local Development Plan Gypsy/Traveller Engagement .....	8
3.2 Future Gypsy/Traveller Site Search .....	9
4 Conclusion and Recommendations.....	10

# 1 Introduction and Strategic Links

The term Gypsy/Travellers refers to distinct groups of people including Roma, Romany Gypsies, Scottish and Irish Travellers who consider the travelling lifestyle part of their ethnic identity.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate Gypsy/Traveller accommodation options which meet need and demand based on current guidance and stakeholder data. The report will include recommendations on future housing provision(s) for Gypsy/Travellers in Midlothian. It is important to note that local authorities are under no legal duty to provide sites for Gypsy/Travellers or for Travelling Showpeople.

Midlothian's Strategic Needs Assessment for Gypsy/Travellers will be informed by a number of external and internal strategic links.

## 1.1 Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021

This is a Joint action plan by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to improve the lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller communities. The action plan was extended following the Covid-19 pandemic and aims to:

- Provide more and better accommodation
- Improve access to public services
- Better incomes in and out of work
- Tackle racism and discrimination
- Improve Gypsy/Traveller representation

[Summary - Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2021/04/Summary-Improving-the-lives-of-Gypsy-Travellers-2019-2021.pdf)

## 1.2 Improving Gypsy/Traveller sites: guidance on minimum sites standards and site tenants' core rights and responsibilities

This document covers minimum standards for Gypsy Traveller sites and core rights and responsibilities for those renting pitches on local authority and RSL sites. The minimum site standards are part of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. This gives site standards the same legal status as the Scottish Housing Quality Standards.

[Improving Gypsy/Traveller sites: guidance on minimum sites standards and site tenants' core rights and responsibilities - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2021/04/Improving-Gypsy-Traveller-sites-guidance-on-minimum-sites-standards-and-site-tenants-core-rights-and-responsibilities.pdf)

## 1.3 Managing unauthorised camping by Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: guidance for local authorities

This guidance provides practical advice for local authorities on how to manage unauthorised camp sites. The guidance will be used in this report to improve how Midlothian Council and stakeholder partners manage future unauthorised encampments.

[Managing unauthorised camping by Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: guidance for local authorities - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2021/04/Managing-unauthorised-camping-by-Gypsy-Travellers-in-Scotland-guidance-for-local-authorities.pdf)

## 1.4 Local Housing Strategy

Midlothian's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out our plans and priorities for housing and housing-related services, including those for Gypsy/Travellers. The LHS will be reviewed in 2025/26 and will reference the findings of the Gypsy/Traveller Strategic Assessment to inform future housing priorities.

[Housing strategy documents | Midlothian Local Housing Strategy 2021-2026](#)

## 1.5 Midlothian Local Development Plan

Development Plans allocate land for development, contain policies for assessing applications for planning permission and guide the future development of the area. Midlothian's Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) preparation is underway with the final document scheduled for adoption in December 2026. In summer 2024 there will be a 'call for ideas' which will ask for site ideas and views on policy matters including those for Gypsy/Travellers. This report references the LDP2 Housing Evidence Report which will be used to set the housing targets for Gypsy/Travellers in the final LDP2.

[Midlothian Local Development Plan 2 | Development plans and policies | Midlothian Council](#)

## 1.6 South East of Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment

Local Authorities have a legal duty to provide an assessment of housing need and demand, and the providing related services. This falls under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The Housing Need and Demand Assessments (HNDAs) are overseen by the Scottish Government's Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA). It considers whether the HNDA is 'robust and credible'. The third South-East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) achieved robust and credible status from CHMA on Thursday 28th July 2022. HNDA3 provides the evidence base for policy decisions in Local Housing Strategies. It also influences land allocation decisions in Local Development Plans. The full South-East Scotland HNDA3 and associated reports can be found here:

[SES Regional Planning — The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal \(esescityregiondeal.org.uk\)](https://www.esescityregiondeal.org.uk)

The HNDA3 includes an assessment of the housing needs and demand for the provision of sites and pitches for Gypsy/Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the Midlothian area. This report will incorporate those findings with a current evidence base.

## 2 Profile of Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation in Midlothian

### 2.1 Whitecraig Site

There is one Gypsy/Traveller site in Midlothian, it is situated on the boundary of East and Midlothian near the village of Whitecraig. The site is situated on land owned by the Buccleuch Estate with East and Midlothian Council acting as joint tenants. The lease between the Buccleuch Estate and East and Midlothian Councils started on 28 May 2013. It is a 21 year lease with a stated expiry date of 27 May 2034. The site lease does not contain break clause conditions for either Local Authority. The next and final leave clause for the Buccleuch Estate is in 2028 (with 12 months written notice).

In 2018/2019 remedial works were undertaken to ensure the site met the Scottish Government's minimum standards<sup>1</sup>. The work included resurfacing the road to the site, resurfacing and installation of a new play area and the installation of a new fence around the perimeter. Midlothian Council was responsible for 50% of the cost of the remedial works<sup>2</sup>. In April 2019 East and Midlothian Council's received confirmation from the Scottish Government that the site met minimum standards.

The Whitecraig Gypsy/Traveller Site was closed in June 2021 due to extensive vandalism caused by tenants on site. The site is not safe to be inhabited and no longer meets the minimum site standards.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Improving Gypsy/Traveller sites: guidance on minimum sites standards and site tenants' core rights and responsibilities - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Midlothian Council's share was £25600

The site had eight active pitches with East Lothian Council Housing Service responsible for the management of the site whilst Midlothian Council was responsible for education, health and social care. Midlothian Council continues to be responsible for 50% of the site fees; Midlothian Council's share was £17,060 in 2022/23.

The South East of Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 reported that when in use, the Whitecraig site had the lowest public site pitch occupancy rate with 63% of the pitches let on average<sup>3</sup>. This is shown in table 2.1 below which also illustrates the public site pitch data for the South East of Scotland and the whole of Scotland which have average pitch occupancy rates of 78% and 88% respectively.

**Table 2.1: South East of Scotland Public Sites Pitch Occupancy**

Area	Total Active Pitches	Let Pitches	Occupancy Rate
City of Edinburgh	20	18	90%
East Lothian and Midlothian Council	8	5	63%
Fife (West and Central)	30	23	77%
Scottish Borders	10	7	70%
South East of Scotland	68	53	78%
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>88%</b>

An independent Site Condition Survey Report was carried out in January 2022 and estimated that costs to fully reinstate the site to the Scottish Government's minimum site standards were £222,000. A reinstated site would require the employment of a full-time warden as per clause 14 of the site lease.

East Lothian Council officers wish to pursue alternative Gypsy/Traveller site options within their own boundary and are currently in the process of seeking authorisation for an early termination of the site lease. It is recommended that Midlothian Council should similarly authorise an early termination of the site lease and seek alternative Gypsy/Traveller accommodation options which meet current need and demand.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations – Whitecraig Site

- It is recommended that Midlothian Council authorises seeking an early termination of the site lease with Buccleuch Property Estate Office. It should be noted that the site would have to be cleared of all materials which, as a financial implication, would be shared with East Lothian Council.
- On average five pitches were used at the Whitecraig site. It is recommended that any future Gypsy/Traveller housing provision has five or more pitches for both short or longer term use.

<sup>3</sup> [SES Regional Planning — The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal \(esescityregiondeal.org.uk\)](https://www.esescityregiondeal.org.uk)

## 2.2 Unauthorised Encampments

Unauthorised encampments are where a person or group camps (in vans, trailers or any other moveable accommodation) on land that they do not own, and where they do not have permission to stay. An unauthorised encampment process is in place whereby officers from Housing, Education, Health, Social Work and Police Scotland work effectively together in relation to their respective roles, to meeting the needs of Gypsy/Travellers living on an unauthorised site. Midlothian Council does not have a Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer and initial site visits tend to be carried out by Police Scotland to ascertain:

- the number of caravans and other vehicles;
- reason for stay;
- any health, education or welfare requirements;
- the condition of the site;
- plans that those on the site have for their future movement, including how long they plan to stay on the site.

This strategic needs assessment recommends that a full unauthorised encampment process is formalised and agreed to ensure good relations are fostered amongst all parties, gives due regard to equality duties and complies with Scottish Government guidance<sup>4</sup>. Guidance further recommends that Local Authorities develop a code of conduct for those living on unauthorised sites to be highlighted and discussed as part of initial site visits.

Table 2.2 below contains the number of unauthorised encampments in Midlothian which have been reported to Police Scotland since 2019.

Table 2.2: Number of Unauthorised Encampments in Midlothian<sup>5</sup>

Year	No. of unauthorised encampments
2019	1
2020	4
2021	7
2022	7
2023	18
2024 (to date)	9

In 2019 the Scottish Government published 'Gypsy Traveller Sites in Scotland'<sup>6</sup> which detailed the findings from a study collating data on Gypsy/Traveller sites in Scotland. The report included an overview of unauthorised Gypsy/Traveller encampment activity across Scotland over the previous three years. Five unauthorised encampment locations were recorded in the Midlothian area with an average of two camps per annum. The average number of unauthorised encampments for the whole of Scotland was 414 with the majority of these recorded across the in North Ayrshire, Fife, Aberdeen

---

<sup>4</sup> [Managing unauthorised camping by Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: guidance for local authorities - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/managing-unauthorised-camping-by-gypsy-travellers-in-scotland/guidance-for-local-authorities-2019/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> Police Scotland advised that these statistics are a result of the correct 'code' for unauthorised encampments being added to the incident by the police control room, there could be higher numbers without the correct code which has not allowed them to be included.

<sup>6</sup> [6 Unauthorised Gypsy/Traveller encampments - Gypsy/Traveller Sites in Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/unauthorised-gypsy-traveller-encampments-gypsy-traveller-sites-in-scotland-2019/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

City, Aberdeenshire, Moray, and Inverness. Midlothian represented 0.5% of all unauthorised encampments in Scotland.

It is clear from the evidence above that the number of known encampments has increased in Midlothian with an average of seven per annum between 2019 and 2023. Police Scotland data records the majority of these at the Edinburgh University owned Easter Bush Estate near Roslin. It is not known why the number of encampments has increased; a formal encampment process should improve communication between all parties and allow greater interaction with the Gypsy/Traveller community.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations – Unauthorised Encampments

- Midlothian Council will agree a formal unauthorised encampment process between colleagues from housing, education, health, social work and Police Scotland. The process will ensure good relations are fostered amongst all parties, gives regard to equality duties and complies with Scottish Government guidance.
- Midlothian Council will develop a code of conduct for those living on unauthorised sites to be highlighted and discussed as part of initial site visits. Scottish Government guidance notes that many unauthorised sites managed using this approach move on voluntarily at an agreed date, with minimal disruption for all concerned.
- Commence discussions between Midlothian Council, University of Edinburgh and Police Scotland to ensure future unauthorised sites are managed following Scottish Government guidance.

### 2.3 National and Local Statistics

It is important that the accommodation needs and preferences of Gypsy/Travellers informs future provision. Midlothian officers have historically found there is limited evidence on the experiences of Gypsy/Travellers living in the area and it is likely that the community is under-reported due to historical and current fears of discrimination and stigma. The actual number of Gypsy/Travellers is thought to be higher than reported, nevertheless table 2.3 below compares the 2011 and 2022 census results for the Midlothian area. It is of note that the number of people reporting as 'white: Gypsy/Travellers' has reduced by 57% whilst those reporting as 'mixed or multiple ethnic group' and 'other ethnic groups: total' have both increased by 389% and 498% respectively. It is possible that some Gypsy/Travellers in the area have self-identified their ethnicity under alternative options.

**Table 2.3: Ethnic group by individuals, Scotland’s Census 2011 and 2022<sup>7</sup>**

Ethnic Group	Number of people in Midlothian (2011)	Number of people in Midlothian (2022)
White: Gypsy/Travellers	72	31
Mixed or multiple ethnic group	210	1027
Other ethnic groups: Total	94	562
<b>Midlothian - total</b>	<b>83187</b>	<b>96527</b>

### 2.31 Midlothian Council Housing Statistics

On 31 March 2024 there were 4713 applicants<sup>8</sup> on Midlothian Council waiting lists. Of these 97 were Gypsy/Travellers which is higher than reported in the 2022 census. Table 2.4 below shows the number of Gypsy/Travellers who have presented as homeless since 2019/2020. In 2023/24 just 1.2% of homeless presentations in Midlothian were from the Gypsy/Traveller community. It is of note that there are currently 15 Gypsy/Travellers living in permanent tenancies in Midlothian and 8 Gypsy/Travellers living in temporary accommodation.

**Table 2.4: Number of homeless presentations in Midlothian from Gypsy/Travellers<sup>9</sup>**

Year	No. of homeless presentations
2019/2020	1
2020/2021	3
2021/2022	4
2022/2023	2
2023/2024	8

#### Conclusion and Recommendations – National and Local Statistics

- There is a small Gypsy/Traveller population in Midlothian although it is likely that numbers are under-reported
- Census 2022 results indicate that the number of ‘white:Gypsy/Traveller’ people in Midlothian has decreased by 57% since the 2011 census. It is possible that some Gypsy/Travellers in the area have self-identified their ethnicity under alternative options.
- A very low number of Gypsy/Travellers have presented as homeless in Midlothian
- Gypsy/Traveller housing statistics suggest that the current level of known housing need is manageable however it also suggests that permanent bricks and mortar housing is not a priority for the community in Midlothian.

<sup>7</sup> [Search | Scotland’s Census - Search by CA2019 \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk)

<sup>8</sup> 23/24 Pressure Analysis

<sup>9</sup> Midlothian HL1 data collection

### 3 Local Development Plan 2 Housing Evidence Report

The Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) is under development and once adopted, will allocate land for development and guide the future development of Midlothian. Legislation states that local authorities must:

- set out a summary of the action taken by the planning authority to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers in the authority's area
- Provide an analysis of the extent to which the action has helped to meet those needs.

Furthermore, legislation states that land can be allocated to ensure the provision of accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers and Travelling Showpeople where need is identified. In order to identify the needs of Gypsy/Travellers in Midlothian officers attended the Lothian Gypsy Traveller Forum, carried out a visit to North Cairntow Gypsy/Traveller Site and have attempted to establish evidence on the lived experience of Travelling Showpeople.

#### 3.1 Local Development Plan Gypsy/Traveller Engagement

Lothian Gypsy/Traveller Forum – 19 January 2024

'A view was expressed at the forum that the nature of sites was a factor in them not being used, and that the planning authority should speak to members of the community to understand needs better. There is evidence that the Smeaton (Whitecraig) site by its location and range of facilities did not meet current expectations of the gypsy/traveller community. The presence of pylons and electricity lines over the site, poor pedestrian and public transport accessibility, and standard of maintenance were cited as reasons for its unpopularity'<sup>10</sup> – feedback from a Gypsy/Traveller resident via MECOPP (Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project)

Visit to North Cairntow Gypsy/Traveller Site – 25 January 2024

'The Council has visited a modern traveller site in Edinburgh (North Cairntow) to view facilities and talk to residents. The North Cairntow site is popular among its residents, and there had been no turnover of residents since it was redeveloped in 2022, but there was also interest in a less static type of site where people could move in mobile homes and stay for a short period of time before moving on'.<sup>11</sup>

Travelling Showpeople

'The Scottish Showmen's Guild was contacted by the Council planning service about the needs and issues of their members in Midlothian. The Council has not, at this stage, been able to establish evidence on the lived experience of members of this group but will seek to hold dialogue as part of MLDP2 preparation, to understand Showmen's needs and identify if any yard/accommodation space is required in Midlothian. The Council understands from the Lothian Gypsy Traveller Forum that there are no travelling Showpeople in Midlothian'<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> Local Development Plan 2 Housing Evidence Report

<sup>11</sup> Local Development Plan 2 Housing Evidence Report

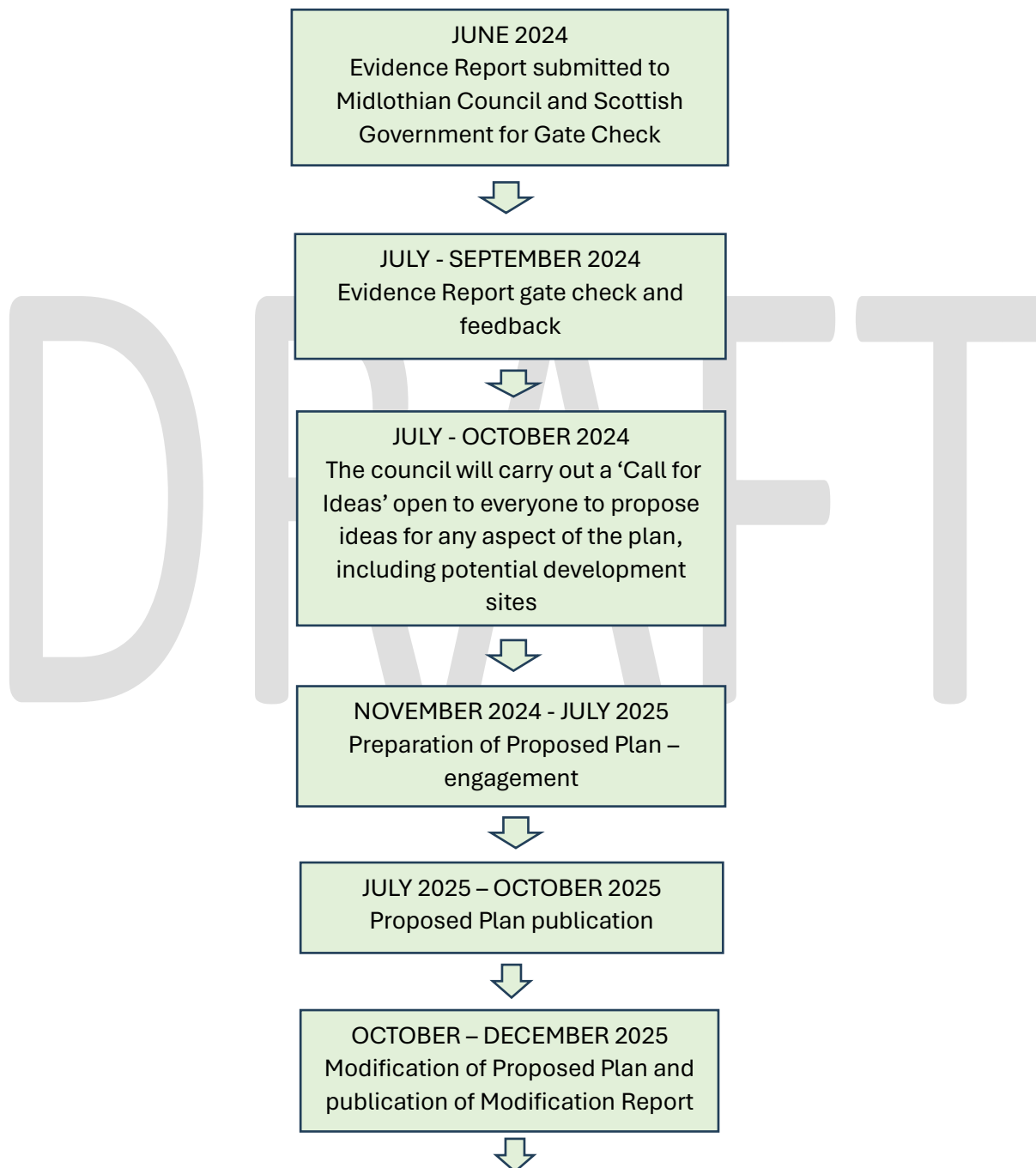
<sup>12</sup> Local Development Plan 2 Housing Evidence Report



### 3.2 Future Gypsy/Traveller Site Search

The Local Development Plan 2 Housing Evidence Report recommends that any future Gypsy/Traveller site search can be taken through the LDP2 Proposed Plan with a decision on whether a site is needed to be taken forward through LDP2 preparation. The indicative timescale for production of the LDP2 is below:

Figure 3.1: Timescale for delivery of Midlothian Local Development Plan 2





#### Conclusion – Local Development Plan 2

- The LDP2 Housing Evidence Report recommends that a future Gypsy/Traveller site search can be undertaken through the development of the LDP2 Proposed Plan (July 2024 – July 2025)
- This will allow a decision to be taken on whether a site is needed through LDP2 preparation (November 2024 – July 2025)
- North Cairntow Site feedback suggests there is interest in a touring caravan facility. This should be noted during the development of the LDP2 Proposed Plan.

## 4 Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to evaluate Midlothian’s Gypsy/Traveller accommodation options to ensure they meet need and demand based on current guidance and stakeholder data.

Midlothian officers have historically found there is limited evidence on the experiences of Gypsy/Travellers living in the area and it is likely that the community is under-reported due to historical and current fears of discrimination and stigma. The actual number of Gypsy/Travellers is thought to be higher than reported both internally and externally. This strategic needs assessment recommends a number of actions to improve communication between parties thus allowing a stable needs and demand assessment to be included during the development of the Local Development Plan 2.

#### Recommendation 1

Authorise Midlothian Council officers to seek an early termination of the Whitecraig site lease with Buccleuch Property Estate Office.

#### Recommendation 2

If demand exists, any future Gypsy/Traveller housing provision should have five or more pitches for both short or longer term use.

Recommendation 3

Midlothian Council to agree a formal unauthorised encampment process between colleagues from housing, education, health, social work and Police Scotland.

Recommendation 4

Midlothian Council to develop a code of conduct for those living on unauthorised sites to be highlighted and discussed as part of initial site visits.

Recommendation 5

Commence discussions between Midlothian Council, University of Edinburgh and Police Scotland to ensure future unauthorised sites are managed following Scottish Government guidance.

Recommendation 6

Any future Gypsy/Traveller site search can be undertaken through the development of the LDP2 Proposed Plan which will allow a decision to be taken on whether a site is needed through LDP2 preparation.

Recommendation 7

If evidence suggests that a site is required, touring caravan facilities should be considered.

DRAFT