

SHOWMENS GUILD OF GREAT BRITAIN

BEST PRACTICE ADVICE ON PROVISION OF SHOWMENS PERMANENT PARKING SITES.

Updated, 4/6/08

Showmen's need with respect to permanent parking sites differs significantly from any other traveler group. In general our traditional custom built caravans are much larger than those used by other traveler groups. By far the biggest difference is our accompanying equipment. i.e. Vehicles, rides stalls etc. A showmen's equipment is inseparable from his home. Our vehicles for example play a domestic, as well as commercial role in our daily lives. For instance, in many cases it is physically impossible to fit some domestic appliances inside a caravan. It is common place to find items such as a washing machine and tumble dryer, fridge freezer etc. along with the rides and stalls, fitted into the heavy goods vehicle that tows the caravan. As families grow and children become teenagers, often a section of the van body which again carries the rides and stalls is partitioned off and fitted with sleeping accommodation. With this in mind we are obviously are anxious to keep the vehicle in close proximity to the caravan.

Our equipment is regarded not only as a commercial piece of kit, with which we earn our living. For showmen our equipment has a life and soul of its own. These items of equipment are almost regarded as extensions of the family. Very often they are passed down from generation to generation and they possess an overwhelming sentimental value and attachment.

Therefore a showmen's site requires more space than would be needed for any other traveler group. A large contributory factor to the current overcrowding on sites today is, the use of a flawed calculation as to how many showmen can be accommodated on a specific area of land when establishing a site in the past.

As a rule of thumb one acre of land can accommodate ten showmen's caravans and accompanying vehicles and equipment. Ideally these this should be provided in half acre areas (showmen's yards as we call them) which can accommodate an extended family of five showmen, with their caravans, vehicles and equipment. We would emphasize at this point this is an extended family unit of five caravans & equipment. The extended family unit would usually consist of a mixture of elderly/retired, who would only have a caravan and no equipment. Fully active showmen, with children living at home and operating several items of equipment. And young showmen, who have recently set up on their own, usually with one item of equipment to start with and a small caravan. A half acre yard cannot accommodate five fully active showmen with children living at home and several items of equipment each. These are the minimum requirements. Indeed in a few instances this figure could not be achieved, depending on the individual circumstances of the showmen in question.

Almost all showmen's sites are currently run on a rental basis. Council run showmen's caravan sites are very rare indeed. The vast majority of the rented sites are run by showmen who act as landlords to their fellow showmen as sub tenants. These sites are sometimes owned freehold by the showman landlord, or more often the land is leased by the showmen landlord from a local council and then sublet to other individual showmen. Whilst the renting option suits a number of showmen, a large number resent paying for something they ultimately never hold a stake in, no security for their family or future provision for their children. There is already more than enough rentable pitches for those who prefer this option. Therefore our best practice advice is that future sites should be provided on the half acre extended family format. Authorities may wish to explore the possibility of converting existing sites to this format, as it may be the preferred option of those already living there.

Developments of this nature have already taken place in some areas of the country with great success, these developments have to date been carried out by individual, or groups of showmen who have developed these "yards," then sold them on to other showmen. We see no reason why a local authority cannot develop future or current sites along the same format.

Showmen are no different than any other section of society; they are prepared to invest financially, physically and emotionally into something which they will ultimately hold a stake.

Some developments as described above can be found at.

Rhodes fair acre, Stainforth, Doncaster

Spring meadow, Kirkby in ashfield, Notts

Carousel Park, Barwell, Leicester

Greetham, nr Stamford, Linc's

Branton, Doncaster

Hoton Park, Wymeswold, Loughborough

Guild hall estate, Selston, Notts