

12. Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

12.1. Introduction

- 12.1.1. Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are people (irrespective of their race or origin) with a nomadic lifestyle who travel to work or members of a group which is organised to hold fairs, circuses or shows. The formal planning definitions for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are provided in 'Planning policy for traveller sites'. The Local Plan is required to provide sufficient 'pitches' to meet the needs of this group. A recent update to national policy has broadened the definitions of both Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. We will need to apply these definitions when taking decisions on planning applications and preparing our Local Plan.
- 12.1.2. Through the application of national policy²⁷, we have a responsibility to prepare 'fair and effective' strategies to meet the need for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (collectively referred to as Travellers in this consultation document) and this duty²⁸ extends to the needs of those who actively chose to live in caravans.

12.2. Need for Traveller pitches and plots

- 12.2.1. In order to plan to meet the needs of Travellers, we have to understand how many pitches for single Gypsy or Traveller households²⁹ and plots for a single Travelling Showpeople household³⁰ are needed. In 2022, we undertook an assessment of need based on the previous planning definitions of Travellers³¹. This concluded that there was a need for 113 pitches for those which meet the then 'planning definition' of Gypsies and Travellers and 40 pitches for those

²⁷ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraphs 61 & 63 and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024, paragraphs 4 b) and 10

²⁸ Under section 8, (3) of the Housing Act 1985, and for those groups of distinct ethnic groups defined in the Equality Act 2010

²⁹ Typically including at least one static caravan, a touring caravan, a day room and vehicle parking space.

³⁰ Typically including area to store and maintain equipment and machinery (potentially including fairground rides) and a residential area.

³¹ Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation assessment or GTAA

which did not meet the then 'planning definition' of Gypsies and Travellers. This gave a total of 153 pitches.

- 12.2.2. In addition, applying the earlier 'planning definition', the assessment identified a need for 13 plots for Travelling Showpeople which meet the 'planning definition' and 3 plots for other Travelling Showpeople'.
- 12.2.3. There is a need for transit sites which provide accommodation for Travellers on a short-term basis. The assessment identified a need for a 25-pitch transit site to provide accommodation for Travellers on a short-term basis.
- 12.2.4. As the definition of Travellers has now been broadened, we will be re-evaluating the needs in Dorset for pitches and it is likely that the need will increase. For the purposes of this consultation, we have outlined a positive approach to meeting the needs as currently identified, and a suggested mechanisms that gives flexibility for meeting the need in the longer term.

12.3. Strategy for meeting Traveller needs

- 12.3.1. There are a number of permanent Travellers' pitches in Dorset but our evidence shows that there is a clear need for more. Some of the existing pitches do not have any formal planning status and therefore there is no certainty for the occupiers about their ability to stay in the area.
- 12.3.2. We therefore need to address this issue and respond to the duty placed on us as Dorset Council to meet the needs of the Travelling community. Reflecting this duty, our Local Plan objectives for meeting the needs of Travellers are to:
 - reduce the number of unauthorised sites, and provide opportunities for Traveller households to grow in suitable locations
 - encourage development in suitable locations for new Traveller sites, which give occupiers of sites the opportunity to access key services and facilities
 - provide opportunities for Travellers to deliver their own sites in suitable locations
- 12.3.3. In response to the identified need for pitches, our proposed strategy for meeting the needs of Travellers will include:
 - The allocation of existing Traveller sites which do not have planning permission, but which we consider are suitable locations for this type of development.

- The intensification of existing Traveller sites (i.e. an increase in the number of pitches on a particular site) where we consider there is capacity to do so without significant harmful impacts.
 - Allocating extensions to existing Traveller sites where we consider that there is an opportunity to expand the current site without significant harmful impacts.
 - Allocations for new Traveller sites in suitable locations.
 - A criteria-based policy for Traveller site planning applications to be considered against.
- 12.3.4. We have therefore identified a number of opportunity sites to consider for inclusion in the Local Plan. Further information is set out later in this chapter and the sites detailed within the included in Appendix C – Opportunity sites for Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople, which accompanies this document. They are also shown in the relevant section of the online consultation. The opportunity sites identified give us a total of 118 pitches, however this consultation and further assessment will help us consider their suitability. Based on our initial calculations of pitch and plot yields from the site opportunities presented in this consultation, we think that there is still likely to be shortfall of around 35 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and 9 plots for Travelling Showpeople.
- 12.3.5. At this stage in the process there is still uncertainty around the numbers of pitches and plots which could be delivered through the proposed site opportunities as we will need to consider all responses to the consultation and further review the site options. The shortfall in the supply of pitches and plots could therefore increase.
- 12.3.6. Further Traveller sites are therefore likely to be required to secure delivery of sites to meet the need. It may be that planning applications for pitches will be consented through our criteria-based policy (Section 12.5) however at this stage, this is unknown. It is however unlikely that this policy will deliver many sites in the short term.
- 12.3.7. As the provision of pitches to meet the needs of Travellers is an important part of the Local Plan, not having a deliverable strategy in place for meeting needs may result in the Local Plan being found unsound at examination. We have explored many opportunity sites through this consultation and previous consultations and have been unable to identify sufficient sites to meet the need.

- 12.3.8. An additional way of meeting the need for Traveller pitches is to deliver them alongside bricks and mortar homes. We are therefore considering policies that would require the delivery of pitches for the Travelling communities alongside bricks and mortar homes. Our current thinking is that sites of greater than 500 homes, whether allocated through the local plan or presented to the council as stand-alone planning application, would be required to also provide 5 pitches for the Traveller community.
- 12.3.9. This approach could provide the further pitches and plots that are likely to be required to provide a deliverable supply of sites to meet the area's needs. This would add a resilience to the supply and delivery of sites for both the short and longer term.
- 12.3.10. We need to develop and work on the details of the policy and how it will be applied. Taking account of any final shortfall between the need and the final supply of deliverable Traveller sites, this will involve considering the detailed policy criteria relating to appearance, layout, design and phasing of mixed residential developments for the settled and Travelling communities.

Question 35: We have suggested that our Local Plan objectives for Travellers should be:

- to reduce the numbers of unauthorised sites,
- to provide opportunities for sites to expand,
- to encourage new Traveller sites in sustainable locations, and
- to provide opportunities for Travellers to deliver their own sites.

Do you have any comments on the objectives for meeting the need for Traveller sites?

Question 36: To help ensure that enough pitches are provided to meet Dorset's needs, Traveller pitches could be delivered alongside homes for the settled community on large scale residential development. Are there any issues which you think we need to consider in locating Traveller pitches alongside new built homes for the settled community?

Question 37: We are suggesting that 5 Traveller pitches should be provided for every 500 homes on large development sites. Is this threshold correct?

- a. Yes
- b. No-it should be higher
- c. No-it should be lower

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

12.4. Traveller opportunity sites for consultation

- 12.4.1. Since the GTAA was completed, we have given full planning permission for a seasonal transit site for Travellers at Piddlehinton³². The current need for Transit pitches has therefore been met.
- 12.4.2. Most of the site opportunities for Travellers' sites presented in the accompanying Opportunity sites for Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople' document (and within the online consultation) relate to existing sites that are already used by Travellers. Some of these sites have been used over extended periods, and are in suitable locations, but do not formally have planning permission. In other cases, there might be planning issues relating to an existing site which mean we are not able to grant planning permission until the issues have been overcome.
- 12.4.3. We also consider that there is scope for the use of existing Traveller sites to be intensified or expanded in suitable locations. :
- Existing sites which do not have planning permission: around 51 pitches on 13 separate sites
 - Expansion of existing Traveller sites with planning permission: around 7 pitches on 5 separate sites
 - New Traveller site proposals: around 60 pitches and 7 plots on 10 separate sites
- 12.4.4. Alongside existing sites, we have also identified some options for new Traveller sites. The new Traveller opportunity sites presented in this consultation are generally closely related to existing Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements in the

³² 'Permanent retention of gypsy & traveller transit site for 25no. caravans'

settlement hierarchy, where community services and facilities tend to be focused.

- 12.4.5. We estimate that the Traveller opportunity sites could deliver around 118 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, and 7 plots for Travelling Showpeople. Following changes to national policy, and because of our duty under the Housing Act, we are seeking to meet the entire identified need for plots and pitches (i.e. 153 pitches and 16 plots).

12.5. Criteria based policy for Traveller sites

- 12.5.1. To support delivery of Traveller sites, and to give Travellers the opportunity to deliver their own sites, we think that the Local Plan should include a criteria-based Traveller policy.

- 12.5.2. We think that this policy should include criteria relating to the:

- Location: specifically the relationship between the site and the nearest accessible services and facilities in a town or village
- Access: arrangements for access, turning, parking and storage of equipment and vehicles
- Neighbouring development: the relationship between the site and neighbours, and the need to safeguard the amenity of existing uses
- Environmental Impact: landscape character and the appearance and character of settlements
- Management of Traveller sites

Question 38: To encourage Travellers to deliver their own sites, we are suggesting that the Local Plan should include a criteria policy which takes account of the site's location, access, neighbouring development, environmental impact and management of the site. Do you think we need to add or change any of the suggested criteria?