

Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showperson and Boat Dweller Accommodation Assessment 2024

Executive Summary for West Oxfordshire District

Introduction

The Oxfordshire 2024 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) provides the latest available evidence to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople across the local authorities of Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse and West Oxfordshire.

This executive summary considers the findings for West Oxfordshire District.

The GTAA has included:

- A review of existing (secondary) data.
- Stakeholder consultation.
- A household survey and site/yard observation. Across Oxfordshire, information from a total of 153 Gypsy and Traveller households (out of 225 or 68%) and 44 Travelling Showperson households (out of 50 or 88%) was obtained. For West Oxfordshire, information was obtained for a total of 56 Gypsy and Traveller households (out of 74 or 75.7%) and 26 Travelling Showperson households (out of 26 or 100%) was obtained.
- A survey of boat dwellers, with interviews achieved with 7 out of a potential 37 households (18.9%), focusing on Oxford City where most residential moorings are located

Data have been carefully analysed to provide a picture of current provision across West Oxfordshire and an assessment of future need. The findings of the study provide an up-to-date, robust and defensible evidence base for policy development.

Population and current accommodation provision

The 2021 Census identified a population of 154 people who identified as 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller' or 'Gypsy/Romany' plus 0 people identifying as 'Roma' living in West Oxfordshire and an estimate of 55 households where the household reference person identifies as being a Gypsy/Traveller.

Across West Oxfordshire there are 13 Gypsy and Traveller sites with 110 pitches (Table ES1) and 4 Travelling Showperson yards with 24 plots (Table ES2).

In January and July each year, councils carry out a Traveller caravan count to inform MHCLG statistics. The latest bi-annual MHCLG Traveller caravan counts (Jan 2020 to January 2024) reported an average of 297 caravans across all sites in West Oxfordshire (with 90% on private sites and 10% on council sites).

Table ES1 Summary of Gypsy and Traveller sites in West Oxfordshire

District	No. Sites	No. Pitches	Total occupied pitches	Total vacant pitches	Total G&T households	Total non G&T households	interviews/ info obtained	No response
West Oxfordshire	13	110	106	4	74	0	56	18

Table ES2 Summary of Travelling Showperson yards in West Oxfordshire

District	No. yards	No. Plots	Total occupied plots	Total vacant plots	Total TSP households	interviews/ info obtained	No response
West Oxfordshire	4	24	24	0	26	26	0

Planning policy requirements for needs assessments

The 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states in Paragraph 63 *‘the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policy (including travellers)’*. A footnote in the NPPF then states *‘Planning Policy for Traveller Sites sets out how travellers’ housing needs should be assessed for those covered by the definition in Annex 1 of that document’*.

The 2024 Planning Policy for Traveller Site (PPTS) document states that *‘local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning’* and *‘ensure that their Local Plan includes fair, realistic and inclusive policies’* and *‘to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply’*.

In the absence of further guidance on preparing GTAAs, the methods adopted by arc⁴ reflect the PPTS, build upon those methods established through previous guidance, our practical experience and decisions made at planning inquiries and appeals.

Need assessment period

Need has been assessed over a short-term period: 2023/24 to 2027/28 and longer-term period 2028/29 to 2041/42 using demographic data.

Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements

There is an overall minimum need for **28** additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches across West Oxfordshire over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42 (Table ES3). Of this need, 2 pitches are needed in the first five years and 26 over the period to 2041/42.

Needs analysis considers the needs arising from existing households, households on unauthorised sites, newly forming households, in-migrant households and current vacancies on existing public and private sites. The main driver of need across West Oxfordshire is household formation.

Table ES3 Gypsy and Traveller pitch need 2023/24 to 2041/42

Residential Pitch need	West Oxfordshire
5yr Authorised Pitch Shortfall (2023/24 to 2027/28) (A)	2
Longer-term need	
<i>Over period 2028/29 to 2032/33 (B)</i>	6
<i>Over period 2033/34 to 2037/38 (C)</i>	13
<i>Over period 2038/39 to 2041/42 (D)</i>	7
Longer-term need TOTAL (E=B+C+D)	26
TOTAL SHORTFALL 2023/24 to 2041/42 A + E	28

Meeting the need

The council should consider the following to help meet identified residential pitch need. Firstly, **regularising of sites** that are not permanently authorised (**5 pitches**) and granting pending permissions (0 pitches). Secondly, **additional pitch provision using existing sites**. Respondents were asked if their sites could be expanded either through a physical expansion or intensification of use to provide more pitches, but no opportunities were identified. There is also a potential supply of 4 pitches due to household dissolution over the plan period.

This potential supply could provide **up to 9 additional pitches** (Table ES4).

There is likely to be pitch supply through the reletting of council pitches, which is likely to be 1 each year.

Table ES4 Gypsy and Traveller pitch need : potential sources of pitch supply from existing sites

District	Option				
	Regularisation	Additional pitches	Vacant pitches on sites that are not permanently authorised	Pitches available through household dissolution	Total potential pitches
West Oxfordshire	5	0	0	4	9

NOTE: any vacant pitches on authorised sites are already factored into pitch supply in the short-term five year modelling of pitch need.

Table ES5 reconciles minimum need with potential pitch supply to establish a minimum residual need for 19 pitches across West Oxfordshire.

Table ES5 Gypsy and Traveller pitch need 2023/24 to 2041/42, potential supply and residual need

Residential Pitch need	West Oxfordshire
5yr Authorised Pitch Shortfall (2023/24 to 2027/28)	2
Longer-term need (2028/29 to 2041/42)	26
TOTAL NET SHORTFALL 2023/24 to 2041/42	28
Potential supply of pitches	9
Residual need	19

Principal and alternative need scenarios

As well as the principal scenario, a small number of alternative scenarios have been run which exclude net-in migration in the first five years and use a household growth rate rather than actual household demographic data to calculate future need. These alternative scenarios produce a lower level of need (Table ES6). The potential supply is considered alongside pitch need outcomes and the resulting shortfall in pitches under alternative scenarios is presented as a range.

Table ES6 Overall pitch need over Plan Period 2023/24 to 2041/42 under principal and variant modelling scenarios

Overall plan period need based on principal and variant scenarios	West Oxfordshire
Principal A1 (includes migration; household demographic data)	28
Variant A2 (includes migration; household growth rates)	22
Variant B1 (excludes migration; household demographic data)	21
Variant B2 (excludes migration; household growth rates)	17
Potential supply (excluding social relets)	9
Shortfall in pitches : range based on different scenario outcomes minus potential supply.	8 to 19

Transit provision

There are a number of ways to deliver temporary places where Travellers can stop whilst passing through a local authority area. These include transit sites, stop over areas and negotiated stopping. According to MHCLG caravan count data there are

no transit pitches available on council sites in West Oxfordshire. Overall, across Oxfordshire there were 22 reported encampments over the period May 2022 to October 2023. The number of caravans ranged between 1 and 17, the most frequently reported number of caravans was 3 and the median number was 5.

The councils should consider how land can be provided for short-term use and particularly in response to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. It is recommended that the councils consider negotiated stopping arrangements to positively manage unauthorised encampment activity, with a recommendation to identify land to accommodate encampments of up to 5 caravans, encampments of between 6 and 10 caravans and encampments of more than 10 caravans.

Travelling Showperson plot requirements

There is an overall minimum need for **8** additional Travelling Showperson plots across West Oxfordshire over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42 (Table ES7). Of this need, 4 plots are needed in the first five years and 4 over the period to 2041/42.

Needs analysis considers the needs arising from existing households, newly forming households, in-migrant households and current vacancies on existing yards. The main driver of need across West Oxfordshire is household formation.

Table ES7 Travelling Showperson plot need 2023/24 to 2041/42

Residential plot need	West Oxfordshire
5yr Authorised plot Shortfall (2023/24 to 2027/28) (A)	4
Longer-term need	
<i>Over period 2028/29 to 2032/33 (B)</i>	1
<i>Over period 2033/34 to 2037/38 (C)</i>	2
<i>Over period 2038/39 to 2041/42 (D)</i>	1
Longer-term need TOTAL (E=B+C+D)	4
TOTAL NET SHORTFALL 2023/24 to 2041/42 A + E	8

It is also recommended that the council develop a criteria-based policy to consider any applications coming forward over the plan period.

Boat dweller need

A review of data from the councils, Canal and River Trust and Environment Agency indicates there are a range of moorings available on the River Thames and Oxford Canal. Most moorings are for leisure purposes or for winter quarters and permanent residential moorings are mainly located in Oxford City, with 4 potentially in Cherwell and none in South, Vale or West Oxfordshire. No specific residential mooring needs were identified in Cherwell, South, Vale or West Oxfordshire.

Policy recommendations

The council should recognise the minimum need for 28 pitches across West Oxfordshire over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42. Of this need, 2 is over the short-term 5-year period 2023/24 to 2027/28 and 26 is over the longer-term (2028/29 to 2045/46). A key driver of need is household formation. The GTAA has evidenced a range of potential sites including regularising existing sites that are not authorised and household dissolution could provide up to **9** additional pitches.

The council should recognise the minimum need for 8 Travelling Showperson plots over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42. Of this need, 4 is over the short-term 5 year period 2023/24 to 2027/28 and 4 is over the longer-term (2028/29 to 2041/42). A key driver of need is household formation.

To support the wider needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, the council should also set out criteria-based policies to inform future planning applications for small private Gypsy and Traveller sites and Showperson's yards should they arise over the plan period.

To manage any unauthorised encampments, it is recommended Oxfordshire councils develop a negotiated stopping policy to support the needs of Travellers passing through Oxfordshire. It is recommended that the councils should identify areas of land that can be used for smaller encampments (up to 5 caravans), medium-sized encampments (between 5 and up to 10 caravan) and larger encampments (more than 10 caravans).