

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

Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire, Vale of
White Horse and West Oxfordshire

Executive Summary for South Oxfordshire and
Vale of White Horse

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Oxfordshire 2024 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) provides the latest available evidence to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and Boat Dwellers across the local authorities of Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire. This Executive Summary provides the results for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, for the submission of their Joint Local Plan.

The GTAA has included:

- A review of existing (secondary) data.
- Stakeholder consultation.
- A household survey and site/yard observation.
 - Information from a total of 153 Gypsy and Traveller households (out of 229 or 69.9%) and 44 Travelling Showperson households (out of 50 or 88%) was obtained across Oxfordshire.
 - For South Oxfordshire, data for 38 out of 52 Gypsy and Traveller households (73.1%) and 12 Travelling Showperson households (out of 12 or 100%) was obtained.
 - For Vale of White Horse, data for 33 out of 41 Gypsy and Traveller households (80.5%) data for 1 Travelling Showperson households (out of 1 or 100%) was obtained.
 - A survey of boat dwellers, with interviews achieved with 7 out of a potential 37 households (18.9%).

Data has been carefully analysed to provide a picture of current provision across 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. We are very grateful to the Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showperson and Boat Dweller communities' response across Oxfordshire for their positive engagement with the work.

Population and current accommodation provision

The 2021 Census identified a population of 606 people who identified as 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller' or 'Gypsy/Romany' plus 1 person identifying as 'Roma' living in Oxfordshire and an estimate of 255 households where the household reference person identifies as being a Gypsy/Traveller.

In South Oxfordshire there are 10 Gypsy and Traveller sites with 54 pitches (Table ES1) and 3 Travelling Showperson yards with 22 plots (Table ES2). In Vale of White Horse there are 6 Gypsy and Traveller sites with 52 pitches and 1 Travelling Showperson yard with 1 plot.

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 687 caravans across all sites in Oxfordshire (76.7% on private sites, 22.4% on council sites and 0.9% on unauthorised sites).

Table ES1 Summary of Gypsy and Traveller sites in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

District	No. Sites/	No. Pitches	Total occupied pitches	Total vacant pitches	Total G&T households	interviews / info obtained	No response
South Oxfordshire	10	54	52	2	52	38	13
Vale of White Horse	6	52	41	11	41	33	8

Table ES2 Summary of Travelling Showperson yards in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

District	No. yards	No. Plots	Total occupied plots	Total vacant plots	Total TSP households	interviews / info obtained	No response
South Oxfordshire	3	22	15	1	12	12	0
Vale of White Horse	1	1	1	0	1	1	0

Planning policy requirements for needs assessments

The 2023 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 2015 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, and 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 in the ‘principal scenario’, with some sensitivity testing for the longer-term period based on household growth rates and migration assumptions.

Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements

The calculation of pitch need considers needs arising from existing households, households on unauthorised sites, newly forming households, in-migrant households and current vacancies on existing public and private sites. Under the ‘principal scenario’, which includes an allowance for net in-migration and uses demographic data from households living on sites, there is a need for 68 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches in South Oxfordshire over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42 (Table ES3). Of this need, 34 pitches are needed in the first five years and 34 over the period to 2041/42. In Vale of White Horse there is a need for 40 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42, of which 17 are needed in the first five years and 23 over the period to 2041/42 (Table ES3).

Table ES4 considers potential supply to help meet need. This derives from the regularisation of sites (granting sites full planning permission); potential additional pitches through the expansion and/or intensification of existing sites; vacant pitches on sites that are not permanently authorised; and pitches potentially available through household dissolution.

Alternative scenarios exclude net-in migration 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 ES5).

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

	South Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse
5yr Authorised Pitch Shortfall (2023/24 to 2027/28)	34	17
Longer-term need		
<i>Over period 2028/29 to 2032/33</i>	9	11
<i>Over period 2033/34 to 2037/38</i>	14	6
<i>Over period 2038/39 to 2041/42</i>	11	6
Longer-term need TOTAL	34	23
TOTAL NET SHORTFALL 2023/24 to 2041/42	68	40

Meeting the need

Table ES4 considers potential supply to help meet need. Firstly, **regularising of sites** that are not permanently authorised (**16 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. There is **potential for further pitches** to be delivered this way. The councils have been provided with details of potential sites for expansion/intensification. In addition, there is **1 vacant pitch** on a site that is not currently authorised. There is also a potential supply of **9 pitches** due to household dissolution over the plan period.

This potential supply could provide **up to 22 additional pitches** in South Oxfordshire and **4 pitches** in Vale of White Horse over the plan period.

Table ES5 compares overall need with potential supply to derive a figure for the shortfall of pitches. Further work is recommended to review the potential for additional pitch development on existing sites and the occupancy of permanent pitches.

Table ES4 Potential additional pitch supply

District	Option				
	Regularisation	Additional pitches	Vacant pitches on sites that are not permanently authorised	Pitches available through household dissolution	Total potential pitches
South Oxfordshire	14	Potential land next to Ten Acre Park council site	1	7	22
Vale of White Horse	2	Potential land next to Red Bridge Hollow council site	0	2	4

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

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

	South Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse
Residential Pitch need		
5yr Authorised Pitch Shortfall (2023/24 to 2027/28)	34	17
Longer-term need (2028/29 to 2041/42)	34	23
TOTAL NET SHORTFALL 2023/24 to 2041/42	68	40
Potential supply of pitches	22	4
Residual need	46	36

(Note: May not sum because of rounding)

In addition, pitch supply through **relets on council sites** is expected during the plan period. A detailed analysis of the length of time households have resided on pitches on council sites indicates that around 29% have moved on their pitch in the past 5 years. This compares with a social rented relet rate of 36.1% based on CORE lettings data for social rented stock over the period 2018/19 to 2022/23. Based on data from household surveys, an annual supply of 3 pitches on council sites in South Oxfordshire and 1 in Vale of White Horse would be anticipated. This would help meet need, particularly from households forming on local authority sites. Over the GTAA study period of 19 years, this could supply 48 pitches in South and 26 in Vale, in addition to the potential supply shown in Table ES4. Whether and how much to rely on a supply from social relets is a decision for each council when plan-making to meet their pitch requirements.

Alternative need scenarios

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 Alternative needs modelling scenario outcomes

Overall plan period need based on principal and variant scenarios	South Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse
Principal A1 (includes migration; household demographic data)	68	41
Variant A2 (includes migration; household growth rates)	48	29
Variant B1 (excludes migration; household demographic data)	66	35
Variant B2 (excludes migration; household growth rates)	48	24
Potential supply (excluding social relets)	22	4
Shortfall in pitches: range based on different scenario outcomes minus potential supply.	26 to 46	20 to 37

Notwithstanding evidence in this GTAA on need, additional need may arise over the plan period, for instance households moving into Oxfordshire. It is therefore recommended the councils have criteria-based policies to inform future planning applications for private sites should they arise.

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 Oxfordshire. There is one transit site for Travellers in Vale of White Horse on an authorised private site (ref VPriv2), secured through a legal agreement attached to a planning permission which specifies an area of the site for transit pitch use and the number of days they can be occupied for, but no data on whether this is actively in use. Only a small number of households expressed a need for transit provision.

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 need for 4 additional Travelling Showperson plots in South Oxfordshire and none in Vale of White Horse over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42 (Table ES7). Of this need in South Oxfordshire, 2 plots are needed in the first five years and 2 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 Oxfordshire is household formation.

There are 4 pitches used for transit provision on a Travelling Showperson’s site in South Oxfordshire.

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

	South Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse
Residential plot need		
5yr Authorised plot Shortfall (2023/24 to 2027/28) (A)	2	0
Longer-term need		
<i>Over period 2028/29 to 2032/33 (B)</i>	1	0
<i>Over period 2033/34 to 2037/38 (C)</i>	1	0
<i>Over period 2038/39 to 2041/42 (D)</i>	0	0
Longer-term need TOTAL (E=B+C+D)	2	0
TOTAL NET SHORTFALL 2023/24 to 2041/42 A + E	4	0

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

Boat dweller need

The analysis of houseboat need would suggest there is additional need for residential moorings across waterways in Oxfordshire.

The creation of permanent residential moorings needs to be balanced with the need to provide mooring spaces for continuous cruising boats and leisure boaters particularly as Oxford is a popular destination for this. Feedback from boat dwellers and stakeholders would suggest there is a need for more moorings, with a suggested range of 20 to 50 additional residential moorings to be made available. Therefore the current figure of 41 in the Oxford Local Plan 2036 as an expression of need remains appropriate. There was no identified need in South and Vale.

Policy recommendations

The councils should recognise that under the principal scenario, there is a need for 68 pitches for Gypsy and Traveller pitches over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42 in South

Oxfordshire, of which 34 pitches are needed over the short-term 5 year period 2023/24 to 2027/28 and 34 are needed over the longer-term (2028/29 to 2045/46). In Vale of White Horse there is a need for 40 pitches over the period 2023/23 to 2041/42 of which 17 are needed over the short-term 5 year period 2023/24 to 2027/28 and 23 are needed 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 the potential expansion/intensification of existing sites and household dissolution could provide up to 22 additional pitches in South and 4 in Vale. It is recommended the councils appraise sites to explore their potential for providing additional pitches. Relets of council pitches could also help meet need, particularly if needs are arising from council sites. The councils should also note the findings of the alternative scenario analysis which suggests a lower overall pitch need.

South Oxfordshire should recognise the need for 4 Travelling Showperson plots over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42. Of this need, 2 plots are over the short-term 5 year period 2023/24 to 2027/28 and 2 are over the longer-term (2028/29 to 2041/42). A key driver of need is household formation, and these needs can be met from supply on the existing private sites.

To support the wider needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, the councils 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, the councils should develop a negotiated stopping policy to support the needs of Travellers passing through Oxfordshire. It is recommended that the Oxfordshire 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).