
Planning for Wiltshire's Gypsy and Traveller Communities Consultation Document

Regulation 18 Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)
(England) Regulation 2012 (as amended)

Wiltshire Council

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Planning for Wiltshire's Gypsy and Traveller Communities

Wiltshire Council is preparing a Plan to address the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities in Wiltshire and is seeking your views to inform the content of the Plan.

Definition of terms:

For the purposes of this document: "travellers" means "gypsies and travellers" and "travelling showpeople" as defined in Annex 1 of the Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, August 2015, summarised below.

"Pitch" means a pitch on a "gypsy and traveller" site and "plot" means a pitch on a "travelling showpeople" site (often called a "yard"). This terminology differentiates between residential pitches for "gypsies and travellers" and mixed-use plots for "travelling showpeople", which may need to incorporate space to be split to allow for the storage of equipment.

Annex 1, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

For the purpose of this planning policy "gypsies and travellers" means:

Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.

In determining whether persons are "gypsies and travellers" for the purposes of this planning policy, consideration should be given to the following issues amongst other relevant matters:

- a) Whether they previously led a nomadic habit of life.
- b) The reasons for ceasing their nomadic habit of life.
- c) Whether there is an intention of living a nomadic habit of life in the future, and if so, how soon and in what circumstances.

For the purposes of this planning policy, "travelling showpeople" means:

Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.

Scope of the Plan

This Plan will identify accommodation needs for travellers to 2036. It will identify sites and broad locations for growth to meet permanent and temporary accommodation needs and review Core Policy 47 'Meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers' of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

This accords with Government policy in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Plan does not cover boaters. Boater requirements will be addressed in the Local Plan.

This consultation document is the first step in developing the plan. It is not a draft Plan but seeks your views on the approach proposed by the Council to developing the Plan.

Question one: Do you have any comments on what the Plan should contain?

Traveller communities in Wiltshire

In response to the Census 2011, 757 people in Wiltshire self-identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller. This number is now likely to be higher since the last Census was undertaken almost 10 years ago.

Most travellers in Wiltshire are English Travellers, Romany Gypsies, and Irish Travellers. They are a diverse group of communities which share some features but have their own histories and traditions. A key common feature is nomadism. Under the Equality Act 2010, several groups have recognition as ethnic groups protected against discrimination. These include English, Welsh and Scottish Gypsy Travellers, Irish Travellers, and Romany Gypsies and Roma people. Travellers history, heritage and traditions distinguish them from settled communities.



New Age Travellers can also be found in Wiltshire. Their origins lie in the 1960s counter culture and they are distinct from ethnic travellers. New Age Travellers are more transient with numbers increasing during the summer months, for example around the Summer Solstice.

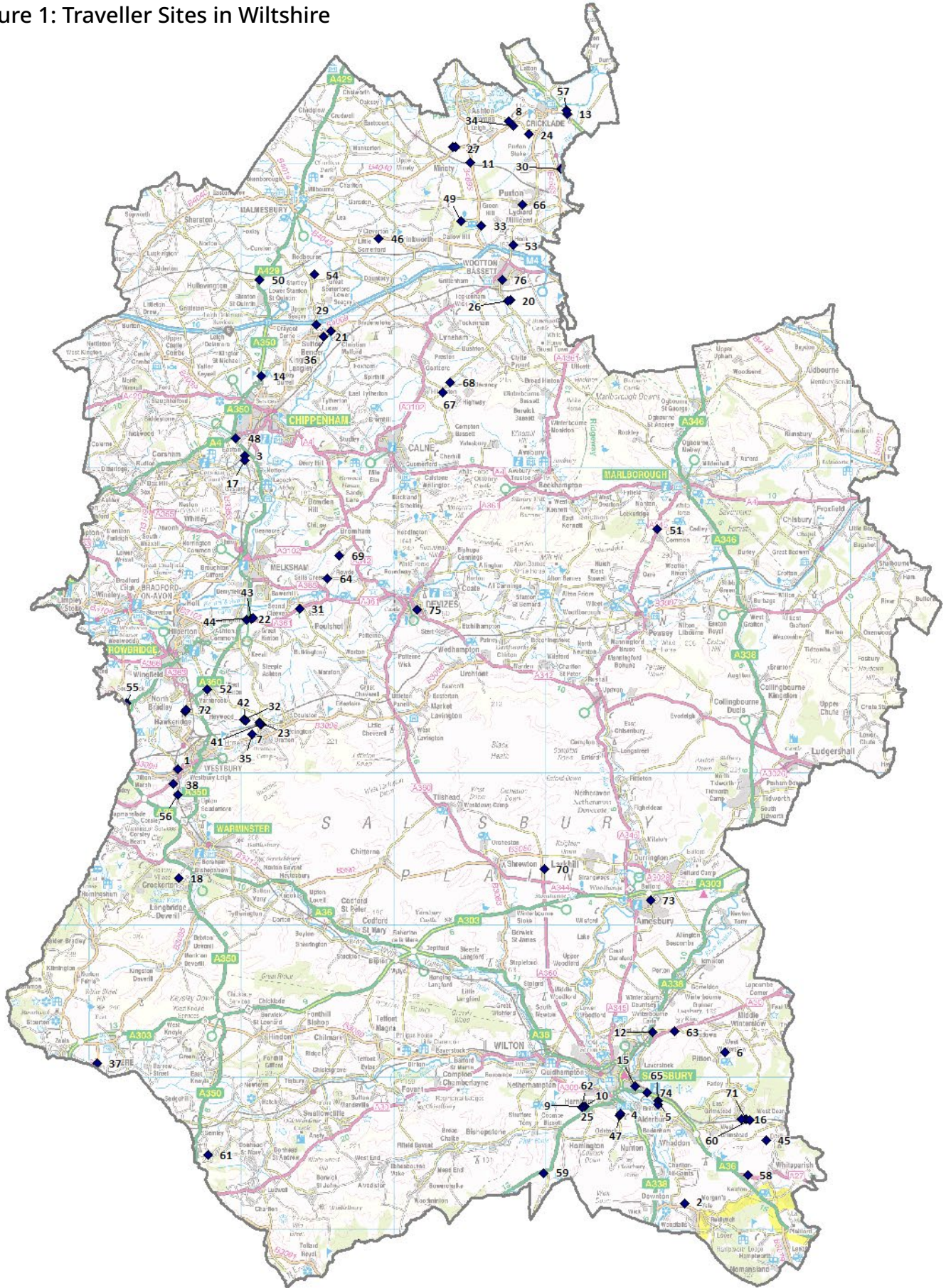
Distinct again from these groups are travelling showpeople. They run fairs, circuses or shows, and their presence in Wiltshire goes back many years.

Travellers live on a mix of local authority sites, privately owned sites and unauthorised sites as shown on **Figure 1** on the next page. Most private sites are small but local authority-managed sites are larger. Most sites lie within the north and west of Wiltshire, and around Salisbury. There are also travellers who live in 'bricks and mortar' housing.

Many travellers pursue an active itinerant lifestyle and are mainly self-employed. However, these traditional patterns are changing whereby travellers have become increasingly settled, which increases the need for new sites.

In addition to travellers who have a settled base in Wiltshire, groups travel through the county. This can result in temporary unauthorised encampments on private or public land. The number and location of encampments varies year on year.

Figure 1: Traveller Sites in Wiltshire



Source: Wiltshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (June 2020), Opinion Research Services

Key Issue:

Why is it important to meet accommodation needs?

Having no permanent accommodation can adversely affect any traveller. Providing permanent and temporary accommodation improves the ability to meet other primary needs, especially health, education and access to employment. Accommodation does also enable gypsies and travellers to continue to live a nomadic life.

There is evidence that ethnic gypsies and travellers in particular suffer from significant health inequality, nationally and locally.

'Having nowhere to go' and living on unauthorised sites or encampments can have a direct effect on mental and physical health. Most recently the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of some travellers due to the lack of access to sanitation, clean water and shelter. This Plan can contribute to improving traveller health through meeting accommodation need on lawful sites. It can also ensure that sites have a minimum standard of basic amenities.

Ethnic gypsies and travellers have the highest proportion of people with no formal qualifications when compared with any other ethnic group in the United Kingdom. Gypsy and traveller children show the lowest attainment of all ethnic groups throughout schooling for example; however, families are increasingly seeking to secure primary school education as a minimum.

A settled base does provide children with a secure environment for learning and accessing school. Meeting accommodation needs can also improve education opportunities for adults and lead to employment options and opportunities outside self-employment.

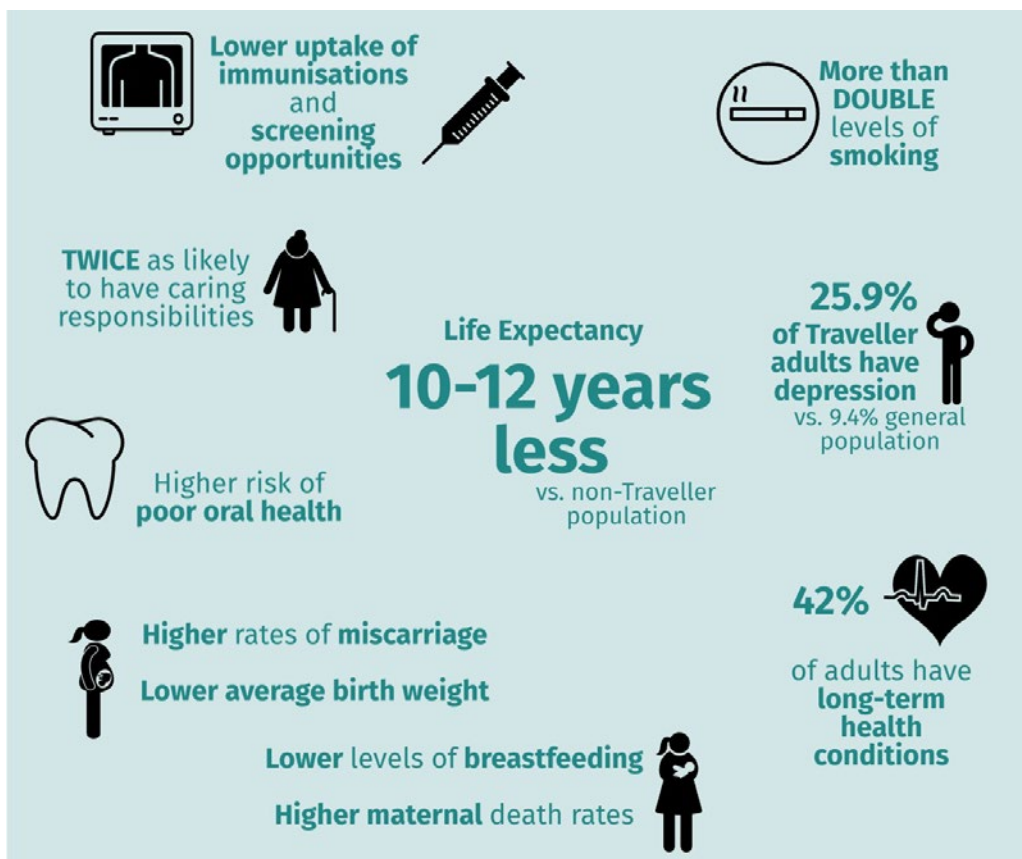


Figure 2: Inequalities in health amongst ethnic gypsies and travellers

Source: Wiltshire Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater Strategy 2020-2025

Proposed Plan Objectives

Two key priorities within the Wiltshire Council Business Plan (Wiltshire Council, 2017) are creating strong communities, and protecting the vulnerable. The adopted Core Strategy's contains the objectives to providing everyone with access to a decent affordable home; and helping to build resilient communities. The Government's overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community (paragraph 3, PPTS).

In respect to traveller sites, the Government - in summary - requires us to

- Assess accommodation needs of travellers
- Identify land in the right locations to meet need through sustainable development
- Address unauthorised encampments
- Reduce tensions between traveller and settled communities in plan-making and decision-taking (paragraph 4, PPTS).

Our Plan objectives are consistent with these aims and objectives:

Objective 1 - Meeting needs for permanent accommodation:

To meet identified accommodation need for gypsy and traveller pitches and travelling showpeople plots to 2036 through site allocations or broad locations for growth; and to provide a framework for assessing proposals.

Objective 2 - Making provision for temporary accommodation:

To provide three emergency stopping sites for temporary accommodation.

Objective 3 - Site location:

To provide well-designed sites in keeping with their surroundings, and in appropriate and sustainable locations with good access to facilities and services; which respect both the interests of the settled and traveller communities.

Question two: Do you agree with these objectives?
Please explain your answer.



Permanent accommodation requirements

In June 2020, we completed a [Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment \(GTAA\)](#) which is published alongside this consultation document. This study provides the evidence on accommodation need that we will plan for from 2019 to 2036.

The GTAA is based on interviews with traveller households that were undertaken on sites and

yards in Wiltshire. It identifies accommodation need for households that meet the definition of gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople in Annex 1 of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites; households who do not; and households that could not be determined.

Tables 1 to 5 below set out the identified accommodation needs in Wiltshire.

Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation Requirements 2019-36

Table 1: Permanent pitch requirements of gypsy and traveller households meeting the planning definition

Years		Pitches
0-5	2019 - 23	76
6-10	2024 - 28	22
11-15	2029 - 33	21
16-18	2034 - 36	13
Total		132

76 pitches are required in the first five years for households meeting the planning definition. Need occurring after year five results from household formation.

The GTAA also identifies need from gypsy and traveller households who do not meet the planning definition but may be protected under equality legislation as ethnic gypsies or travellers. It is proposed that their need is addressed in this Plan as it would otherwise persist.

Table 2: Accommodation need for Gypsy and Traveller households that did not meet the planning definition

Years		Pitches
0-5	2019 - 23	21
6-10	2024 - 28	23
11-15	2029 - 33	26
16-18	2034 - 36	8
Total		78

The GTAA also identifies need from households who could not be interviewed but might meet the planning definition. Need occurring after year five results from household formation. The GTAA recommends that this need is addressed through the planning application process as it is not possible for the Plan to allocate land for undetermined need. Any applications could be assessed against criteria presented below.

Table 3: Permanent pitch requirements of undetermined gypsy and traveller households

Years		Pitches
0-5	2019 - 23	14
6-10	2024 - 28	6
11-15	2029 - 33	6
16-18	2034 - 36	3
Total		29

Accommodation Requirements for Travelling Showpeople

Table 4: Permanent plot requirements of showpeople households meeting the planning definition

Years		Pitches
0-5	2019 - 23	10
6-10	2024 - 28	1
11-15	2029 - 33	0
16-18	2034 - 36	1
Total		12

Ten plots for showpeople meeting the planning definition are required in the first five years. Need occurring after year five results from household formation.

Consistent with the approach for gypsies and travellers, the identified need for two plots from undetermined households could be considered through the planning application process.

Table 4: Permanent plot requirements of undetermined showpeople households

Years		Pitches
0 - 5	2019 - 23	0
6 - 10	2024 - 28	1
11 - 15	2029 - 33	0
16 - 18	2034 - 36	1
Total		2

There are no showpeople households with accommodation need who do not meet the planning definition.



Question three: Do you support the above GTAA findings? Please explain your answer.

Temporary accommodation requirements

Temporary accommodation can offer a safe place to stay for transient travellers. Where groups or individuals travel through the county this can result in unauthorised encampments.

The GTAA shows that there was a total of 155 unauthorised encampments in 2016, 296 encampments in 2017, 225 encampments in 2018 and 161 encampments between January and September 2019.

The GTAA proposes that we provide three emergency stopping sites in the north, west and south of Wiltshire to meet temporary accommodation need. They should offer temporary stay for transient travellers and assist in managing unauthorised encampments. No set number of pitches are proposed in the GTAA.



Question four: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to provide three sites? Please explain your answer.

Proposed approach to meeting accommodation needs

Accommodation needs must be met on authorised pitches and plots. Pitches for travellers ordinarily include space for a static caravan, a tourer, car parking, a dayroom and open space. The GTAA advises that teenage children's accommodation needs can sometimes be met through provision of a touring caravan. Similarly, single adults may not need a formal pitch, but their accommodation needs could be met through provision of additional touring caravans.

Plots for travelling showpeople also include the above but tend to be larger and require more space for equipment such as fairs and rides stored on-site.

Commonly there is a desire for households to remain on a family site. It is therefore proposed to intensify existing lawful sites in the first instance to meet requirements. These sites already benefit from planning permission and could potentially take up more development.

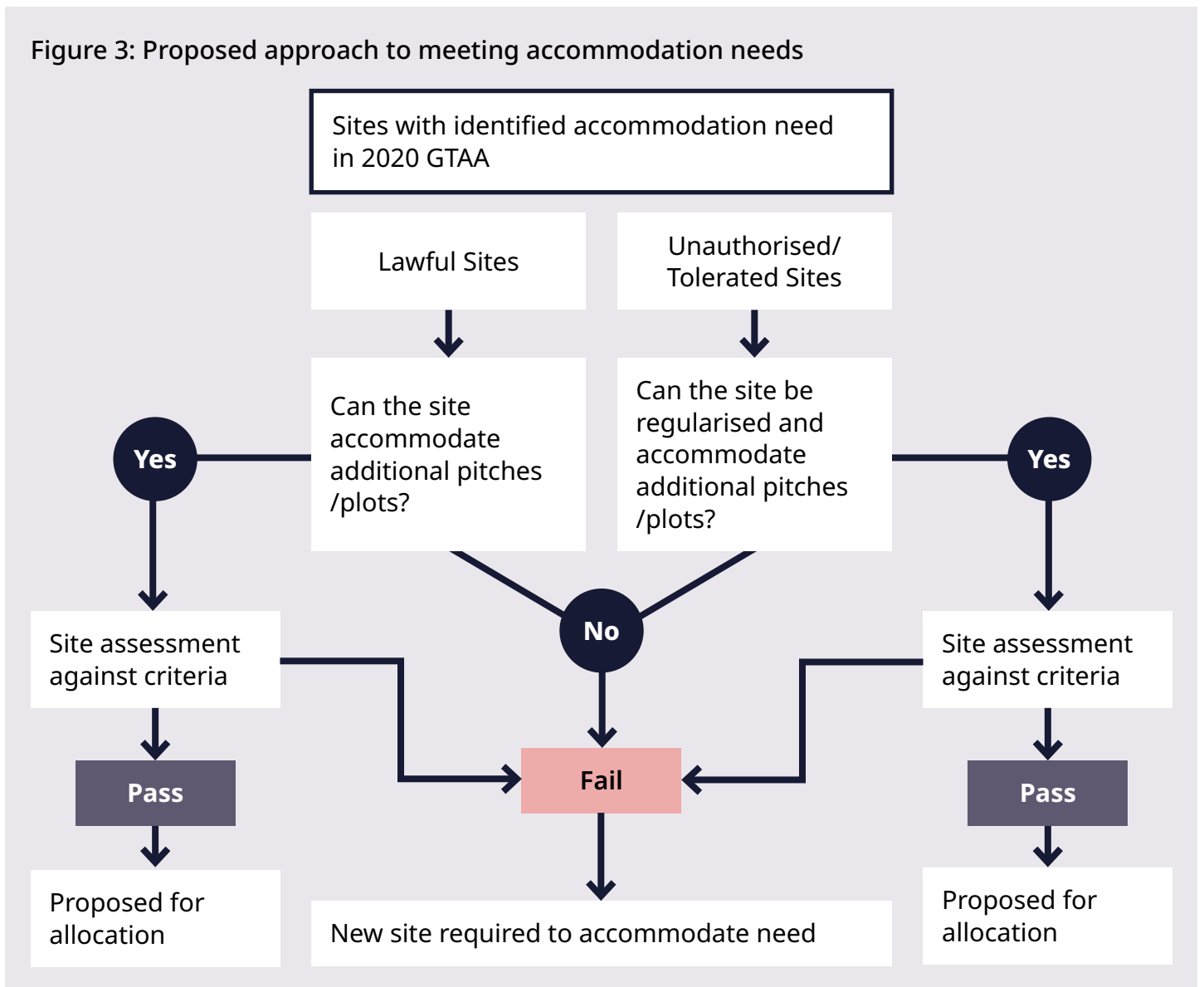


Unauthorised sites will be assessed to see if they can be regularised through an allocation in the plan. Both assessments will be undertaken based on a review of criteria in the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy, Core Policy 47.

We anticipate that most of the first five-year requirements could be met in this way. This also works in the interest of the best and most efficient use of land.

Any residual requirements are proposed to be met through new site allocations or by way of identifying broad locations for growth in the plan. At present we cannot be sure precisely how many new sites will be needed as this depends on the ability of existing sites to accommodate new development; and the availability of suitable and deliverable land.

Figure 3: Proposed approach to meeting accommodation needs



New sites for permanent pitches

It is proposed that new sites for travellers (including travelling showpeople) will be small and offer the opportunity for family-owned pitches and plots. Feedback from travellers received before emphasised that this is preferred to large sites.

New sites must comply with site assessment criteria below. In addition to new sites, broad locations for growth could be areas or existing sites where new pitches or plots are supported in principle, subject to planning permission.

Question five: Do you agree with the proposed approach to meeting accommodation need? Please explain your answer.



Site assessment criteria for permanent sites

We are reviewing the criteria in Core Policy 47 in the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy and propose to include them in the Plan. Since the Core Strategy was adopted, national planning policy has been revised so some criteria may require changes to ensure consistency. We also know from the planning application process that some criteria may need to be reviewed in the interest of clarity. The purpose of the criteria is to:

- Inform site assessments for site intensification
- Inform assessment of unauthorised sites
- Inform assessment of candidate new sites
- Inform determination of planning applications

We would welcome your views on the criteria and the changes we are proposing:

Proposals for new gypsy and traveller pitches or travelling showpeople plots/yards will only be granted where there is no conflict with other planning policies and where no barrier to development exists. New development should be situated in sustainable locations. Where proposals satisfy the following general criteria, they will be considered favourably:

- i. Priority must be given to effective use of previously developed land over greenfield land. This can include land last occupied by farmyards.

(New criterion: In the interest of protecting undeveloped land. This new criterion does not preclude the use of greenfield sites but would require evidence that previously developed land has been considered.)

- ii. No significant barriers to development exist in terms of flooding, poor drainage, poor ground stability or proximity to other hazardous land or installation where conventional housing would not be suitable.
- iii. It is served by a safe and convenient vehicular and pedestrian access. The proposal should not result in significant hazard to other road users.
- iv. The site can be properly serviced and is supplied with essential services, such as water, power, sewerage and drainage, and waste disposal. Where possible, sites should connect to mains.

(Reason: To ensure that wherever possible, mains connections are achieved in the interest of sustainable development.)

- v. The site must also be large enough to provide adequate vehicle parking, including circulation space, along with residential amenity and play areas.
- vi. It is located in, or within three kilometres to, settlements that offer a range of local services and community facilities, in particular schools and essential health services.

(Reason: Our evidence shows that sites which were granted permission, and those that were subject to appeal decisions, predominantly fall within three kilometres of a primary school and GP surgery. The proposed change would clarify what constitutes a reasonable distance.)

- vii. It will not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and the amenity of neighbouring properties and is sensitively designed to mitigate any impact on its surroundings.

- viii. Adequate levels of privacy should be provided for occupiers.
- ix. Development of the site should be appropriate to the scale and character of its surroundings and existing nearby settlements.
- x. The site should not compromise a nationally or internationally recognised designation nor have the potential for adverse effects on river quality, biodiversity or archaeology.

In assessing sites for travelling showpeople or where mixed-uses are proposed, the site and its surrounding context are suitable for mixed residential and business uses, including storage required and/or land required for exercising animals, and would not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity and adverse impact on the safety and amenity of the site's occupants and neighbouring properties.

Question six: Do you agree with the proposed criteria?
Please explain your answer.



Site assessment criteria for emergency stopping sites

Emergency stopping sites are sites with hardstanding, fence, gate, toilets and rubbish disposal. The GTAA recommends that we build three sites in line with the approved Emergency Stopping Places (ESP) Strategy¹. This will ensure that they are available when needed.

The approved ESP Strategy includes the following assessment criteria to find suitable sites:

- i. Sites should avoid any adverse impact on local/national designations (such as conservation areas and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Sites should avoid any hazardous areas (such as flood zones, contaminated land).
- ii. The site must meet space requirements for internal road(s) and parking and circulation space, and fire safety standards. The site should have additional space for facilities such as waste disposal
- iii. The site should be near or adjacent to key travelling routes identified in the GTAA.
- iv. The site should not have a detrimental impact on the safe and efficient operation of the strategic/highway road network, including junctions and land within the ownership of Highways England and/or Wiltshire Council required for operational purposes.
- v. The candidate site must be serviced by an independent vehicular access point that adheres to the Highway Authority's guidance and standards in terms of safe entry and egress. The road to and from the site must be of sufficient quality and size to enable access onto and off the site by heavy vehicles such as trailers.
- vi. Access to candidate sites should avoid the need to use local roads within industrial areas, recognised commercial areas or housing areas. The site should not give rise to visual impacts or pollution on surrounding land uses and other receptors. Space for a clear barrier around the site is required to prevent unauthorised extension to the site.
- vii. Brownfield land is preferred over greenfield land. Where no brownfield land is available, greenfield land of poor agricultural quality (Grade 3b or poorer) is preferred.
- viii. All routes for vehicles on the site, and for access to the site, must allow easy access for emergency vehicles and safe places for turning vehicles.
- ix. The ease of commitment to bringing sites forward and the timing of land release.

Question seven: Do you agree with the proposed selection criteria for emergency stopping sites? Please explain your answer.

Question eight: Do you have any further comments?

¹ Gypsy and Travellers Emergency Stopping Places Strategy (June 2018), approved by Wiltshire Council Cabinet on 3 July 2018 <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=141&MIId=11668> , see item 255

Call for sites

We would also welcome any suggestions for land that might be suitable for new Gypsy and Traveller sites, whether you own the land or not. If you wish to submit land/sites for consideration, please complete the attached Call for Sites Form and return it to us.

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/722/Gypsy-and-Traveller-Call-for-Sites-Form/pdf/call-for-sites-form.pdf

Completed forms can be sent electronically via email, to spatialplanningpolicy@wiltshire.gov.uk or posted to the following address:

**Spatial Planning,
Economic Development & Planning,
Wiltshire Council,
County Hall,
Trowbridge,
BA14 8JN**

Next steps

Following closure of this consultation we will consider your comments and draft the Plan for consultation in Autumn 2021, when there will be further opportunity to comment. Adoption of the Plan is programmed for Winter 2022.

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This document was published by Spatial Planning, Economic Development and Planning,
Wiltshire Council

For further information please visit the following website:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy