

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

Executive Summary for Oxford City

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 Oxford City.

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. There are no sites or yards in Oxford City.
- 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.

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 63 people who identified as 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller' or 'Gypsy/Romany' plus 0 people identifying as 'Roma' living in Oxford and an estimate of 30 households where the household reference person identifies as being a Gypsy/Traveller, all of whom live in bricks and mortar accommodation.

Across Oxford City there are no Gypsy and Traveller sites or Travelling Showperson yards.

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 zero caravans across Oxford City.

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 **zero** additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches across Oxford City over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42 (Table ES1).

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.

Table ES1 Gypsy and Traveller pitch need 2023/24 to 2041/42

Residential Pitch need	Oxford City
5yr Authorised Pitch Shortfall (2023/24 to 2027/28) (A)	0
Longer-term need	
<i>Over period 2028/29 to 2032/33 (B)</i>	0
<i>Over period 2033/34 to 2037/38 (C)</i>	0
<i>Over period 2038/39 to 2041/42 (D)</i>	0
Longer-term need TOTAL (E=B+C+D)	0
TOTAL SHORTFALL 2023/24 to 2041/42 A + E	0

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 in Oxford City. 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 **zero** additional Travelling Showperson plots across Oxford City over the period 2023/24 to 2041/42 (Table ES2).

Needs analysis considers the needs arising from existing households, newly forming households, in-migrant households and current vacancies on existing yards.

Table ES2 Travelling Showperson plot need 2023/24 to 2041/42

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

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.

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.

Policy recommendations

The council should recognise there is no current need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches or Travelling Showperson plots across Oxford City over period 2023/24 to 2041/42.

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).

It is recommended that Oxford City should have criteria-based policies to consider any applications for residential moorings.