

# Oxford Local Plan 2040

## Proposed Traveller policies: position statement - March 2024

### Policy background and definitions

- 1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to periodically assess the need for Traveller accommodation in their area. The 2023 National Planning Policy Framework 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 policies’. It then lists a number of groups including Travellers. A footnote to the paragraph 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’.
- 1.2 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’.*
- 1.3 When assessing need, the definition of Gypsies and Travellers set out within Annex 1 of the 2012 PPTS is used:  
*‘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 or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling Showpeople [sic] or circus people travelling together as such.’*
- 1.4 Similarly, the following definition from Annex 1 of the Guidance in respect of Travelling Showpeople is used:  
*‘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 or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.’*
- 1.5 In addition:  
*‘For the purposes of this planning policy, “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 pitches for “travelling showpeople”, which may/will need to incorporate space or to be split to allow for the storage of equipment.’ (DCLG Planning policy for traveller sites August 2015 Annex 1, para 5)*

- 1.6 It is recommended that the Council separates out the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople requirements into two separate policies, but if necessary, the requirements can be combined into one policy as set out in Policy H12 (Homes for travelling communities) of the current Oxford Local Plan 2036. The reason for considering two policies reflects the specific needs of the two groups of people – for instance Travelling Showpeople have a particular need to ensure that their yards have sufficient space for the storage and maintenance of equipment.

### **Gypsy and Traveller need and policy response**

- 1.7 A comprehensive 2024 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is being prepared for Oxfordshire local authorities. This is involving a review of existing data such as caravan counts, waiting lists and household interviews.
- 1.8 Within Oxford City, there are currently no Gypsy and Traveller pitches. The 2021 census reports a total of 63 people who identify White Gypsy and Traveller or other ethnic group Gypsy/Romany. The census estimates there are around 30 Gypsy and Traveller households, all living in bricks and mortar accommodation.
- 1.9 The GTAA needs modelling makes an allowance for the potential need for pitches arising from households living in bricks and mortar. Based on data derived from 354 arc4 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation across the country, an estimated 5.3% would prefer to live on a pitch. For Oxford, this would translate to a potential theoretical need for 2 pitches over the plan period. As this is a theoretical figure, it is not recommended that the council identifies this as their strategic need for sites. However, if this need arises, the council should judge any site applications against the criteria listed in the following policy as well as other relevant policies of the Plan.

### **Travelling Showperson need and response**

- 1.10 There are currently no Travelling Showperson yards in Oxford City. Should future applications for yards come forward, the council should judge any applications against the criteria in the following policy as well as other relevant policies of the Plan and national policy, for example Green Belt.

## **Gypsy and Traveller, and Travelling Showperson policy**

1.11 It is recommended that planning permission will only be granted for residential pitches in Oxford for Gypsies and Travellers or yards for Travelling Showpeople if all of the following criteria are met:

- The pitch/ yard is in a sustainable location in terms of accessibility to services and facilities, including health and schools.
- The pitch/ yard is suitable in terms of vehicular access to the highway, parking, turning, road safety and servicing arrangements and has access to essential services such as water supply, sewerage, drainage and waste disposal.
- Appropriate screening and landscaping is included within the proposal to protect local amenity and the environment.
- The pitch/ yard is not affected by environmental hazards that may affect the residents' health or welfare or be located in Flood Zones 3a or 3b.
- The pitch/ yard avoids undue pressure on local infrastructure and services.
- Proposals make adequate provision for on-site facilities that meet best practice for modern Traveller pitch/ yard requirements, including play areas, and provision for recycling and waste management (and for Travelling Showpeople space for the storage and maintenance of equipment appropriate to their business activities).

### **Homes for boat dwellers**

1.12 A dedicated Oxford Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment 2018 was undertaken to better understand current provision of moorings and services and to determine need. This has been supplemented with interviews carried out with boat dwellers a part of the 2024 assessment of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The findings from the 2018 assessment remain valid and an appropriate base for assessing the future demand/need for residential moorings in Oxford.

1.13 It is recommended that planning permission will only be granted for new residential moorings on Oxford's waterways where all of the following criteria are met:

- They do not have negative impacts on navigation and navigational safety or operational requirements of the waterway.
- The biodiversity of the water, its margins and nearby nature conservation sites will be maintained or enhanced.
- There is adequate access for emergency services to ensure safety.

- Sites have adequate accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to facilities and services including shops, healthcare, education and employment.
- There is adequate access to or provision of facilities and servicing, including water supply, electricity and disposal facilities for sewage and waste.
- Use of any adjacent paths will not be impeded.