



Buckinghamshire Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment: Executive Summary



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Executive Summary

The Study

1. Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned by the Local Authorities of Buckinghamshire to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA). The study provides an evidence base that complies with requirements towards Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople under the Housing Act 2004, the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites 2012.
2. The main objective of this study was to provide the Councils with robust, defensible and up to date evidence about the accommodation needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople in the period until 2023.

Existing Gypsy and Traveller Pitches and Travelling Showpeople Plots in the Study Area

3. There are approximately 286 Gypsy and Traveller pitches across Buckinghamshire. However, the study also found that a number of pitches are currently occupied by non-Travellers so only around 255 pitches are occupied by Gypsies and Travellers. There is also a waiting list for public sites of 4 households which adds to the likely number of future households. The table below shows the number of pitches by authority.

Figure 1
Number of Gypsy and Traveller Pitches by Local Authority

Local Authority	Permanent permission and developed	Temporary permission	Lawful	Unauthorised	Total
Aylesbury Vale	62	21	0	17	100
Chiltern	19	2	2	1	24
South Buckinghamshire	98	2	0	7	107
Wycombe	46	3	0	6	55
Total	225	28	2	31	286

4. The population of Travelling Showpeople is typically smaller than that of Gypsies and Traveller and planning records also tend to be more disparate. However, we have identified the following number of Showpeople yards/plots in the study area:
 - » Aylesbury Vale – 1 unauthorised yard with 3 plots;
 - » Chiltern – 2 yards with 17 plots;
 - » South Buckinghamshire – no yards;
 - » Wycombe – 2 yards with 10 plots.

Methodology

5. This section sets out the methodology we have followed to deliver the outputs for this study. The stages below provide a summary of the process undertaken by ORS, with more information on each stage provided in the appropriate section of the main report.

Stage 1: Background

6. At the outset of the project we sought to understand the background to Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople population in Buckinghamshire. The study sought to identify the location of all known sites in the study area and the number of pitches or plots on each one.

Stage 2: Stakeholder Engagement

7. This study included extensive stakeholder engagement with council officers from the Buckinghamshire councils, neighbouring councils and other stakeholders.

Stage 3: Household Survey

8. The research methodology for identifying the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers adopted in this report was largely based upon face to face interviews with Gypsies and Travellers across Buckinghamshire. We sought to undertake a census of Gypsy and Traveller households in January and February 2013. Interviews were attempted with every known Gypsy and Traveller household present during this time period and 179 interviews were achieved with Gypsies and Travellers on-site. In practice there are around 255 occupied pitches in Buckinghamshire, so 179 interviews represents a high response rate of around 70%. A further 3 interviews were carried out with households in bricks and mortar accommodation and 5 with Travelling Showpeople.

Stage 4: Future Pitch and Plot Requirements

9. The overall principles behind assessing future needs are relatively simple. The residential and transit pitch requirements for Gypsies and Travellers are identified separately from those for Travelling Showpeople and for each group the requirements are identified in 5 year periods to 2023 in line with the requirements of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

Survey of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Population

10. The majority of Gypsies and Travellers surveyed have a long period of residence on their current site, with two thirds (67%) of respondents having lived on their site for 5 years or more.
11. The households showed a mixed range of ages across their members. Nearly one in ten (9.8%) household members were over 60, but 44% of all household members were aged 16 years or under. Nearly a third of all household members were aged 5-16 years and another 13% were children aged 4 years or less.

Future Requirements

12. The estimated extra site provision that is required for the 4 authorities will be an additional 108 pitches to address the needs of all identifiable households over the next 10 years. This includes the existing households on unauthorised sites, those on the waiting list for a public site, those currently seeking to develop a private site and growth in household numbers due to new household formation.
13. We would note that we have not considered provision made in the period 2006-2012 and instead we are taking 2013 as a baseline position for our estimates. However, any backlog of unmet need will have been captured within figures for current need.

Figure 2
Extra Pitches which are Required in Buckinghamshire from 2013-2023

Reason for Requirement/Vacancy	Gross Requirement	Supply	Net Requirement
Supply of Pitches			
Additional supply from empty pitches	-	9	
Additional supply new sites	-	7	
Movement to bricks and mortar	-	9	
Total Supply		25	
Current Need			
Current unauthorised developments or encampments and seeking to stay in the area	31	-	
Concealed households	0	-	
Movement from bricks and mortar	0	-	
Waiting list for public sites	4	-	
Total Current Need	35		
Future Needs			
Currently on sites with temporary planning permission	28	-	
Net migration	0	-	
Net new household formation	70	-	
Total Future Needs	98		
Total	133	25	108

14. The table below shows the provision required by District in 5 year time periods. In terms of providing results by 5 year time periods we have assumed that all unauthorised sites, waiting list needs and sites with temporary planning permissions are addressed in the first 5 years. Any supply from undeveloped sites is assumed to be developed in the first 5 years. Household formation is apportioned over time.

Figure 3
Extra Pitch Provision in Buckinghamshire by Local Authority

Planning Authority	2013-2018	2018-2023	Total
Aylesbury Vale	33	14	47
Chiltern	5	4	9
South Buckinghamshire	18	13	31
Wycombe	13	8	21
Total	69	39	108

Transit Sites

15. There are currently no operational transit sites or emergency stopping places in the study area. A former transit site at Whites Hill (near Beaconsfield), owned and managed by Bucks CC, fell into disuse and was closed in 2010. ORS has spoken to a number of local authorities across the country and many indicate that publically provided transit sites are poorly used and in some cases have fallen out of use. This is part due to the location away from major travelling routes.
16. The household surveys and stakeholder interviews undertaken as part of this assessment have provided little evidence to suggest that any major travelling routes exist in Buckinghamshire. Where ORS have conducted household surveys with households on unauthorised encampments in Bucks, those households were generally seeking permanent accommodation as opposed to travelling through or visiting the study area. Neither does information from the caravan count indicate a need for accommodation to be provided in Buckinghamshire for any one travelling through the study area. Equally there is little evidence from neighbouring authorities to suggest that there are currently any regular and established travelling routes through Buckinghamshire.
17. The authorities will need to monitor the situation over time, and should circumstances change and regular travelling routes emerge resulting in an increase in unauthorised encampments, a transit site or temporary stopping place might be considered.

Travelling Showperson Requirements

18. The estimated need for plots for Travelling Showpeople in Buckinghamshire is much simpler to model than for Gypsies and Travellers. No plots are expected to be freed due to any reason and there is no waiting list for sites, though there are 3 households on an unauthorised site in Aylesbury Vale District. Therefore, the needs are primarily driven by the needs for households from outside of the area and household growth.
19. ORS were provided with the contact details of a group of Travelling Showpeople who own land in Chiltern and wish to develop a site in the area. They are mostly living in areas outside of Buckinghamshire and are sharing the sites of others. All 13 households confirmed that none has permanent accommodation anywhere else and that all would wish to live in Chiltern District and have been counted as need in the District. A further 4 plots are required to allow for household growth over time including one plot in Chiltern.
20. Figure 4 sets out the net requirement for new pitch provision by local authority until 2023. Any need from in-migration and unauthorised sites is included in the initial period 2013-2018 along with any need arising from new household formation during that time. Any supply of pitches has also been taken into account in the first period.

Figure 4
Extra Travelling Showpeople Provision in Buckinghamshire by Local Authority

Planning Authority	2013-2018	2018-2023	Total
Aylesbury Vale	3	0	3
Chiltern	14	2	16
South Buckinghamshire	0	0	0
Wycombe	0	1	1
Total	17	3	20

Recommendations

21. Having established the future pitch and plot requirements for each District over the next 10 years, the report makes a number of recommendations the Councils to consider. In summary, ORS recommends the following:
 - » Safeguarding existing permanent Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites, to ensure that existing needs continue to be met;
 - » Identifying broad geographical locations within their Local Plans and specifying that the identification of further sites should focus on these locations where appropriate;
 - » Allocating private sites in suitable locations through the Local Plan process;
 - » Exploring opportunities to develop any new public sites within the most sustainable locations;
 - » Investigating instances where non-Gypsies and Travellers are occupying existing pitches and making these pitches available to the Travelling community where possible;
 - » Investigating the potential from existing sites to achieve additional pitches/plots;
 - » Identifying a reserve supply of sites, beyond the minimum requirement, which could be brought forward in the future if required;
 - » The development of suitable criteria based-policies for planning applications which could be incorporated within each Council's Core Strategy, Local Plans or other DPD;
 - » Supporting planning applications on the most appropriate sites, where these criteria have been met;
 - » Noting that Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers have separate traditions and may not be prepared to share sites. Similarly, Travelling Showpeople are unlikely to share sites;
 - » Ensuring that Councils work together and meet the requirements under the Duty to Co-operate, particularly if there were any indication that an authority was unable to meet the needs purporting to arise in its area;
 - » Monitoring occurrences of unauthorised encampments over time, and give consideration to the provision of temporary stopping places or transit sites, should regular travelling routes emerge; and
 - » Establishing a local Gypsy and Traveller Forum as a way of furthering understanding between the Gypsy, Traveller and settled communities, and help inform the site allocation process.