

Swindon Local Plan 2043

GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE
ACCOMMODATIONS TOPIC PAPER



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1. Purpose of this document/ Introduction

This document sets out the methodology used by Swindon Borough Council to assess potential sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation as part of the preparation of the emerging Local Plan.

The Council is required to consider the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers through the plan-making process and to identify suitable sites to help meet the accommodation requirement identified through the Council's evidence base. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) provides an assessment of the level of accommodation need within the Borough, while this document sets out the approach used to assess the suitability of potential sites for meeting that need.

The purpose of the site selection methodology is to provide a consistent, transparent and evidence-led framework for assessing potential sites. It considers a range of factors that may influence the suitability of a site for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, including sustainability, transport and accessibility, flood risk, environmental and planning constraints, utilities, community cohesion and the potential for mitigation where appropriate.

The methodology is intended to ensure that potential sites are assessed systematically against the same broad principles and that the reasons for the assessment outcomes are clearly identified. It provides an important part of the evidence base supporting the emerging Local Plan and will assist the Council in determining which sites may be appropriate for further consideration as potential allocations.

This document should therefore be read alongside the Council's wider evidence base, including the GTAA and other relevant Local Plan evidence.

2. Planning Context

The preparation of this methodology is informed by national planning policy relating to the provision of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024, requires local planning authorities to have an understanding of the housing needs of different groups within their communities and to reflect these needs in planning policies.

Paragraph 63 of the NPPF states that, in establishing housing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. The groups identified include, but are not limited to, those requiring affordable housing, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, students and travellers. This establishes that the accommodation needs of Travellers should form part of the evidence informing the preparation of development plans.

The inclusion of Travellers within paragraph 63 is particularly relevant to this Topic Paper. It establishes the requirement for the Council to understand the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and to ensure that these needs are appropriately considered through the Local Plan. Accordingly, the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) provides the evidence of the level and nature of accommodation need within Swindon Borough. This Site Selection Methodology complements the GTAA by providing the framework for considering how and where that identified need could potentially be accommodated.

The NPPF should be read alongside the Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS), August 2026, which sets out the specific national planning policy for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation. The PPTS requires local planning authorities, in producing their Local Plans, to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of sites against locally set targets, and to identify a supply of specific developable sites or broad locations for years 6 to 10 and, where possible, years 11 to 15. It also states that criteria should be set to guide land supply allocations where there is an identified need.

The PPTS further requires Traveller sites to be assessed in terms of their economic, social and environmental sustainability. Relevant considerations include access to services and facilities, sustainable transport, local environmental quality, community integration, infrastructure and services, flood risk, and the natural and historic environment. These considerations provide an important national policy basis for the criteria used within this Site Selection Methodology.

In preparing this methodology, the Council has therefore taken account of both the general requirements of the NPPF and the Traveller-specific requirements of the PPTS. The assessment criteria have been developed to provide a consistent and proportionate means of considering the suitability of potential sites against these policy considerations. The methodology does not seek to determine the level of accommodation need, which is established through the GTAA, but to assess the suitability of potential sites that could contribute towards meeting the identified need.

The assessment will form part of the wider evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. The findings will inform the identification of potential site allocations.

3. Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment

In 2024 Swindon Borough Council commissioned RRR Consultancy Ltd to undertake a Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Assessment (GTAA) for the period up to 2043. The findings of this study should be used to assist policy development and planning decision-making and supersedes any previous GTAAs (including any accommodation needs calculated prior to this assessment) for the local planning authority.

The assessment considered a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence to establish the current accommodation circumstances and future needs of the different community groups. The assessment drew on a review of relevant national and local planning policy, previous accommodation assessments and available secondary data. This included consideration of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Traveller Caravan Count, published in January 2024, to provide an understanding of trends in the Gypsy and Traveller population and patterns of accommodation provision. This desk-based evidence was supplemented by engagement with relevant stakeholders, providing further information on accommodation circumstances and the needs of the different community groups.

Direct engagement with members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities was also undertaken during spring and summer 2024. This provided qualitative evidence on existing accommodation circumstances, future accommodation requirements and wider service needs. Taken together, the different sources of evidence enabled the

GTAA to identify existing and projected accommodation needs and provided the basis for considering how these needs should be addressed through the Local Plan. As part of this assessment, consultation in relation to Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and boat dwellers, was undertaken with adjoining planning and housing authorities.

The GTAA identifies a permanent accommodation need for 35 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers over the period 2024–2043. This comprises 17 pitches for 2024–2029, followed by 6 pitches in each of the 2029–2034, 2034–2039 and 2039–2043 periods. The GTAA also identifies a need for 19 Travelling Showpeople plots over the same period.

4. Site Selection Methodology

4.1. Site Identification and Initial Scoping

As the first stage of the site selection process, the Council identified potential sources of land that could potentially contribute towards meeting the identified Gypsy and Traveller accommodation need. The initial scoping exercise considered existing Traveller sites, sites promoted to the Council for Gypsy and Traveller use, Council-owned land and strategic residential allocations.

Each category of site was considered in terms of its availability and potential to provide Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. Sites considered to have a realistic prospect of being available for this purpose were scoped in for further assessment. Sites were scoped out where there was no identified capacity, the land was not considered available, or the site was considered too advanced in the planning process to accommodate an additional use.

Following this initial scoping exercise, seven sites were identified for detailed assessment. The remaining sites and land categories were scoped out for the reasons set out in Table 1. The initial scoping stage therefore provides a proportionate means of focusing the detailed assessment on sites with the greatest potential to contribute towards meeting the identified accommodation need.

Category	Scoping Decision	Rationale
Authorised transit site (1 site – SBC owned)	Scoped in for further assessment	Potentially available for conversion to permanent site
Sites promoted to SBC for G&T uses (2 sites – private ownership)	Scoped in for further assessment	Available sites
Council owned land available for release (2 sites)	Scoped in for further assessment	Available sites
Authorised permanent sites	Scoped out	No capacity for intensification of sites

Unauthorised encampments	Scoped out	- Sites are not available for G&T uses - SBC does not hold data on defined boundaries of unauthorised encampments
Strategic residential site allocations with outline consent	Scoped out	Too advanced in planning process for additional uses
Strategic residential site allocations without any consent	Scoped out	Sites have not been promoted for G&T uses, considered unavailable

Table 1: Site Identification and Initial Scoping Criteria

4.2. Detailed Site Assessment

The seven sites identified through the initial site scoping exercise have been subject to a detailed assessment to consider their potential suitability for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The assessment has been informed by the considerations set out in Policy B, paragraph 13 of the PPTS and provides a consistent framework for considering the key opportunities, constraints and potential impacts associated with each site.

The assessment considers a range of factors relating to accessibility and location, environmental constraints, environmental quality and health impacts, and infrastructure. Each criterion is assessed using a Red, Amber or Green (RAG) rating, reflecting the level of constraint identified and, where relevant, the potential for mitigation.

The individual RAG ratings are considered collectively to inform an overall assessment of each site's potential suitability. The assessment is based primarily on available evidence and desktop assessment, and does not replace the need for detailed technical investigations or assessments that may be required at subsequent stages of the planning process.

4.3. Capacity Assumption

For the purposes of assessing the potential capacity of sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, an indicative capacity assumption of 0.05 hectares (500 square metres) per pitch has been applied.

This assumption is based on established practice in Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessments and local plan site assessment work. Evidence indicates that a pitch of approximately 325 square metres can accommodate the minimum separation distances and basic requirements associated with a pitch, while a larger area of approximately 500 square metres (0.05 hectares) provides a more appropriate allowance for the range of facilities required for a household. These can include hardstanding for static and touring caravans, parking for

vehicles, an amenity building, storage and drying areas, and a garden or amenity area.

The 0.05 hectare per pitch assumption has therefore been used as a reasonable and proportionate basis for estimating the potential number of pitches that could be accommodated on the sites assessed. It provides a consistent approach for comparing site capacity across the assessment and does not represent a minimum or fixed site size requirement for planning purposes. The actual number of pitches that could be accommodated on an individual site would depend on the site's characteristics, including its shape, access, environmental and planning constraints, infrastructure requirements, site layout and the need to provide appropriate separation, amenity and landscaping.

Accordingly, the indicative capacity figures generated through this methodology should be regarded as a starting point for assessing site potential, rather than a prescribed development capacity. More detailed site-specific design and assessment would be required to establish the number of pitches that could appropriately be accommodated at any site taken forward for allocation or planning permission.

There is no national standard within the NPPF or PPTS for determining the amount of land required per Travelling Showpeople plot. Therefore, an evidence-based benchmarking exercise has been undertaken using existing and allocated Travelling Showpeople sites in other local authority areas, alongside the Council's existing site at Furndale Road.

The site area and number of plots for each site have been identified and an average plot size calculated for each site. The results are set out in Table X. Based on this assessment, an indicative capacity assumption of 0.18 hectares per plot has been applied for the purpose of estimating the potential capacity of sites for Travelling Showpeople accommodation.

This is an indicative assumption for site assessment purposes only, and the actual capacity of individual sites will depend on site-specific characteristics, constraints and layout.

Borough	Local Plan	Site Allocation	Site Area (ha)	Capacity	Average Plot size
Tewkesbury Borough	Adopted	Land off Old Gloucester Road, Staverton	1.7	9	0.19
Cheshire East	Adopted	Land at Fir Farm, Brereton	2.73	10	0.273
Cheshire East	Adopted	Lorry park, off Mobberley Road, Knutsford	0.31	3	0.10
SBC Existing site	Adopted	Furndale Road	0.7	4	0.18

Table 3: Evidence-based benchmarking from different Local Authority

5. Policy Approach

The 2024 GTAA identifies a total permanent accommodation requirement of 35 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers over the Local Plan period to 2043. A significant proportion of this requirement arises during the initial part of the plan period, with 17 pitches identified for 2024–2029. The remaining need is distributed across the subsequent plan periods, with a further 6 pitches identified for each of 2029–34, 2034–39 and 2039–43, resulting in a total requirement of 35 pitches.

For Travelling Showpeople, the GTAA 2024 identifies a total requirement of 19 plots, of which 16 plots are required during 2024–29, followed by one plot in each of the three subsequent periods. Overall, the evidence indicates that the majority of the identified accommodation requirement for both Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople falls within the early part of the Local Plan period.

Period	Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs	Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs
2024-2029	17	16
2029-2034	6	1
2034-2039	6	1
2039-2043	6	1
Total	35	19

Table 4: Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs (Source: GTAA 2024)

The site assessment has informed the Council’s approach to meeting the identified need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation through the Local Plan. The assessment findings, together with site availability, capacity and other relevant planning considerations, have informed the identification of sites proposed for allocation under Policy HC9: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople’s Accommodation Site Allocation.

The proposed allocations are:

Site	Ownership	Accommodation type	Proposed Capacity
Little Rose Lane	Private	Gypsy and Travellers Community Accommodations	18 pitches
Land South of Hay Lane	SBC	Gypsy and Travellers Community Accommodations	17 pitches
Land at Chapel Farm	SBC	Travelling Showpeople Accommodations	19 plots

Table 5: Site Allocation for Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The Council has identified land within its ownership to provide for the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople over the Local Plan period. Unlike the privately promoted site at Little Rose Lane, no site deliverability proformas have been completed for the Council-owned sites, as the sites have been identified

through the Council's review of its land holdings and consideration of land available to meet the identified accommodation requirement.

6. Site Deliverability and Developability

The site promoter has confirmed that the Little Rose Lane site remains available for development and has expressed a clear intention to bring the site forward for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The promoter has indicated that a full planning application is anticipated to be submitted in Q4 2026.

Subject to the submission and determination of the planning application, the promoter has indicated that development could commence shortly after planning permission is secured, with the proposed 18 pitches anticipated to be delivered within approximately two years. This provides an indication that the site could contribute to meeting the identified Gypsy and Traveller accommodation requirement during the Local Plan period.

The Council has identified two Council-owned sites, Land South of Hay Lane and Land at Chapel Farm, to contribute towards meeting the identified accommodation needs over the Local Plan period. The identification of Council-owned land provides an opportunity for the Council to support the delivery of the required accommodation through the Local Plan allocations, with the sites having been considered in the context of the accommodation needs identified through the 2024 GTAA.

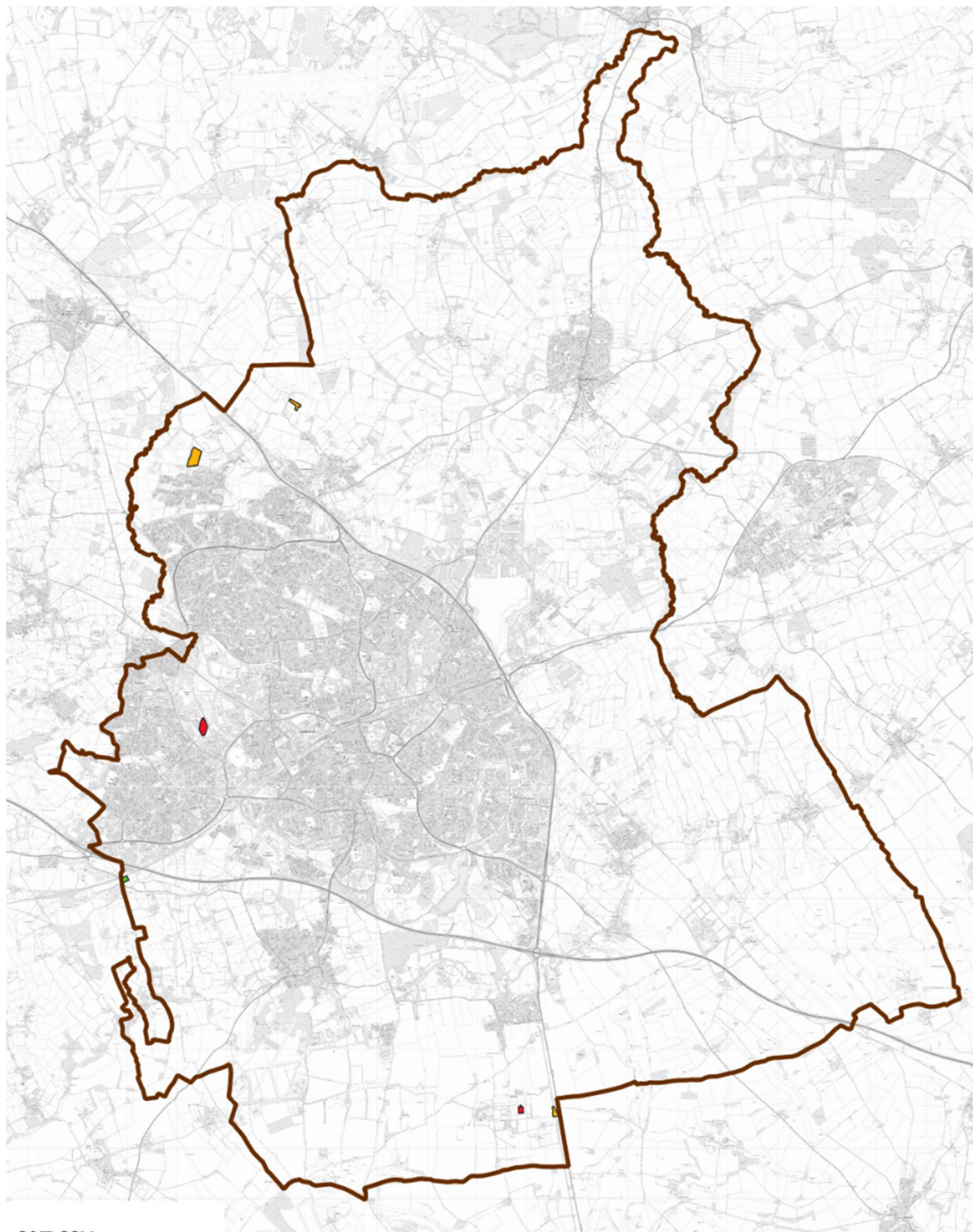
Land at Chapel Farm has the potential to provide 19 plots for Travelling Showpeople, which corresponds with the total requirement identified by the GTAA over the Local Plan period. This includes the 16 plots identified for 2024–29, followed by one plot in each of the three subsequent periods. Land South of Hay Lane, with potential for 17 Gypsy and Traveller pitches, would also contribute towards meeting the identified accommodation requirement. The timing of delivery of the Council-owned allocations will be dependent on further site assessment, the planning process and implementation, but the allocations provide identified capacity to address the accommodation needs arising throughout the plan period.

7. Appendix

Site Name	Gross Area (ha)	Net Area (ha) ((Gross Area less Flood Zone 3)*0.85)	Sustainability				Environmental constraints				Suitability	Availability
			Accessibility and Location			Known Infrastructure Constraint	Flood Risk	Heritage Impact	Impact on Landscape Character and Natural Environment	Health and environmental Quality		
			Highway access suitability	Access to services via sustainable transport	Relationship to Settlement							
Chiseldon Firs	1.2	1.20	Green	Amber	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Amber	Amber
Little Rose Lane	1.79	1.79	Green	Red	Amber	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Green	Amber	Green
Land at Quebec Road	1.56	1.40	Red	Red	Amber	Green	Green	Amber	Red	Green	Red	Green
Land at Rivermead	6.29	0.00	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Amber	Amber	Amber	Red	Green
Land at Chapel Farm	4.33	3.90	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Green	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green
Land at South of Hay Lane	1.03	0.93	Green	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Detailed Site Suitability Assessment Table

Location of All sites assessed for Suitability Assessment:



- G&T SSM
- Amber
 - Green
 - Red
 - Swindon Boundary