

Policy and Programmes

HEAD OF SERVICE: **Tim Oruye**

Robert Cramp
Planning Enforcement Team

CONTACT OFFICER: Ryan Hunt

Ryan.Hunt@southoxon.gov.uk

Tel: 01235 422422

Textphone: 18001 01235 422422

Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon,
OXON, OX14 3JE

Our reference: P24/S0941/FUL

12/04/2024

Dear Robert Cramp,

Planning Policy Response to P24/S0941/FUL- Emmanuel Ranch Windmill Road Towersey OX9 3QQ. Change of use of land to use as a residential caravan site for 3 gypsy families, including the stationing of 6 caravans of which no more than 3 are to be static caravans/mobile homes, together with the laying of hardstanding.

Thank you for providing the planning policy team with the opportunity to comment on this application. My response covers the need and supply of travellers' pitches in South Oxfordshire and provides an update on undertaking a new travellers' accommodation needs assessment and progress on the emerging Joint Local Plan 2041.

Need for pitches

The 2017 Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)¹ is South Oxfordshire's most up to date assessment of the need for pitches in the district and forms the basis for the need identified within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (adopted December 2020).

Adopted Local Plan Policy H14 identifies a requirement for 10 pitches, this is made up of 9 pitches to meet the needs of those who meet the 2015 Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS) definition and 1 additional pitch to address need that might arise from households whose travelling status was unknown at the time of the assessment. The 1 additional pitch was considered reasonable on the basis of

¹https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1670533691&CODE=F0466A8D7F61D0D62B5F5E3EED9A1972 Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse GTAA – ORS, June 2017

information available to the consultant on the proportion of unknown households that might comply with the 2015 definition.

The PPTS² was updated in December 2023 to amend the planning policy definition of gypsies and travellers contained in Annex 1 of that document. The revised definition now includes travellers who have ceased to travel permanently on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age:

"For the purposes 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 or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such."

As well as identifying the needs of those who met the 2015 PPTS definition, the 2017 GTAA also included an assessment of the pitch requirements for those households whose travelling status was unknown and for those households who did not meet the 2015 PPTS definition. Table 1 below sets out the component parts of the identified need assessed through the 2017 GTAA.

Table 1: Need for pitches and source of need from 2017 GTAA.

Source of need	Identified need for pitches	Relevant section of 2017 GTAA
Households that met the 2015 PPTS definition	9	Figure 32, report
Households whose travelling status was unknown	5	Figure 49, appendix B
Households that did not met the 2015 PPTS definition	8	Figure 65, appendix C

The 2017 GTAA identifies a potential need for up to 22 pitches, from the above three sources (table 1). However, not all of those households who were identified as not meeting the 2015 PPTS definition or whose travelling status was unknown will now met the revised December 2023 PPTS definition. As advised by paragraph 2 of Annex 1 of the PPTS:

²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/658198bb23b70a000d234c03/Final_planning_and_travellers_policy.pdf

“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.”*

Some persons identified in the 2017 GTAA as not meeting the 2015 definition or whose status was unknown at the time may now meet the revised planning definition, but others will not, because they may have never travelled or have ceased travelling on grounds unrelated to their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age. As such they would not meet the new PPTS definition of a traveller for planning policy purposes.

Until an updated assessment is completed, and the revised definition is applied in determining a household's travelling status, the number of additional pitches, if any, required above those identified within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 Policy H14 of 10 pitches is unknown.

Supply of pitches

Since the GTAA was published (2017) the council has granted 2 applications for permanent pitches, and temporary permission for 2 pitches has been allowed at appeal. The two single permanent pitches are at Newlands Platts Lane, Northend (P19/S1069/FUL) and Watlings Paddock, Watlington Road, Stadhampton (P16/S2987/FUL). The pitch at Newlands Pitts had temporary permission at the time of the 2017 GTAA and was counted within the assessed need for pitches. Subsequently it was granted a certificate of lawfulness to demonstrate the structure on site is a permanent structure and not a caravan (P22/S1976/LDE), and further approval to demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling (P23/S2783/FUL). The pitch at Newlands Pitts is therefore no longer counted within the need (as the need has been met) or supply of pitches (as it is no longer in use as a travellers' pitch). As a result of these permissions there is the need for a further 8 pitches to be delivered in the plan period.

Additionally temporary planning permission was granted in November 2022 under Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/20/3263366 7/8 Kiln Lane, Garsington and Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/C/19/3238398 Land at 12 Kiln Lane, Garsington for 2 pitches for a limited period of 5 years. Temporary permissions have not been counted in the supply as the permission is time limited and the households will still require a permanent pitch once that temporary year period ends in 2027.

The council is currently unable to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites and subsequently has a zero years' supply of pitches.

Policy H14 of the Local Plan makes provision for pitches sufficient to meet the identified need of 10 pitches to be delivered on 3 strategic sites (Chalgrove Airfield STRAT7, Land adjacent to Culham Science Centre STRAT9 and the allocation at Didcot North East), however none of these are anticipated to deliver pitches in the next 5 years. As well as the local plan allocations, the Local Plan policy also provides a criteria-based policy for determining proposals that come forward. This provides that proposals for pitches for travellers (who meet the planning policy definition, as defined by the PPTS) on sites not identified within part 1 of Policy H14 will be permitted where it has been demonstrated that the criteria in part 2 of Policy H14 have been met, alongside any other relevant policies.

Updated assessment of need and emerging Joint Local Plan 2041

The council is undertaking a new joint Oxfordshire-wide GTAA along with the other local planning authorities in Oxfordshire³. The study is underway and is being carried out by consultants Arc4. This new assessment will take account of changes to the planning definition of travellers contained in the December 2023 PPTS and is expected to report findings late spring 2024. This is to inform the Reg 19 pre-submission version of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041, which is due for consultation in Autumn 2024 and adoption by the end of 2025.

Yours sincerely

Ryan Hunt
Planning Policy Officer

³ South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire, Cherwell and Oxford City.