

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Topic Paper

Submission Document

Medway Council

Regulation 22
December 2025

Contents

Contents.....	2
1 Introduction.....	3
1.1 Definition and purpose	3
1.2 National Policy Context.....	3
2 Medway’s Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs.....	5
2.1 Overview.....	5
3 Approach to delivering sites	7
3.2 Increasing provision	7
4 Summary and Monitoring	9
4.1 Summary	9
4.2 Monitoring	9

1 Introduction

1.1 Definition and purpose

- 1.1.1 Topic papers set out written material produced by the local planning authority to be submitted with a local plan for examination.
- 1.1.2 The purpose of this Topic Paper is to provide further background information to the Council's approach to providing for its identified Gypsy and Traveller accommodation need, and that which is set out in policies relating to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation within the Local Plan.

1.2 National Policy Context

- 1.2.1 The NPPF details that planning policies must reflect the housing needs of diverse groups, including those requiring affordable housing, families, older people, students, disabled individuals, service families, travellers, renter, and self builds¹.
- 1.2.2 The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) sets out how to assess and plan for traveller housing needs. Policy A stipulates that local authorities must:
 - Engage early with both settled and traveller communities
 - Collaborate with neighbouring authorities and support groups
 - Use robust evidence to inform plans and decision
- 1.2.3 Policy B stipulates that authorities should set criteria to guide land allocation for traveller sites. Where no need is identified, fair criteria-based policies must still be in place to support applications and respect both nomadic traditions and settled communities.
- 1.2.4 For the purposes of the planning system, the current planning definition of a Traveller is set out in the PPTS (2024). The planning definition set out in Annex 1 states that:
 - 1. *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, and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.*
 - 2. *For the purposes of this planning policy, “travelling showpeople” means:*

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 63
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

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.

For the purposes of this planning policy, "travellers" means "gypsies and travellers" and "travelling showpeople" as defined above.

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 plots for "travelling showpeople", which may / will need to incorporate space or to be split to allow for the storage of equipment.

- 1.2.5 Following the changes to the PPTS in 2024, the planning definition now includes all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan. All Gypsies and Travellers now meet the PPTS 2024 planning definition of a Traveller.
- 1.2.6 There were no changes made to the planning definition of a Travelling Showperson made in 2024 but is also now assumed that all Travelling Showpeople will meet the planning definition².

² Planning Policy for Traveller Site, Annex 1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites>

2 Medway's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 Medway Council commissioned an updated Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA, 2024) to identify the needs for gypsy and traveller pitches and travelling showpeople plots, to align with the Local Plan period. This accommodation assessment provided a robust assessment of need and created an evidence base to aid the implementation Local Plan policies.
- 2.1.2 It identified the need within Medway as set out below:

Figure 1 – Need for Gypsy and Traveller households in Medway (2022 – 2041)

	Status	2022 – 2041
A	Meet Planning Definition [Gypsy and Travellers Policy Allocations]	31
B	Undetermined	15
C	Do not meet Planning Definition [Wider Housing Policy Allocations]	10
	TOTAL	56

Years	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	Total
	2022-26	2027-31	2032-36	2037-41	
	22	4	3	2	31

- 2.1.3 The report identified that need arising should be addressed through site allocation/intensification/expansion and through the Local plan policies via criteria based policy.
- 2.1.4 An addendum to the GTAA was produced in 2025 to take account of the updated PPTS. Under the 2024 PPTS definition the need target is now presented as follows:

Figure 2 – Need for Gypsy and Traveller households in Medway (2022 – 2041)

	Status	2022 – 2041
A + C	Meet Planning Definition [Gypsy and Traveller Policy Allocations]	41
B	Undetermined [meet 100% of need through Criteria-Based Policies]	15
	TOTAL	56

- 2.1.5 There is a need for 41 pitches emerging from the households that meet the planning definition. There is a need for 4 plots for identified Travelling Showpeople households and for 4 plots for undetermined households.
- 2.1.6 These specified needs are to be considered as a main modification to Policy T10, to provide clarity on the scale of needs.

3 Approach to delivering sites

- 3.1.1 The Council has used iterative Calls for Sites and updates to the Strategic Land Availability Assessments to consider potential sites for development, including for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. A number of potential sites for development were reviewed after publishing an interim Land Availability Assessment report in September 2023, and as part of this, a call for Gypsy and Traveller sites was made.
- 3.1.2 This Call for Sites did not identify potential sites that could be suitable for gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople. The Council sought advice from the GTAA consultant on appropriate actions to explore to meet needs in the context of the lack of available or suitable sites in the Land Availability Assessment. The GTAA identified existing sites with current or emerging household needs for additional pitches. The GTAA consultant and Planning officers considered if there could be potential for intensification of sites that would provide additional pitch capacity to meet needs. A number of sites were identified with potential for intensification, which could contribute to meeting needs.
- 3.1.3 Following the GTAA update, Policy T10 was developed as a criteria-based policy, to be used in planning applications when considering new sites and their suitability in meeting gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople need. The policy looks to safeguard existing sites over the plan period with some exceptions stipulated within the policy. The policy also seeks the expansion of safeguarded gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople sites.
- 3.1.4 Paragraph 11 of the PPTS encourages the use of criteria based policy to guide land supply allocations where there is identified need. Establishing criteria based policy increases the likelihood of finding land deemed as suitable to meet identified need for sites that would otherwise not be considered, whilst maintaining fairness in the type of land, accessibility, and environmental impacts.

3.2 Increasing provision

- 3.2.1 There are a number of gypsy and traveller sites and one travelling showpeople site in Medway. These include a public site at Cuxton which is managed by Medway Council and a range of permanent and temporary private sites across the authority area. Since the preparation of the GTAA in 2024, further sites have been developed in Medway.
- 3.2.2 There are 10 new pitches that have recently been permitted by the Council within Medway:

Site	Location	Permitted
Shant Cottage	Grain Road, Lower Stoke, Rochester, ME3 9RF	3 mobile homes

Land On The Southeast Side Of Ropers Green Lane	High Halstow, Rochester, ME3 8QP	3 new pitches each of which are comprised of 1 mobile home, 1 touring caravan, and 1 dayroom
Scarlet Meadow	Matts Hill Road, Rainham, Gillingham, ME9 7XA	4 new pitches to the rear of the existing site each with 1 Mobile Home and 1 Touring Caravan, a shared dayroom, and the retention of stables building

- 3.2.3 In addition, 10 touring caravans were granted at the M2 Commuter Car Park, Maidstone Road, Rainham, Gillingham, ME8 0LU, providing an additional 5 new pitches and making a total of 15 new pitches granted this year (10 approved by Medway Council & 5 on appeal).
- 3.2.4 A further application for 8 additional pitches near High Halstow is to be determined shortly.

4 Summary and Monitoring

4.1 Summary

- 4.1.1 In the absence of available and suitable sites being identified through the land availability assessments, the Council's approach is:
- Safeguarding existing sites
 - Expansion or intensification of sites
 - Identifying new sites through criteria based policy
- 4.1.2 Policy T10 provides a robust criteria-based approach, enabling fair assessment of new sites, whilst safeguarding existing ones, with scope for expansion where criteria are met. This aligns with paragraph 11 of the PPTS which encourages criteria-based approaches to ensure fairness, accessibility and environmental balance.
- 4.1.3 Medway Council has already permitted a number of sites in the last year, demonstrating that a criteria-based approach through the development management process is an effective means of providing for gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople needs.

4.2 Monitoring

- 4.2.1 The Council will monitor the policy approach through the Authority Monitoring Report, noting permitted sites as well as refusals and reasons for refusal, to determine whether set criteria is effective in granting sites.
- 4.2.2 The Council will also continue to review the policy against any PPTS and NPPF updates to ensure alignment with national policy and guidance.