



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and unauthorised encampments

Reducing cost and conflict around unauthorised Traveller encampments - challenges and opportunities

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Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and unauthorised encampments

The Government's aims in respect of traveller sites are:

- to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites
- that plan-making and decision-taking should aim **to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments** and make enforcement more effective
- to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply
- to reduce tensions between settled and traveller communities in plan-making and planning decisions
- for local planning authorities to have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment



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- Local authorities are responsible for taking action to **address unauthorised encampments**. This is best done through **the provision of an adequate number of sites** provided through the planning system.
- Our policy provides local councils with the **freedom and responsibility** to deal with enforcement action and to determine the appropriate level and location of traveller site provision in their areas in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- In much the same way as we expect councils to plan to meet the needs of their settled community and those Gypsies and Travellers who have permanently settled, our Planning Policy for Traveller Sites sets out that local authorities should **objectively assess their traveller needs and identify a suitable five-year supply of sites** to meet their needs, taking account of national planning policy in doing so.
- Delaying establishing a robust supply of sites against needs in a way which is consistent with policy as a whole **exposes local planning authorities to unplanned development** which may prove more controversial than provision established during the Local Plan process.



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- Updated Planning Policy for Traveller Sites on 31 August 2015
 - Amend the definition of “Gypsies and Travellers” and “Travelling showpeople” for planning purposes to remove the words ‘*or permanently*’.
 - Amend national planning policy (including Planning Policy for Traveller Sites) to make clear that, subject to the best interests of the child, unmet need and personal circumstances are unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt and any other harm so as to establish very special circumstances.
 - Make intentional unauthorised development a material consideration that weighs against the grant of permission on all types of development.
 - In exceptional cases, where a local authority is burdened by a large scale unauthorised site which has significantly increased their need, and their area is subject to strict and special planning constraints, then there is no assumption that they must meet their traveller site needs in full.
 - Local authorities should very strictly limit new traveller sites in the open countryside
 - Amend paragraph 25 of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites so that the absence of an up-to-date five year supply of deliverable sites be removed as a significant material consideration in the grant of temporary permission for traveller sites in sensitive areas including the Green Belt.



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- The change of definition is not about changing anyone's ethnic identity but rather establishing a definition appropriate for planning purposes. For planning purposes a traveller should be someone of a nomadic way of life whatever their race or origin.
- Those who have ceased to travel permanently will still be able to continue to submit applications for caravan sites if they wish to maintain links to their traditional way of life, but such applications would be considered under wider national planning policy through our National Planning Policy Framework.
- A local authority can request further information as part of any planning application, and in so doing can determine whether someone applying for planning permission plans to continue to travel. This could include (amongst other matters) asking whether they previously led a nomadic lifestyle, whether there is an intention to continue leading a nomadic habit of life and if not the reasons for ceasing, how soon and in what circumstances.



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- The Government is providing assistance for local authorities to provide sites.
- Between 2011 and March 2015, the Traveller Pitch Funding programme helped local authorities and other registered providers build new and refurbish existing traveller sites. The Homes and Communities Agency is forecasting that it will have spent £42 million delivering 463 new and 332 refurbished pitches through this programme.
- The New Homes Bonus will match fund the additional council tax raised for new homes, including Gypsy and Traveller pitches.
- Local authorities can now bid to fund traveller sites through the 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme, along with other forms of affordable housing.
- Local authorities are making progress. In July 2015, the number of traveller caravans on authorised privately funded sites was 11,478, which is an increase of 12% since July 2014.



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