

## **The current situation on the Isle of Wight**

The council first commissioned a Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTTSA) in 2006, with subsequent updates in 2012 and 2015, that provided an assessment of housing need and pitch requirements across the island. Following changes to the PPTS and to ensure the council had an up-to-date evidence base, the council undertook its own [Isle of Wight Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment](#) in 2018.

The 2018 assessment outlined the need to:

- Create at least 1 permanent site;
- Develop 16 permanent pitches rising to 19 by 2035;
- Recommendation of an additional transit site of 2 pitches rising to 3 by 2035.

The GTTS indicated that this would be of greatest benefit in the Ryde Regeneration Area as this has the largest and most settled population of travellers.

It is also noted that previous GTTSAs identified that the Isle of Wight does not form part of any established 'traditional' Gypsy and Traveller routes. This is still believed to be the case in 2024. In support of this, it is noted that since the publication of the 2018 report there have been no incidences recorded of any traditional 'Fairs' or other similar events being held on the Island, which Gypsies and Travellers may attend as part of their regular travelling routes. A reason could be due to the additional requirement and expense of accessing the Island by ferry.

Therefore, the conclusion of the 2018 assessment that finds no evidence of significant in or out migration of Gypsies or Travellers remains sound. This supports the settled nature of the GTTS population on the island.

More recent analysis undertaken by the IWC Housing Service in 2022 showed that there are no Local Authority or Registered Provider owned or managed Gypsy and Traveller pitches on the Island. Through the desk-based and observational research carried out, all current authorised and unauthorised sites and encampments were identified. This work has showed that there are:

- no public permanent sites or transit owned by the Council;
- two unauthorised sites on public owned land in the Ryde area, both have been unofficially 'tolerated' since at least 2012;
- one unauthorised site occupied since at least 2006 which is the subject of a legal judgement, meaning that the residents cannot be moved until a transit site is built for them;
- two other observed unauthorised sites which are believed to contain people who are not either Gypsies or Travellers.

The observed GTTS population on the island appears to have remained fairly settled in the same place or nearby vicinity since the first GTAA assessment was carried out in 2006, then the 2018 update and more lately the 2022 caravan count return which found 16 (n=0) unauthorised caravans/vehicles on a total of seven (n+2) sites.

Currently all tolerated / informal sites are functioning well within their existing communities, in line with paragraph 13 of [Planning Policy for travellers sites](#) which notes that LPA policies should '*promote peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community.*'

Furthermore, no planning applications have been submitted to the council for sites or plots since the adoption of the Core Strategy in March 2012. This is an important factor as the 'identified need' highlighted in the 2018 assessment is currently being accommodated on the sites identified in the 2022 work, with no increase in caravans, and tolerance within the community.

## **Policy approach in the IPS**

As no suitable sites have come forward, no planning applications have been submitted and the existing GTTS population on the island is settled and tolerated (and is effectively the 'identified need'), the council has decided to take a positive but robust policy approach in the Island Planning Strategy towards new provision, as guided by paragraph 11 of the governments [Planning Policy for travellers sites](#).

**Policy H11 'Planning for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Provision'** sets out criteria against which applications submitted for sites for the travelling community will be assessed.

The policy is criteria based in order to clearly assess any proposals that may come forward. The provision of pitches/plots within settlements is appropriate in principle, as for other forms of housing. Outside of settlement boundaries, proposals may be appropriate subject to the criteria contained within the policy and other policies within the Island Planning Strategy

The council, working in partnership with its Housing Service and aligning with paragraph 7 of [Planning Policy for travellers sites](#), will also commission an update to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment in 2025 to help inform the content of a separate GTTS Allocations DPD, as identified in the Council's Local Development Scheme.

Policy H11 and supporting paragraphs establish that the council will undertake a future 'call for sites' as none have so far come forward, in order to identify potentially suitable sites for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople. The results of this exercise will also be used, alongside the updated needs assessment, to help inform the preparation of the development plan document to address any identified needs.

## **Gypsy, Traveller & Travelling Showpeople Allocations DPD**

Given the settled nature and low numbers in the GTTS population on the island, the IWC is taking a proportionate approach to the identification of new sites, which, if necessary, will be allocated in a separate Development Plan Document and represent '*a fair and effective strategy to meet need through the identification of land for sites*' as detailed in paragraph 4 (b) of [Planning Policy for travellers sites](#).

Whilst sites for Gypsies and Travellers pitches generally should follow similar locational criteria to the selection of housing sites for the settled community, there are specific aspects of Gypsies and Travellers cultural traditions and preferences which need specific consideration, such as the preference for living in a caravan or working from home and the need to provide space suitable for both sustained periods of settled living whilst also facilitating a nomadic lifestyle. These factors need to be borne in mind when assessing sites.

A bespoke call for sites exercise and a bespoke, plan-led mechanism to ensure any necessary allocation of sites is considered to represent the most appropriate method of addressing this issue on the island and would align with the content of Policy B: Planning for traveller sites in government guidance.

Two reasonable alternatives were considered to the approach taken. The first was to 'do nothing', that is, not to have a robust criterion based policy, nor to allocate sites in a future DPD and leave it to the market. This approach was not considered appropriate as would not represent the positive, plan-led approach set out in government guidance.

The second alternative was to undertake the needs assessment update, a further call for sites, assess them and then allocate as necessary in the Island Planning Strategy. This was considered a reasonable alternative in the circumstances but it was felt that the right approach was to have a bespoke plan led approach and to undertake a separate Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations DPD.