

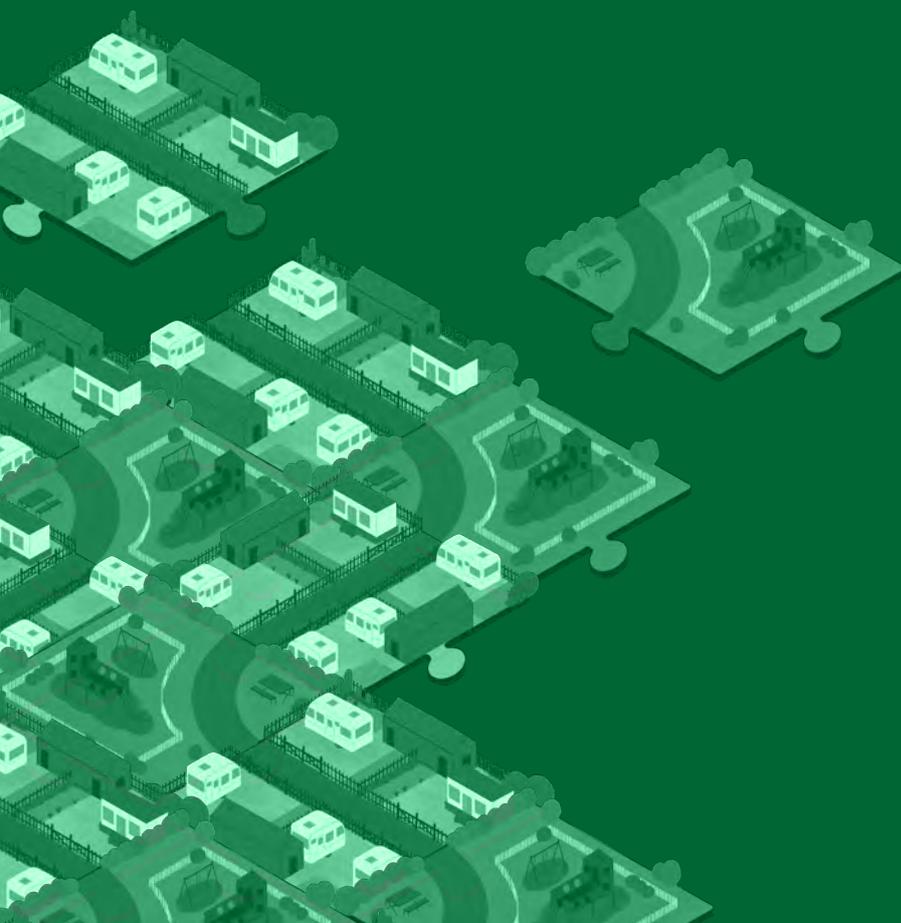


**FRIENDS,
FAMILIES &
TRAVELLERS**

Kicking the can down the road:

**The planning and provision of
Gypsy and Traveller sites in
England 1960-2023 Executive
Summary**

**Dr Simon Ruston MRTPI
for Friends, Families and Travellers**



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The planning and provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England 1960-2023
Executive Summary

Dr Simon Ruston MRTPI
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November 2023

*This report has been made possible
through the support of Oak Foundation.*

Dedication to Steve Staines (1947 – 2022)

Steve founded Friends, Families and Travellers over 25 years ago, in response to what became the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, and the effect on Travellers.

Steve worked tirelessly on planning issues and was one of the early pioneers of considering how the planning system addressed the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

Executive summary

Gypsies and Travellers are an important part of Britain's population, heritage and social fabric. Providing well-designed and managed sites for Gypsies and Travellers supports happy and healthy communities and addresses wider determinants of health, education and employment.

There is a direct correlation between accommodation insecurity and health outcomes. With Gypsy and Traveller communities having life expectancies between 10 and 25 years shorter than the general population, there is a strong case for site provision.

Furthermore, 2021 Census data indicates that many within the Gypsy and Traveller communities need socially provided accommodation, with 44% of Gypsy and Traveller Census respondents renting in social housing, compared with all ethnic groups at 17%. As such, it is important that there is a wide choice of homes available for Gypsy and Traveller communities.

This report is concerned with the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites through the planning system since 1960, with a specific focus on the period from 1994 to the present day.

The period from 1960-2023 can be broadly summarised as follows:

1960 – The closure of traditional stopping places.

1968 – The creation of a statutory duty to provide sites.

1994 – The revocation of the statutory duty to provide sites.

2006 – The instigation of a regional approach to Gypsy and Traveller site provision.

2011 – The revocation of a regional approach to Gypsy and Traveller site provision.

2015 – The exclusion of a significant part of the Gypsy and Traveller population from the assessment and provision of sites through the change in definition within the national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS 2015).

2022 – A ruling in the Court of Appeal that the PPTS 2015 definition was tainted with discrimination.

The report looks at these key moments in time for Gypsy and Traveller site provision, giving an overview of the impact of the changes.

The research then goes on to look at 100 local planning authorities and makes the following key findings (amongst other matters):

- Of the 100 local planning authorities where information was available, 64% had failed to allocate sites as part of the development plan process despite 29 years of government policy and guidance that required this.
- There were 149 socially-provided sites across the 100 local planning authorities and of these sites, 119 were built before 1994, and only 30 since then (after the statutory duty to provide sites had been revoked).

The research then looks in more detail at 15 different local planning authorities and from this makes the following findings:

- Even though a local planning authority may have a 5-year land supply (or near to) for Gypsy and Traveller sites, planning appeal inspectors were finding that there was a lack of alternative sites. As such, the presence or otherwise of a 5-year supply is a poor indication of whether or not a local planning authority is meeting its need.
- In some cases, there was evidence that the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar were being missed in accommodation needs assessments.
- One company undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments was consistently using 'turnover' on pitches as a form of supply. This approach is methodologically problematic and results in figures being artificially reduced.
- Two of the local planning authorities relied upon private sites to meet the need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, despite evidence to suggest that social provision was required.
- In two areas, Gypsy and Traveller sites which had been allocated in the local plan for use had not been constructed.
- In a number of cases, local plans had been adopted without site allocations for Gypsies and Travellers, on the basis of commitments from local planning authorities to meet the need in future documents, that did not materialise.
- In areas where there had been no provision for Gypsy and Traveller sites for many years, despite there being identified need, there was no real consequence for the local planning authority.
- The Green Belt is a significant constraint to the provision of sites. In areas with a significant proportion of Green Belt, the consequences of not allocating sites led to multiple temporary permissions and in one case a large scale and costly eviction.

The report identified the following good practice:

- In Preston, the local planning authority took the step of purchasing an existing site from the county council. This allowed for the residents to form a co-operative to manage the site themselves.
- In Leeds and Bristol, sites have been established without planning permission on unused public land in order to address immediate need.
- In Leeds, a negotiated stopping model allowed for transit provision to be made on a flexible basis.
- In some areas where local Gypsy and Traveller advocacy organisations were involved in the planning process / campaigning for sites, provision was made.
- Where local planning authorities committed time and resource to provision, progress on site provision was made.
- Four local authorities had made direct provision without going through a site allocations process, which was a pragmatic approach to provision.
- Where elected politicians showed leadership on Gypsy and Traveller accommodation provision, tangible progress was made.
- The regional planning process that was abolished in 2011 was an effective means for scrutinising local planning authorities' approach to Gypsy and Traveller site provision.
- Only 2 out of 15 local planning authorities explicitly addressed the issue of social provision. Given that a larger proportion of Gypsies and Travellers live in socially provided accommodation (including bricks and mortar housing) this should be a key consideration for councils.

The report then makes the following primary recommendation:

- To introduce a statutory duty to provide sites. Such a duty should also exist alongside proper funding measures. With a reasonable approach, to both location and funding, this could be the single biggest transformative measure for Gypsies and Travellers in England.

Further recommendations to increase and improve Gypsy and Traveller site provision include:

- That following the judgment in Lisa Smith v The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites 2012 definition should be restored.
- That new detailed guidance on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments should be issued.
- The 5-year supply of sites figure, should be set for publicly owned sites by local authorities only, as it is a poor indicator of pitches being available for occupation. Private provision should be measured against the general need figure. This measure will ensure that public provision is made.
- In locations with regional government with planning functions, oversight of Gypsy and Traveller provision should be a responsibility at the strategic level plan.
- Local planning authorities should seek to engage with local Gypsy and Traveller communities and organisations as much as possible.
- Where there is an identified need for public sites, this should be met through direct provision rather than through site allocations. This will ensure that sites are built in a timely manner and will not be delayed by lengthy local plan processes.
- In areas constrained by Green Belt, national policy should be amended to state the need for public sites is capable of outweighing the harm to the Green Belt, so as to establish very special circumstances.
- In order to ensure Gypsy and Traveller needs are met, Local Plans should not be found to be sound unless the public need for sites has been addressed either through allocation or direct provision, and that there are sufficient allocations to meet a significant percentage of the private need.
- National planning policy on Green Belt should be amended, in order to be more permissive of sites in areas which are subject to significant constraints which cause issues in the identification and provision of sites.
- All local authorities should have a 'negotiated stopping' policy, in order to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers passing through their area.
- That models of good practice are shared and accessed through existing networks and forums such as the National Policy Advisory Panel, to support social housing providers in improving and increasing site provision.

Appendices: The list of the 15 Local Planning Authorities area profiles



1. **Basildon area profile**
2. **Brighton area profile**
3. **Bristol area profile**
4. **Carlisle area profile**
5. **Cheshire West and Chester area profile**
6. **Cornwall area profile**
7. **East Hampshire area profile**
8. **Leeds area profile**
9. **Manchester area profile**
10. **Preston area profile**
11. **Runnymede area profile**
12. **Southwark area profile**
13. **Swale area profile**
14. **Wirral area profile**
15. **Wychavon area profile**

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FRIENDS, FAMILIES & TRAVELLERS

Contact Details:

Address

Friends, Families and Travellers
Community Base
113 Queens Road
Brighton
BN1 3XG

Telephone 01273 234 777

Email fft@gypsy-traveller.org

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