

Briefing Note

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FIVE-YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

AND

UPDATED GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS' ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT

Summary

This briefing note reports on the annual update to Wiltshire's five-year housing land supply, and an update on the latest need assessment for Gypsies and Travellers.

For five-year housing land supply, the updated position is a **2.8 years** supply using a base date of **1 April 2025**. It is an improvement on the 1 April 2024 position, which was 2.42 years. The updated position will inform decision-taking of planning applications and appeals for proposals for housing, but as it is still below 5 years the presumption in favour of sustainable development (or 'tilted balance') will continue to apply (see section 5). The five-year land supply is discussed further in sections 1 - 6 below.

The updated need assessment reflects recent changes in national policy to the definition of Gypsies and Travellers, which means that there is an increase in levels of need for pitches in the future. This is discussed in sections 7-10 below.

The Government requires that an adequate supply of land for housing and for Traveller accommodation is provided and uses five-year land supply as a measure for this. Supply can be replenished with new planning permissions and site allocations brought forward through the development plan to ensure that requirements in the future can be met. Where there is an insufficient land supply both for housing, or Travellers' accommodation over the next five years (for example, through allocated sites not being brought forward promptly or sufficient sites being permitted), the council can be exposed to unplanned, 'speculative' planning applications to help improve the land supply (see sections 5, 6, 9 and 10).

This briefing note provides information on the Government measures for assessing land supply for both housing and Gypsies and Travellers' accommodation, and what the implications are for decision-taking on planning applications.

FIVE-YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Government policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), includes two measures that are designed to drive the delivery of housing:
- (i) the five-year housing land supply measures the level of 'supply' that can be expected to come forward over a five-year period of time i.e. the number of homes that it is anticipated **will be** built (see sections 2 and 3 below);
 - (ii) the Housing Delivery Test measures the number of homes that **have been** built over a set period (see section 4 below).
- 1.2 Both measures have established methodologies and assess the expected delivery of homes, and homes that have been delivered respectively, against the housing requirement for a local authority area. Many local authorities find themselves in the same position as Wiltshire, given the increases to housing required by the Government and national policy.

2. What is the five-year housing land supply?

- 2.1 The latest NPPF (December 2024) sets out how the five-year housing land supply operates. The housing requirement used in the five-year housing land supply calculation is the local housing need which is set using the Government's standard methodology¹. This is calculated using data on existing housing stock and housing affordability in the local authority area. It has set inputs and is recalculated every year based on the latest data which is applicable at the base date of 1 April 2025.
- 2.2 The annual update for Wiltshire has now been completed and the results of the assessment, using a base date of 1 April 2025 is set out in the 2025 Housing Land Supply Statement (HLSS). This will be available shortly on the council website via this [link](#). Key points:
- The council cannot demonstrate the requisite five-year housing land supply. The current position indicates there is a **2.8 years'** supply.
 - The deliverable supply has increased from the previous position (2.42 years) due to a number of factors, including a slight reduction in the local housing need figure, an increase in the number of new housing planning permissions being granted, greater prospects of delivery at major strategic sites, and a limited number of housing completions in the past year (which means a greater number of dwellings are retained in the housing land supply).

¹ Planning Practice Guidance (MHCLG, December 2024) - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

3. How is the housing land supply calculated?

3.1 Housing land supply is calculated using a base date from which calculations are made to ensure a consistent position is established. An explanation is provided below:

Calculation at base date of 1 April 2025:

Elements of calculation	Value
(A) Local Housing Need as at 1 April 2025 (homes per annum)	3,488
(B) Local Housing Need over 5 years (2025-2030) = (A) x 5	17,438
(C) Add buffer (established from Housing Delivery Test results) to arrive at five-year housing requirement = (B) + 5%	18,310
(D) Deliverable housing land supply	10,268
(E) Calculate number of years housing land supply = (D) / (C) x 5	2.8

What can be included in the deliverable housing land supply?

- Sites with full planning permission at the base date. For small sites (less than 10 homes), a delivery rate is applied based on historic rates of lapsed permissions and delivery timescales. For large sites (10 or more homes) the delivery timescales and how many homes can be delivered in five years need to be taken into account, reflecting that some sites will not deliver in their entirety, or at all, in the five-year period.
- Sites with outline planning permission, a resolution to grant planning permission, or non-permitted sites which are allocated in the development plan² at the base date. Again, delivery timescales and homes that can be delivered within five years are taken into account. As these sites are less advanced through the planning process, the NPPF requires us to show clear evidence to demonstrate that sites at this stage are deliverable over the five-year period being assessed. This means that for large sites, which take time to deliver, we may only be able to include the early phases of development in the five-year housing land supply.
- A windfall allowance to include delivery from homes on new 'windfall' sites (sites that are not allocated in the development plan and do not have planning permission at the base date) over the five-year period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2030.

² Wiltshire Core Strategy, Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan, and allocations in Neighbourhood Plans which do not yet have planning permission.

4. What is the Housing Delivery Test (HDT)?

- 4.1 This measures net homes delivery (i.e. net homes built) in a local authority area, against the homes required (set by the local housing need) over the preceding three years. It uses local authority completions statistics and planning data to carry out the calculation.
- 4.2 The results are published for each local authority area by the Secretary of State annually, see [Housing Delivery Test \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-delivery-test). The most up to date result, at the time of writing, is the 2023 results. These show that Wiltshire has performed well against the HDT and scored 135% against in the latest results. This means that only a 5% buffer needs to be added to the housing requirement in the calculation (5% is the usual buffer which all local authorities must apply as a minimum.)³ Where authorities score below 85% in the test then a 20% buffer will apply.

5. What are the implications of not having a five-year housing land supply?

- 5.1 The implications of not having an adequate housing land supply for decision-taking have been set out in previous briefing notes, for example in [No. 24-18](#) (September 2024) and [No. 24-20](#) (December 2024). These explain that the presumption in favour of sustainable development (often referred to as the 'tilted balance') applies when determining planning applications. This reflects the Government's approach to ensure that sufficient land is being released to meet its aspirations for housing growth as set out in paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF.

6. What can we do to improve the housing land supply?

- 6.1 Where applications are being considered for sites at settlements (including those outside the defined settlement boundaries), there may be the opportunity to improve housing supply by favourably considering housing development proposals, even where there may be some conflict with the development plan policies.
- 6.2 Since the base date of 1 April 2025, consents have continued to be granted permission on suitable sites (including just over 1,000 dwellings on large sites). While these do not currently contribute to the housing land supply because they were permitted after the base date of 1 April 2025, they will help to increase the housing land supply in the future. New permissions help replenish the housing land supply as it is reduced due to housing completions, planning permissions lapsing, and unexpected delays in delivery on large strategic sites, which are more complex to deliver.
- 6.3 Work will now start on the preparation of the next housing land supply position, which will have a 1 April 2026 base date. These statements take time to prepare, particularly for

³ Where delivery falls below the housing requirement over the three year period the local authority can be penalised, requiring it to (a) produce an Action Plan to set out steps to address the under-delivery, (b) apply a 20% buffer on the housing requirement in the calculation, and (c) the presumption in favour of sustainable development applying for housing proposals (irrespective of the five-year housing land supply position). Which of these penalties are applied will depend on the degree of under-delivery as set out in the HDT results.

authorities the size of Wiltshire, and typically take around nine months from the base date to publication.

UPDATED NEED ASSESSMENT FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

7. Introduction

- 7.1 The Government’s planning policy for Travellers is set out in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS), which was published in December 2024. This requires that local authorities use a robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs to inform the preparation of local plans and make planning decisions. The council has recently updated its need assessment in the [Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment \(GTAA\)](#), completed in March 2026.
- 7.2 For the purpose of determining planning applications, the targets for provision of Traveller accommodation are set out in the GTAA (March 2026). Accommodation is known as a ‘pitch’ for a Gypsy or Traveller, and a ‘plot’ for travelling showpeople. The terminology differentiates between residential pitches for “Gypsies and Travellers” and mixed-use plots for “travelling showpeople”, which may / will need to incorporate space or be split to allow for the storage of show equipment.

8. What is the five-year land supply for Gypsies and Travellers?

- 8.1 As with housing (sections 2 and 3 above) the Government also requires that local authorities identify, and update annually, a five-year supply of specific deliverable sites against the local targets for pitches and plots.
- 8.2 The approach to five-year land supply for Gypsies and Travellers is similar to housing land supply with regard to assessing the deliverable supply against the housing need or requirement to be met in the forthcoming five-year period. However, it differs from the housing land supply as there is no Housing Delivery Test to assess past completions, and no buffer to be added to the requirement in the five-year calculation.
- 8.3 The current five-year land supply position, using a 2026 base date, is shown in the table below:

Elements of calculation	Gypsy and Traveller Pitches	Travelling Showpeople Plots
(A) 2026-31 Accommodation Need	205	11
(B) Completions	0	0
(C) Deliverable land supply (planning permissions)	41	0
(D) Calculate number of years supply $C / (A-B) \times 5$	1.0	0.0

- 8.4 At present the deliverable supply is wholly made up of planning permissions granted up to the base date of 1 April 2026, and includes 31 pitches granted permission since 1 April 2025. There are currently no site allocations for Gypsies and Travellers accommodation in the development plan.

9. What are the implications of not having a five-year land supply for Gypsies and Travellers?

- 9.1 As with housing land supply, where a five-year supply of pitches for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation cannot be demonstrated, the presumption in favour of sustainable development (often referred to as the 'tilted balance') applies when determining planning applications. This is set out in paragraph 28 of the PPTS which indicates that the provisions in paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF apply (see section 5).

This reflects the Government's approach to ensure that sufficient land is being released to meet its need for all members of the community, including Gypsies and Travellers.

For Wiltshire, as the supply for pitches or plots is well below five years (1 years land supply), the 'tilted balance' is engaged. For further advice please refer to the briefing notes on general housing supply and the application of the 'tilted balance' (see section 5 above), as the same considerations apply.

10. What can we do to improve the land supply for Gypsies and Travellers?

- 10.1 Core Policy 47 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy alongside national planning policies including the PPTS will inform the determination of planning applications for traveller sites to help meet identified need. The council has a track record of approving proposals for new traveller sites either by way of delegated officer decision or at Strategic Planning Committee. Officers will continue to advise, in their reports, how to apply planning policy requirements under the 'tilted balance'. Approving sustainable development forms an important plank of improving supply. This does not mean all proposals are acceptable, but that careful consideration needs to be given to the merits of sites put forward.
- 10.2 There are different ways to meet the accommodation needs in the updated GTAA and it is not anticipated that all of these will be on new sites. These are:
- **Intensification of existing sites:** some sites where there is a need for accommodation have potential to include additional pitches while maintaining reasonable living standards, this can involve reducing the size of existing pitches to make space for additional pitches to be added to the overall site or redesign of sites to accommodate additional pitches.
 - **Meeting need on existing pitches:** the GTAA has identified need from single adults and teenagers as they reach adulthood. There may be the opportunity for their need to be met through allowing additional touring caravans on existing pitches (a pitch is typically made up of a static home, touring caravan and dayroom), rather than a new pitch.
 - **New sites:** considering proposals for new sites in sustainable locations according to national policy set out in the PPTS.

- 10.3 In the past, officers have provided informal pre-planning advice at no cost to travellers because the community has poorer knowledge of the planning system. This can involve site visits, written correspondence and telephone conversations to discuss a possible proposal or site informally; and obtaining informal advice from internal specialists i.e. highways. This may assist in bringing sites forward that have potential and can be approved, improving the quality of proposals and planning applications.