

Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Policy

May 2018

1. Background

- 1.1. This policy sets out how the Council allocates available pitches on the sites under its management and ownership. This policy is in line with Common Allocations Policy for Newport, and is based on a banding system. It is designed to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, respecting their culture and traditions, whilst providing effective management of the sites.
- 1.2. The Council recognises that many Gypsies and Travellers choose to live within family groups where they can enjoy the benefits of their extended family's support. The Council is committed to supporting this wherever reasonably possible and therefore preference will be given to those families or individuals with a local connection as defined in section 3.3 of this policy.
- 1.3. The aim of this policy is to ensure that the allocation of pitches on sites is made in a fair and transparent way and that those in the greatest need are given priority assistance. The Council acknowledges it may not have enough pitches to meet the requests from everyone who applies. The Council is committed to the creation of cohesive communities that are balanced, safe, inclusive and sustainable. As such the Council will operate a policy that supports this aim whilst meeting the requirements of the Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013.
- 1.4. In line with all other forms of affordable housing applications for pitches are made via the Common Housing Register www.homeoptionsnewport.co.uk. Applications for pitches are assessed using the criteria within the main Common Allocations Policy along with the additional criteria set out here.

2. Who Can Apply Under this Policy?

- 2.1. Applications for housing are accepted from anyone over the age of 16, and who meets the definition of a Gypsy or Traveller within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 sec 108 or any subsequent legal definitions. Applicants must also be able to demonstrate an aversion to living in bricks and mortar accommodation.
- 2.2. Individual applicants will be able to submit applications in a range of formats in order to suit their particular preferences, as outlined in the overarching Common Allocations Policy for Newport. The Council acknowledges that higher than average numbers of Gypsies and Travellers have difficulty with reading and writing. The Gwent Gypsy Traveller Service is able to provide support to people who need help in completing applications for pitches.

3. The Banding System

- 3.1. The Council operates a needs based banding system where applicants will be placed into one of four bands broadly based upon the circumstances of the applicant and their household. The banding system and criteria is based upon a composite assessment of individual need.

Band A	Assessment Criteria
	Applicants who have a demonstrable aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation and who have

	a caravan, which is their principle home, but nowhere to locate it (for at least six months). Evidence of this will have to be provided and a home visit may be required.
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Band B	Assessment Criteria
	Applicants who have a demonstrable aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation and who have substantive social care/health/disability problems that are being seriously affected by their current housing circumstances, that would leave them at risk if they were to remain in occupation

Band C	Assessment Criteria
	<p>Applicants with a demonstrable aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who are living in accommodation that is having a proven adverse impact on their health and wellbeing and it is shown that there is a particular need to move to alternative accommodation to address this; or • Who are at risk of being made homeless within 56 days and whom the Council are assisting under Section 66 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. To be awarded this priority, confirmation will be provided by the Council's designated officer and will commence from the date of the housing application being submitted; or • Are currently residing in shared accommodation such as with friends or family which has been assessed by the Council's Environmental Health Team as having a Category 2 (band D-J) overcrowding and space hazard present

Band D	Applicants with a demonstrable aversion to living in bricks and mortar accommodation but:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have no local connection to Newport; or • are adequately housed; or • own their own home, or a property in which they can be reasonably expected to reside.
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3.2. Each applicant will be assessed to determine the needs that they have in line with the banding scheme. Applicants with one need from within a band will be allocated 10 points with further points to be allocated in the event of additional needs from within the same band being identified under the assessment. Preference will therefore be provided to applicants who have multiple needs from within each band.

3.3. Applicants who do not have a local connection with Newport will be placed in Band D unless there are urgent housing issues as reflected in Band A or Band B. An applicant will have a local connection if they can provide evidence to show that:

- they have been resident within the Newport for at least 12 out of the last 24 months. Residence must have been of the applicants own choice;
- they have permanent employment within the area; or
- if they have parents, children, step children, adopted children or siblings living in Newport who have been resident within the city for at least 5 years; or
- if they have in the past resided in Newport for a substantial period of time.

3.4. The housing situation within the city is such that the Council and its partners need to ensure that Social Housing within the city is allocated to applicants in the greatest need. As such pitches will only be allocated to applicants who are able to demonstrate an aversion to living in bricks and mortar accommodation. Applicants who are not able to demonstrate this aversion will have their application considered in line with the provisions of the overarching Common Allocations Policy for Newport only.

4. Assessment Criteria

4.1. Assessments will be conducted in order to ascertain an applicant's suitability for an offer of accommodation to the property that has been applied for with the purpose being to ensure that the applicant is matched to the most suitable type of accommodation for their needs and requirements.

4.2. The Council managed sites are specifically designed to meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Therefore to apply for a pitch, applicants must be a Gypsy or Traveller as defined in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 or any subsequent legal definition and be able to demonstrate an aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation. The housing needs of others are addressed through the main Common Allocations Policy.

4.3. Due to the small nature of Gypsy and Traveller sites and the close proximity of plots, the compatibility of a new licensee with existing licensees is of paramount importance. This close proximity can give rise to very serious problems, for other site residents, for the management of the site and for the local community. Incompatibility can occur for a variety of reasons such as religious practices, ethnicity, life style and personality. It is naïve to expect two families on Gypsy/Traveller sites who are incompatible, to live in close proximity without creating serious problems for themselves, the Council or the surrounding community. The Council will carry out reasonable checks in order to establish if there are likely to be any compatibility issues which may include consulting with partner agencies such as the police.

5. Appeal Procedure

5.1. Applicants will be notified in writing of decisions made surrounding their applications. Any appeal must be submitted within 21 days of receiving the written decision. The review will then be carried out by a senior officer not involved in the original decision. The officer concerned will vary depending on the decision made and reviews will generally be completed within 56 days of receipt of the review request where reasonably practicable to do so.

5.2. Applicants will be advised appropriately where reviews are anticipated to exceed this limit. Reviews submitted outside the timescale may be considered where this is considered reasonable to do so. The list below indicates the main review requests that may be received in order to give some guidance as to who will be responsible for conducting reviews:

- Acceptance onto/removal from the waiting list for a pitch - Scheme Manager
- Level of Priority/Band awarded - Scheme Manager
- Suitability of offer of accommodation (other) – Scheme Manager