

Sites for Life

Guidance Leaflet for Gypsy & Traveller Site Location.

Choosing Your Home.

This leaflet is designed to assist Gypsies and Travellers in assessing land for site use prior to submitting a planning application or embarking on any purchase of land. It lists the general criteria which Mendip District Council have to take into account when deciding whether or not an application for a new site is considered to be suitable.

For any group wishing to make use of the Council's Community Land Trust loan scheme, any proposed site must first pass the Pre-Planning Assessment, which looks specifically at the criteria listed in this leaflet.

This leaflet is only a general introduction. More detailed information should be gained from the Planning Department of the Council. We encourage pre-application discussions with the Planning Department before submitting an application.

1. Community.

It is important to choose a site which has reasonable access to local services, facilities and public transport. A location which is isolated or difficult to get to is less likely to gain support as it will be harder to show how it is sustainable.

This means that sites should be within reasonable distance of public transport routes, access to doctors and other health services, and access to schools for any children who might live on the site.

Where it is intended to carry out any business activities then its proximity to any residential neighbours will need to be considered. Think about whether there would be any potential conflict from things like noise, dust, smell or visual impact.

2. Utilities.

Think about living on your prospective site and how you would deal with things like sewage disposal, water & electricity supply and refuse collection. Drainage of waste is important and any site proposal needs to show that utilities can be provided. It is worth thinking about this at the outset.

3. Landscape.

It is important to choose a location where the site is integrated with its surroundings and where landscape impact is minimal. Developments should be as low impact as possible. It may be appropriate to provide the site with landscaping and screening.

Any land which has special landscape, environmental or conservation value is not normally suitable for development. Examples include Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Landscape Features, Sites of Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves and Conservation Areas. Information on whether land falls within these designations can be obtained from the Council Planning Department.

4. Site Safety.

Safe vehicle access is a very important aspect of site design. Sites which are difficult to pull into or to exit from or which have poor visibility are less likely to be approved. Look for land which is safe to pull out from and has good visibility of any approaching traffic. Further advice on access can be obtained from the Transport Development Group, at Somerset County Council.

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Flood Risk is another important consideration. The planning system seeks to steer development away from land which is at greatest risk of flooding. You can contact the Environment Agency to find out if your proposed site is within a flood risk zone. If land is within Flood Zone 3 (highest risk), then it is unlikely to gain approval.

When you have this information, send it to Development Control at the Council at the address on this leaflet. The Council will then send you an acknowledgement letter with contact details of the planning officer who will be dealing with your enquiry.

5. What Next? - Pre-Planning Assessment.

If you have found a possible site that you are interested in, then the next stage is to make use of our free Pre-Application planning service.

You can discuss your proposals with a planning officer who will give you a view as to whether the site meets the necessary planning guidelines.

Before contacting the Council, gathering the following information will mean that the Planning Officer will be better able to help you:

- A site plan that clearly shows the location of the site. Ordnance Survey Maps can supply plans for a small sum. Their contact details are on this leaflet.
- Photographs of the site, particularly from public vantage points such as roads and public footpaths.
- Details of the number of pitches being proposed and how many people will be living on the site.
- Whether the site is for purely residential, business or mixed.
- Whether there are any special circumstances relating to the people who would live on the site (e.g. health issues or educational requirements for any children).

Useful Addresses.

- **Environment Agency.**

Planning Liaison Officer,
Environmental Agency North Wessex Area Office,
Easy Quay, Rivers House, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 4YS

Telephone: 08708 506506

Website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk

- **Ordnance Survey Site Maps:**

Blackwell Mapping and Data Centre,

89 Park Street, Bristol, BS1 5PW,

Telephone: 0117 926 2322

email: osbristol@blackwell.co.uk

- **Ordnance Survey.**

Telephone: 08456 050505

Website: www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk

- **Transport Development Group.**

Somerset County Council.

Telephone: 0845 345 9166

- **Mendip District Council**

Cannards Grave Road,

Shepton Mallet, BA4 5BT

Telephone: 01749 648999

Website: www.mendip.gov.uk