

## **Wiltshire's Traveller Strategy Refresh – 2016-2020**

### **Introduction**

Wiltshire Council brings together a wide range of services and responsibilities that engage with traveller communities and published a Wiltshire Gypsy and Traveller Strategy in 2010<sup>1</sup>. Wiltshire Council is now taking the opportunity to refresh this strategy, to reignite partnerships between services, and put in place a new action plan to provide an integrated and supportive approach to engaging with traveller communities to help them live safer, healthier, active and high-quality lives. In line with Wiltshire Council's Business plan<sup>2</sup>, this strategy aims to create strong resilient communities, with the needs of these communities balanced against the needs of settled populations.

There are two sections to this refreshed strategy; this document sets out the current situation in for Traveller communities and a plan of actions.

### **Why do we need a Traveller strategy?**

Wiltshire Council provides services to all people, regardless of their lifestyle, and at the moment, Gypsy and Traveller communities do not have equal outcomes and life chances with settled communities. The first step to tackling the causes of this inequality is to find out what the Traveller community's needs are, so that targeted support can be provided. Services across the public sector then need to work together to empower and support traveller and settled populations to live together and form resilient communities.

### **Who are Travellers?**

Defined in the Good Practice Briefing written by Shelter<sup>15</sup>, Travellers (including Gypsies) are usually visibly identified with caravans, but mobility is not their defining characteristic. Travellers comprise many groups, each with their own lifestyle, culture and traditions. Only Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised as distinct ethnic groups under the Race Relations Act 1989. However, the experiences of second or third generation new Travellers, although not a distinct ethnic group, are believed to be similar to those of Gypsies and Irish Travellers when relocated to conventional housing. Adapting from a culture of nomadism and strong family support networks to life in conventional housing, often on large estates, can be isolating and confusing. Little research has been undertaken into any of these groups' experiences, and limited recent research relates only to Gypsies and Irish Travellers. Other Travellers include show-people and people living on boats (boaters). The experiences of new generations of Travellers are believed to be similar to those of Gypsies and Irish Travellers.

There are several definitions of Travellers used in different legal and policy documents. According to the Race Relations Act 1976<sup>3</sup>, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000<sup>4</sup>, and the Human Rights Act 1998<sup>5</sup>, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised as having ethnic status. Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS, August 2015)<sup>6</sup> sets out definitions for gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople for the purpose of planning. The Housing Act 2004<sup>7</sup> also defines Gypsies and Travellers as being a wider group than those who belong to the ethnically recognised groups. For the purposes of this strategy document, the definition of Travellers will incorporate the planning definition of Gypsies and Travellers as in the PPTS:

*“Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependants’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.”*

Travelling showpeople are defined in the PPTS as follows:

*“Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family’s or dependants’ more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.”*

Boaters or Boat Dwellers (referred to as ‘Bargees’ in the original strategy) have several definitions which were collated in the Bath and North East Somerset Council task and finish group review on Boat Dwellers and River Travellers<sup>15</sup>. The document identifies several organisations which have varying definitions but with the following commonalities: boat dwellers live on boats, whether or not they have a permanent residential mooring or are travelling inland waterways. Boaters are described as nomadic people.

The Kennet & Avon Canal is covered by six Area Boards and in partnership with Canal & River Trust. Data from Canal & River Trust regarding the Kennet & Avon Canal showed that between April 2015 and March 2016 there were 779 boats that were registered as continuous cruiser sighted between Dundas (KA-112) and Froxfield (KA-048) - the section of the canal that runs through Wiltshire. Of the 779 boats sighted during the year, 601 had also been sighted elsewhere on the canal. During the March National Boat Count this year 410 boats registered as continuous cruisers were sighted in the same area. It is further recognised that an unspecified number of boats which have permanent moorings are used residentially. See appendix 2 for map of the Kennet and Avon Canal

The precise number of Travellers in England and Wiltshire is unclear. The latest ONS analysis released in 2014<sup>8</sup> using 2011 Census data recorded 58,000 who identified themselves as a Gypsy or Irish Traveller (this doesn’t include those who identify themselves as other forms of Traveller). This suggests that this is the smallest ethnic group and accounts for 0.1% of the population in England and Wales. According to the 2011 Census, 757 people in Wiltshire identified themselves as being of gypsy or Irish traveller ethnicity; this is 0.2% of the population. Appendix 1 shows the distribution of gypsies in Wiltshire by Output Area (OA).

The Census 2011 data also gives a wider insight into the Gypsy and Traveller population:

- Median age is 26 years old for G&T population, with 39% of the population being below 20 years old.
- 88% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers were born in the UK with 91% speaking English at their main language, 5% could speak a main language other than English but could speak English well or very well, and 4% spoke a main language other than English and could not speak English well or at all.
- 45% of households had dependent children, and 45% of households with dependent children were lone parent households, this is nearly double that for England and Wales which was 25%.
- 24% of Gypsy or Irish travellers lived in caravans or other mobile or temporary structures, and 61% lived in a whole house or bungalow.

- 7 out of 10 described themselves as being in 'very good' or 'good' health which is lower than the overall population of England and Wales (8 out of 10).
- Wiltshire had 102 children in primary or secondary schools whose ethnic group is Gypsy/Roma according to the January 2012 school census<sup>9</sup>. This was 0.17% of the school population which was similar to the South West (0.16%) but lower than in England overall (0.22%).
- 60% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers over the age of 16 have no qualifications compared to 23% of all residents of England Wales over the age of 16 who have no qualifications.
- 47% of Gypsy and Traveller communities are described as 'economically active' – meaning they are either employed (51%), self-employed (26%), unemployed (20%) or full time students (4%). Those that were economically inactive were described as either looking after family (27%), long term sick or disabled (26%), retired (16%) or 'other' (31%). Economic activity is lower than the England and Welsh average (63%) and economic inactivity is higher (37% in England and Wales).

According to the latest Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)<sup>10</sup> for Wiltshire, in 2014, there were 200 traveller families on permitted and tolerated traveller sites in the county, totalling 634 people. The majority of families (171) were gypsies and travellers. There were 29 showpeople families on 4 sites.

The Government's overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community (PPTS, paragraph 3).

The Housing Act 2004<sup>7</sup> and the PPTS<sup>6</sup>, put in place a framework which means every local authority has to identify land for the Gypsy and Traveller sites that are needed in its area. Wiltshire Council has responded to the Government's policy changes by adopting its Core Strategy<sup>11</sup> which is compliant with national policy. Core Policy 47 sets out pitch and plot targets for permanent gypsy and traveller pitches, showpeople plots and transit pitches. The policy is also applied when assessing the locational effects of traveller sites coming forward via planning applications.

In addition, the Council is in the process of preparing a Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (DPD) which will allocate sufficient land to meet the housing needs of gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople. The latest housing need figures are set out in the 2014 GTAA which was prepared independently. According to that document, there is a need for 90 gypsy and traveller pitches and 7 showpeople plots in Wiltshire between 2014 and 2029. Furthermore the study recommends the development of a network of emergency stopping places.

Consultation on the emerging DPD which was undertaken in 2010 also sought feedback from communities on the methodology which should be applied in identifying suitable sites for allocations in the plan for which a consultation report has been prepared<sup>12</sup>. The methodology has since been refined further to assist in selecting sufficient sites to meet the need identified in the GTAA. We remain committed to completing this DPD which will include new sites for travellers.

The Housing Act 2004<sup>7</sup> requires local housing authorities to include Gypsies and Travellers in their accommodation assessments and to take a strategic approach, including drawing up a strategy demonstrating how the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers will be met, as part of their wider housing strategies.

Wiltshire Council currently owns and/or operates 6 residential Gypsy and Traveller sites around the county, providing a total of 100 pitches for their semi-permanent residents. A further 12 pitches are available at an established transit site in Salisbury. Gypsies and Travellers can stay on the transit site for up to 28 days whilst they are travelling through the county. There are currently no emergency stopping places where Gypsies and Travellers could stop for very short periods determined by the Local Authority.

This current level of provision is:

Area of the county	Number of local authority sites in each area	Numbers of pitches in each area
North Wiltshire	1 site -Thingley	31
East Wiltshire	0 sites	0
South Wiltshire	3 sites Lode Hill Dairy House Bridge Oak Tree Field	12 18 32
West Wiltshire	1 site Fairhaven	7
Odstock Transit Site	1 site	8
Total	5	108

Travellers also live on private sites across the county, as well as living on unauthorised encampments. Travellers in Wiltshire also live in 'bricks and mortar' accommodation, on houseboats on the canals (for example, boaters or 'Bargee' Travellers), as well as living on sites that are a base for travelling with their business or for economic reasons (for example, Travelling Showpeople).

The GTAA provides the latest data regarding the number of families residing on permitted or tolerated sites. Snapshot updates are available through the bi-annual caravan counts. The July 2015 count data is provided below:

Type of site	Number of Caravans	Percentage of total caravan count
Authorised sites (private or public)	335 caravans	92%
Unauthorised developments (i.e. on land that was owned by the Gypsies and Travellers).	23 caravans	6%
Tolerated unauthorised encampments (i.e. on sites where the land was not owned by the Gypsies and Travellers	6 caravans	2%

At the time of publication the 2016 count is still in progress and final figures submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government in last August 2016, officially published data will follow thereafter.

Data provided by the enforcement team regarding unauthorised encampments (total 53) in Wiltshire (by area board) over the period 2014/15 is as follows:

Amesbury	3	Pewsey	1
Bradford on Avon	1	Salisbury	9
Calne	2	Southern Wiltshire	2
Chippenham	7	South West Wiltshire	1
Corsham	1	Tidworth	0
Devizes	6	Trowbridge	6
Malmesbury	1	Warminster	1
Marlborough	6	Westbury	1
Melksham	4	Wootton Bassett & Cricklade	1

Unauthorised encampments by type of traveller is detailed below

Traveller Type	Number of encampments
New Age	11
Irish	24
Romany	1
Economic	10
Bargee	0
Holiday Maker	0
N/A	4
Other	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

Whilst retrieving the data an assessment was made to identify any seasonal patterns but none were discovered.

As with the settled population, the population of Traveller communities in Wiltshire requires additional accommodation to meet their housing need into the future. The GTAA provides the relevant data.

The 2010 DPD Consultation Report provides the latest evidence held by the council as to minimum pitch requirements. A pitch is an area of land that can accommodate a hard standing for at least 1 static mobile, 1 tourer, 2 car parking spaces, a small storage shed and an amenity block for services. Additional space is often required for turning manoeuvres, grazing horses and play areas for children.

### **The Needs of Traveller Communities**

The South West Public Health Observatory produced a report looking at the health and wellbeing of Travellers and Gypsies in 2011<sup>13</sup>. The report refreshed the literature review material pertaining to Traveller and Gypsy health; used recent caravan count data to map Travellers and Gypsy populations in the South West to look at emerging trends; and investigated, via a questionnaire, how much work, if any, was being done by Local Authorities and PCTs with regard to Traveller and Gypsy health.

The findings included:

- Work in this area is very limited and there are still vast gaps in research and data pertaining to the health of Traveller and Gypsy communities.
- The lack of research makes it challenging to draw conclusions but the general consensus from the sources that are available is that the healthcare of Travellers and Gypsies is still worse than the national average.
- Access to GP breastfeeding support, immunisations and injury prevention services are available to Travellers in almost half of local areas in the South West.
- Areas that need to be improved are sexual health, dentistry, and drugs and alcohol services, all of which scored low on the questionnaire.

Work undertaken in 2013 by the Wiltshire and Swindon User's Network<sup>14</sup> looked at diverse community's experiences with health, public and social care services. The main findings specifically in relation to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers were:

- Difficulties in accessing services, which require registration (e.g. GP service), for nomadic gypsy travellers due to frequently being on the move and having no fixed abode. Consequently, Romany Gypsies use Hospitals A&E service for minor health needs, which is not appropriate for them or the service.
- The insular and closed nature of some communities (in particular Gypsy/Traveller) can prevent potential users from accessing and using mainstream services.
- Unawareness of different communities' cultural values and intricacies. For example gypsy traveller values surrounding high regard for hygiene and cleanliness which are important when providing personal care or outreach services.
- Poor literacy levels within the Gypsy Traveller community even make it difficult for them to locate a service as they find it difficult to understand directions and signs.

### **Wiltshire's Traveller strategy**

This strategy will cover Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers, as well as Travelling Showpeople, New Travellers, Bargee Travellers, and any other groups with a nomadic lifestyle, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently. From this part of the document all groups mentioned above will be referred to as 'Traveller.'

The overall aim of the Traveller strategy is that by 2020, engagement with Traveller communities will be strengthened, coordinated and in line with our aims to create strong and resilient communities, with the needs of those communities balanced against the needs of the settled population.

The strategic aims are:

- That service provision and engagement is co-ordinated throughout the Council and involves consultation with Traveller communities.

- Services and facilities are improved to empower Traveller communities, through joint working, participation and involvement.
- The needs of Traveller communities and settled communities are recognised and addressed in partnership, in line with our aim to create strong and resilient communities with residents that are living healthy, active lives.
- All council officers understand their role in regard to the safeguarding of adults and children in Traveller communities.

By 2020 the strategy aspires to achieve:

- **Better accommodation**
  - Clear pathways to providing appropriate sites for Travellers, with standards of accommodation on local authority sites being equitable to that of the settled population.
- **Better intelligence**
  - Better utilisation of data, information and knowledge to help in analysing the needs of Traveller communities and inform the delivery of and access to services.
- **Better community engagement and involvement**
  - Regular engagement with Traveller communities (and local settled communities) in order to enable needs to be identified and more targeted services provided in order to more effectively meet those needs.
  - Increased partnership working with Traveller communities wherever possible, to try to increase the resilience and empowerment of these communities.
- **Better health and education**
  - To understand the needs of Traveller communities to support health and wellbeing, education and safer communities, particularly the identification of existing inequalities and disadvantage, which has disproportional and adverse impacts on the quality of life for this community.
  - To implement better planning and appropriate targeting of services to enable all partners to effectively meet the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities in relation to health, education and safer communities.
  - To encourage greater health and education service take up by ensuring are accessible for Gypsy and Traveller communities.

## **Action Plan**

### **Action 1**

All new public and private sites should be in the locations which meet the particular needs of Traveller communities. People from across communities (travelling and settled) will be consulted to help identify and allocate future sites in the most effective locations in accordance with national policy.

### **Action 2**

Continue to gather intelligence on preferred travelling routes and locations of unauthorised encampments over time to understand the repeating patterns of accommodation needed to reduce unauthorised encampments in Wiltshire.

### **Action 3**

Alternative ways to provide sites should be researched and taken forward, for example considering shared ownership schemes or RSL development management of sites

### **Action 4**

A cultural awareness training programme will be run for Councillors in order to support them with knowledge and information about the needs of Traveller communities.

### **Action 5**

Encourage Traveller communities to begin discussions about potential sites or pieces of land early in the planning process. This should include the provision of information, support, and pre-application advice on planning issues.

### **Action 6**

Source, develop and disseminate clear and easy to read information in accessible formats to support Traveller communities in understanding how to access complex planning systems.

### **Action 7**

Source, develop and disseminate easy to read guides on enforcement policy will be made available to Traveller communities, along with general advice on what all communities can expect during an unauthorised development.

### **Action 8**

All council services providing support to the traveller community should pro-actively engage with Traveller communities to ensure their views are represented and inform council policy and procedure.



### **Action 9**

Intelligence gathered about the health and wellbeing needs of Traveller communities will be fed in to the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) and all held in one place.

### **Action 10**

A system for customer feedback will be designed and implemented to assess the satisfaction of Traveller communities on all types of sites to ensure satisfaction.

### **Action 11**

To develop and disseminate a local area information pack about the local area, and how to access local services (including health and educational services) for travellers moving onto new sites or are new to the county.

### **Action 12**

A checklist will be produced for unauthorised developments and encampments to provide information to support Travellers to stay safe whilst in the county.

### **Action 13**

Training will be provided for frontline staff across the public sector on cultural awareness, and information and advice on how to interact and communicate with Traveller communities. Particular focuses should include verbal explanation of information and ensuring that any written information provided is appropriate and accessible in easy read formats.

### **Action 14**

Public sector agencies will endeavour to work together to share information on a regular basis, and as issues emerge through the formation of a new travellers forum.

### **Action 15**

A communications protocol will be developed and put in place to ensure that where possible, any community services frontline worker visiting a local authority site speaks with a member of the Traveller Services team to ensure that services are as coordinated as possible.

### **Action 16**

Undertake some community-led health promotional events to provide information and advice to communities to raise awareness about particular health conditions that are prevalent for Traveller communities, in order to increase take-up of preventative services and access to primary care.

### **Action 17**

Under 'making every contact count' frontline staff will receive access to behaviour change training in order support healthier lifestyles and effectively signposting to appropriate health services.

#### **Action 18**

Training will be offered to senior leadership teams in schools to increase the support available for Traveller children. Also, the barriers to accessing educational funding and other forms of education, for example vocational training, should be identified and assessed to understand the reasons for higher and further education not being accessed.

#### **Action 19**

Adult literacy services should be assessed and targeted information should be provided to Traveller communities in order to increase their take-up.

#### **Action 20**

To make the process as consistent as possible, agencies will share information about unauthorised encampments and new residents arriving on sites as quickly as possible.

#### **Action 21**

Officers, Members and frontline staff will be supported in liaising with members of settled communities to provide reassurance and to tackle prejudices.

#### **Action 22**

Engagement with Area Boards will also take place where traveller related issues have been identified to communicate with Members and the general public. This will include appreciating the issues raised by both settled and Traveller communities, as well as providing support to communities to understand each other better.

#### **Action 23**

All Council officers who work with Traveller communities to understand their roles and responsibilities in the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children within these communities and to understand the safeguarding processes and be able to action them as required.

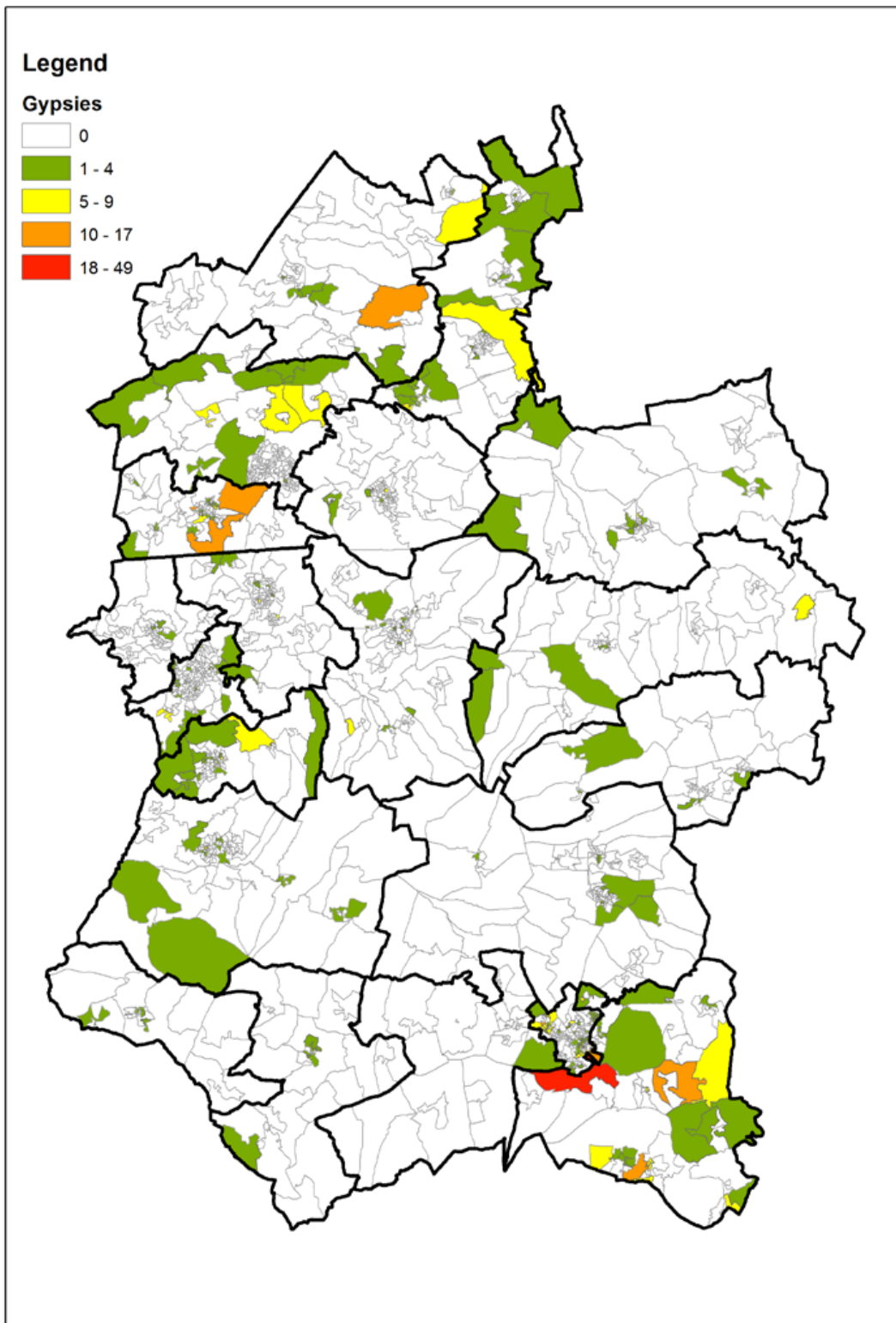
#### **Action 24**

To gain intelligence and develop a better understanding of the cross-border boater community and issues in conjunction with neighbouring Local Authorities in order to inform Council policy.

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- <sup>2</sup> Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2013-17. Url: [http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwjP07w19vJAhUL2RoKHRstDr0QFggjMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.wiltshire.gov.uk%2Fwiltshire-council-2013-2017-business-plan.pdf&usg=AFQjCNENLcdUY9w6bqMzaDd633\\_YVoao](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwjP07w19vJAhUL2RoKHRstDr0QFggjMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.wiltshire.gov.uk%2Fwiltshire-council-2013-2017-business-plan.pdf&usg=AFQjCNENLcdUY9w6bqMzaDd633_YVoao)
- <sup>3</sup> Race relations Act 1976. Url: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74> (assessed 14.12.2015)
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- <sup>5</sup> Human Rights Act 1998. Url: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents> (assessed 14.12.2015)
- <sup>6</sup> Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. url: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/457420/Final\\_planning\\_and\\_travellers\\_policy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457420/Final_planning_and_travellers_policy.pdf) (accessed 14.12.2015)
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- <sup>8</sup> 2011 Census, Quick Statistics table QS209EW, ONS, January 2013. url: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/what-does-the-2011-census-tell-us-about-the-characteristics-of-gypsy-or-irish-travellers-in-england-and-wales-/sty-gypsy-or-irish-travellers.html> (accessed 11.12.2015)
- <sup>9</sup> January 2012 School Census, Chimat. url: <http://atlas.chimat.org.uk/IAS/dataviews/view?viewId=247> (accessed 14.12.15)
- <sup>10</sup> December 2014; Wiltshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. url: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-gtaa-final-report.pdf> (assessed 14.12.2015)
- <sup>11</sup> Wiltshire Council Core Strategy 2015. Url: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/wiltshirecorestrategy.htm> (accessed 14.12.2015)
- <sup>12</sup> Gypsy consultation paper: URL: [http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/gypsy\\_and\\_travellers\\_dpd\\_issues\\_and\\_general\\_approach\\_april\\_2010.pdf](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/gypsy_and_travellers_dpd_issues_and_general_approach_april_2010.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> Health and Wellbeing of Travellers and Gypsies in the South West, South West Public Health Observatory, October 2011. ISBN: 978-0-9569224-4-1
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- <sup>15</sup> Good Practice Guidance: Gypsy and Travellers, Shelter. URL: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/39547/Gypsies\\_and\\_Travellers.pdf](https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/39547/Gypsies_and_Travellers.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> Boat Dwellers and River Travellers – Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (A task and finish group review). Bath and North East Somerset Council, 2013

**Appendix 1 - 2011 Census: ethnicity = gypsy or Irish traveller**



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census

## Appendix 2 – Map of the Kennet and Avon Canal

