

GUIDANCE ON TEMPORARY CAMPING SITES



A guide for landowners in the Mendip Hills AONB for the creation of temporary camping sites

GUIDANCE NOTE 6/2023



Since the Covid pandemic in the early 2020s, the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership has seen more people coming to visit and stay within the area. People come here for the natural beauty of our landscape, both in the day and in the night to experience the dark night skies, this helps to boost the visitor economy in this predominantly rural area recover post pandemic, bringing opportunities for farmers and landowners to diversify and cater for visitors wishing to stay overnight.

If you are planning to provide temporary camping or caravanning sites there are guidelines that can help you in your planning, whilst ensuring that the natural beauty of the Mendip Hills AONB is conserved and enhanced.

Do I need planning permission to set up a temporary camp site?

To set up a camping site for a temporary period used for camping **in tents** on fewer than 42 days in a row, or fewer than 60 days in any 12-month period, you may not need planning permission or a licence, or

- If you're a member of an organisation like the Scouts and have an [exemption certificate](#)
- your site is approved by an organisation with a camping exemption certificate.
- members of an exempted organisation stay in their tents on the site.

The above does not apply to siting of caravans, motorhomes and campervans. If you are planning to have caravans etc on the site, you may need to apply for a caravan site licence instead.

<https://www.gov.uk/caravan-site-licence>

Its best to check with your local planning authority before setting up your campsite.

If you do need a licence, your council may put conditions on the licence including:

- how the site should be laid out
- how many tents or moveable structures are allowed
- what toilet and washing facilities should be provided

The Government is considering a new permitted development right relating to camping that may require the on-site provision of temporary facilities for showers and toilets, as well as waste storage and collection, to ensure that every campsite will provide adequate facilities to visitors. Any moveable structures could only be installed on the land where they support the campsite use.

You don't need a caravan site licence or planning permission if:

- forestry workers, builders, travelling showmen or seasonal workers (like fruit pickers) stay in caravans on the site
- the site is 5 or more acres and there are 3 or less caravans there for 28 days or less a year
- you're a member of an organisation like a caravan club and have a caravan exemption certificate
- your site is approved by an organisation with a caravan exemption certificate
- members of an exempted organisation stay in their caravans on the site
- your site is used for a social get-together of caravan club members (a 'rally')

Please let your local planning authority know if you are proposing a temporary camping or caravan site. They can provide further guidance.

For Somerset East(Mendip area) and Somerset North (Sedgemoor)

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/supplementary-planning-documents/>

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control>

<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/planning>

Further considerations

- If the land is designated for conservation importance (e.g. SSSI, SAC, SPA) and/or in an agri-environment scheme agreement you will need to contact your Natural England Land Management

Adviser. You can use this map to check <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/> for land designations

- Safe access in and out of the site for cars and pedestrians
- Access for emergency vehicles
- Access to adequate toilets, showers and drinking water
- Food safety regulations - if you are planning to sell food and drink; your council can advise
- Provision of adequate rubbish containers for campers to use and how you will dispose of this
- Availability of fire safety precautions - water and sand
- Whether you have adequate Public Liability Insurance
- Undertaking a Risk Assessment of the site to identify and remedy any health and safety issues
- What measures you can take to prevent crime or noise nuisance
- Ensuring those neighbouring the site are aware of your plans
- Ensure you own the land or have permission to use it for these purposes

Protecting the reason that people want to stay on the Mendip Hills

The Mendip Hills has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, one of England's finest landscapes. People visit for the views, tranquillity, dark night skies, wildlife, sense of remoteness, and recreation.

- If you are providing glamping pods, yurts and tents consider the colour of them. White or light-coloured fabrics can create light glow at night, which is detrimental to our precious dark night skies, and has the potential to disrupt foraging nocturnal species such as bats, moths and other insects. Light pollution may also cause a nuisance to neighbours, creating bad feeling with local residents.
- Think carefully about the location of the temporary site. Can it be screened by existing trees, hedgerows or contours to minimise the visual impact on the landscape? If you are applying for a permanent site your local planning authority may require you to produce a landscaping plan. The AONB Unit has produced a tree planting guide with some helpful tips [New Tree Planting Guide for the Mendip Hills AONB - Mendip Hills AONB](#)

- Minimise any artificial lighting in and around the campsite to conserve the dark night skies The Mendip Hills AONB Dark Night Skies and Lighting Position Statement provides guidelines on artificial lighting to help you provide the right amount of light, in the right place for the right amount of time. Please visit [Dark-Skies-in-the-Mendip-Hills-AONB_statement-Final-Dec-2020.pdf](#)
- Encourage visitors to enjoy the tranquillity and remoteness of the area by providing 'Enjoy your Stay' information, which includes how to enjoy the dark night skies by minimising artificial light from tents, minimising evening and night car journeys on and off site. Provide stargazing maps and links to the Mendip Hills AONB website for up to date news on visiting the AONB [Visit Mendip Hills AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) . For suggested walks:- [Walks - Mendip Hills AONB](#).
- Sustainable transport and traffic movement. The Mendip Hills AONB is renowned for the tranquillity and remoteness, plan to encourage visitors to use sustainable modes of transport to get to your site by providing relevant information, and once on site to use bus, bike and feet to get out and about wherever possible.

Provide places to sit to look at the views both in the daytime and the night, and to experience the tranquillity, and remoteness of the AONB setting.

- Rubbish – encourage visitors to leave no trace when out of the hills. In addition, encourage recycling of waste on site to help tackle the climate emergency by providing well placed, attractive waste and recycling areas.

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