



# Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

## Preferred Options

June 2015





**WOKINGHAM**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Gypsy and Traveller**  
**Local Plan**

Preferred Options

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## **Executive Summary**

Local authorities are required by Central Government to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers alongside the settled population, and develop a strategy that addresses any unmet need that is identified. The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP) will set out how Wokingham Borough Council (WBC – also referred to in this document as the Council) will meet Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation needs within the Borough until 2029.

The refreshed Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) (March 2015) identifies a need for 52 additional permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Wokingham Borough between 2014 and 2029. In the first 5 year period (2014-2019) there is a requirement for 21 pitches.

The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan has the following objectives:

- To deliver sufficient Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots between 2014 and 2029, to meet the identified accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers in Wokingham Borough;
- To minimise the number of unauthorised sites by identifying a supply of deliverable and developable sites throughout the Plan period (up to 2029);
- To deliver a supply of permanent sites in close proximity to existing settlements that improve access to healthcare, education and other services, and
- To provide a clear policy framework for making decisions on applications regarding Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites in Wokingham Borough.

This GTLP Preferred Options document builds upon the previous GTLP Draft Options which was consulted on between 7<sup>th</sup> August and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014. That initial document focused on what options there were to meet Gypsy and Traveller need. Based on the responses from the consultation, a list of preferred options have now been drawn up relating to how sites could be identified for development and what criteria could be used to assess applications on these sites (and any others that may be proposed through future planning applications).

This consultation seeks comments about these preferred policy options. The views expressed in this current consultation will therefore contribute directly towards the production of the next phase of the GTLP, which will be the Proposed Submission document.

## **Have Your Say**

We are interested to hear the views of everyone including residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders. All comments received will be carefully considered and will help to shape the policies in the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.

### **What are you seeking views on?**

We are seeking views on the preferred options for site selection and associated policies, as well as on the preferred sites that have been suggested for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople development. We are **not** seeking views on the principle of allocating sites; that principle is set out in the Core Strategy (January 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014).

A Glossary with definitions of general terms relating to Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople development can be found at the end of this document.

### **Where can I find the documents?**

This document, supporting documents and representation (comments) forms can be viewed at: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/very-important-planning-policies/> (click on 'Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan')

Hard copies can also be downloaded, or obtained by post/email request or from the Council's Civic Offices in Shute End.

### **How can I comment?**

Please let us have your comments in one of the following ways:

- E-mail to [GTLP@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:GTLP@wokingham.gov.uk) or
- By post/hand to: Land Use and Transport Team, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

### **When do I need to comment by?**

The closing date for responses is 4pm on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014. Please note that we will only consider comments by respondents who provide their name and address. More information about responding is available in the guidance notes of the consultation form that accompanies this document.

### **Writing a response to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan consultation**

When writing a response to the GTLP, respondents should consider the legislation in *Public Order Act 1986, Part III* which sets out the offense of an incitement to racial hatred. Under this legislation the Council is prevented from publishing responses that it considers could stir up racial hatred. Wokingham Borough Council will not publish

or take into consideration any responses to the consultation which are considered to be an incitement to racial hatred or that are defamatory. This is in line with the standards set out in the Local Authority Publicity Code which requires all Council communications to be lawful, appropriate and have regard to equality and diversity.

**Where can I find further information?**

For further information on this document, please contact the Council:

- By e-mail: [GTLP@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:GTLP@wokingham.gov.uk)
- By telephone: 0118 974 6478
- By visiting the main Civic offices at Shute End, Wokingham

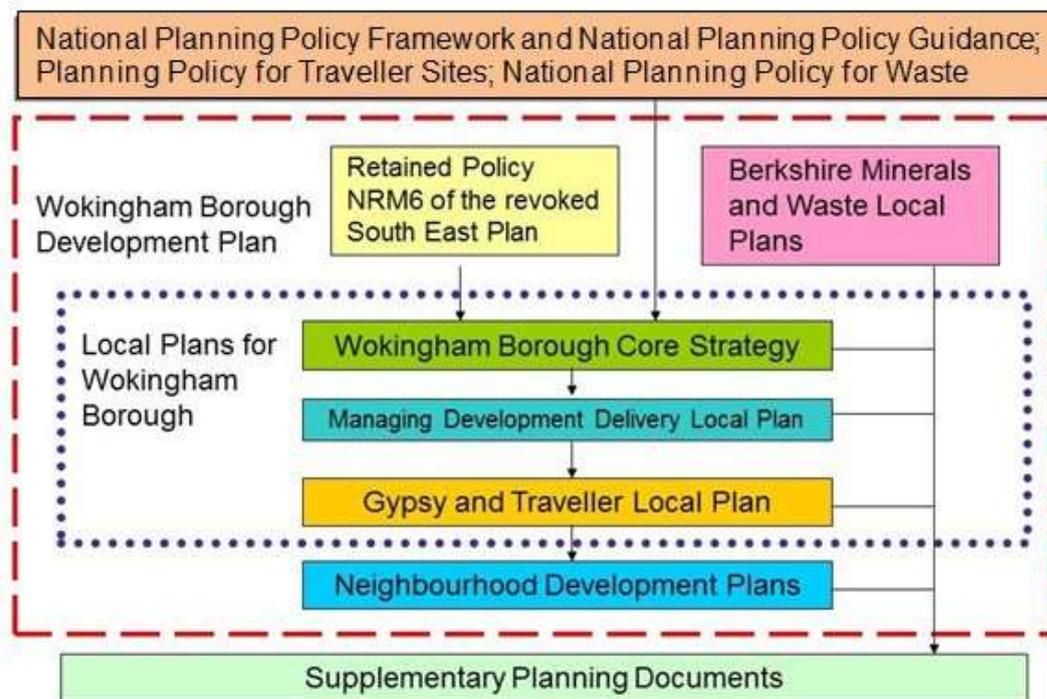
Two separate Sustainability Appraisal (SA/SEA) reports have been prepared, which examine the environmental, social and economic implications of the preferred options and also the existing and suggested sites. The appraisals can be viewed via: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/very-important-planning-policies/> (click on 'Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan'), at the Council's Planning reception and online in libraries across the Borough, as well as Crowthorne Library. Comments can also be made on both of the Sustainability Appraisal reports.

# 1. Introduction

## What is the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan?

1.1 Local Plan documents are very important planning policy documents which together provide a framework for the future development of the Borough, forming part of the overall Development Plan. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The documents that make up the Wokingham Development Plan are shown in **Figure 1** (indicated by the dotted line) and this will include the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP) once it has been adopted.

**Figure 1: Policy Context for the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan**



1.2 The [Core Strategy](#) provides the overarching strategy and policies and the long term vision for the Borough. This includes policies that are relevant to Gypsy and Traveller issues, such as policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities).

1.3 Policy TB10 of the [Managing Development Delivery \(MDD\) Local Plan](#) sets the criteria against which planning applications for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople will be assessed.

1.4 The GTLP will form an important Development Plan document alongside the Core Strategy and the MDD Local Plan. It will enable the Council to meet the needs of the Traveller community through the allocation of sites and the

establishment of specific policies to govern these and all future applications for Gypsy and Traveller development on the Borough.

- 1.5 In addition Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) such as the [Borough Design Guide](#) also provide general guidance which is relevant to Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites (particularly Section 4.12 of the Borough Design Guide).

### **Why produce a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP)?**

- 1.6 Local authorities have to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople alongside the settled population and develop a strategy that addresses any unmet need that is identified. Travelling is an integral part of cultural identity for Gypsy and Traveller households; Gypsies and Travellers are recognised ethnic groups and are entitled to the same access to housing as the settled community.

### **Why do we need to allocate sites?**

- 1.7 The GTLP will establish how Wokingham Borough Council will meet Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation needs<sup>1</sup> in Wokingham Borough until 2029 including setting pitch targets for Gypsy and Travellers and plot targets for Travelling Showpeople (based on local evidence – see paragraph 1.12). The Plan has to be consistent with the [Planning Policy for Traveller Sites \(PPTS\)](#) guidance produced by Central Government, which requires local planning authorities (including Wokingham Borough Council) to:

- Identify a five year supply of specific deliverable sites<sup>2</sup> and other, developable<sup>3</sup> sites to accommodate growth for years 6-10 and where possible 11-15;
- Ensure the number of pitches and plots reflect the size and location of a site, and the size of the surrounding population; and
- Protect local amenity and the environment.

- 1.8 Gypsies and Travellers are often more disadvantaged than other ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> This does not relate to traditional mobile park home sites.

<sup>2</sup> Footnote taken from the footnote in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS): “To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that development will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years, for example they will not be viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans”.

<sup>3</sup> Footnote taken from the footnote in the PPTS: “To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for traveller site development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged”.

groups in terms of access to healthcare and education. The lack of authorised sites and the difficulties associated with getting planning permission has meant that Gypsies and Travellers have had to set up home on land belonging to others or on their own land without permission. The failure to allocate sufficient land to meet the need for permanent pitches is likely to lead to:

- Unauthorised development and encampments, as well as tensions with the settled community;
- Difficulty of ensuring stable access to all the support and services that Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople communities need;
- Reinforcing the cycle of nomadism and homelessness for those Gypsies and Travellers who may prefer or need a more settled way of life, but cannot find a permanent site;
- Applications for development being decided on appeal, which can result in sites being permitted that may not be the most suitable or sustainable locations for development;
- The failure of the Council to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in contravention of its duty under the Housing Act 2004 and
- Restricting the Council's ability to enforce against unauthorised development, as our ability to enforce is related to our activity in meeting the need for new provision.

1.9 One of the aims of the GTLP is to reduce the occurrence of unauthorised sites by ensuring there is sufficient provision for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the Borough.

#### **What have we done so far?**

1.10 From 18<sup>th</sup> July – 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013, Wokingham Borough Council consulted on a Draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report, which contained a number of objectives against which the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP) is proposed to be assessed. The purpose of these objectives is to identify the likely social, environmental and economic effects that may result from the plan, and to set out ways in which any potential harm could be prevented or reduced in order to improve the sustainability of the plan. The objectives agreed following this consultation have been used within the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (including Strategic Environment Assessment) to assess the proposals in the GTLP to ensure they contribute to sustainable development.

1.11 An initial 'Call for Sites' was carried out from 18<sup>th</sup> July to 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013, to enable people to suggest sites to the Council.

- 1.12 To ensure that Wokingham Borough Council has the most up to date information regarding meeting the local needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, the Council - in partnership with four other Berkshire authorities - undertook the development of a common methodology for the assessment of accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in 2014. Following this, a full Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was undertaken by Opinion Research Services (ORS).
- 1.13 The key outcome of the March 2015 GTAA was to identify the Borough's Gypsy and Traveller accommodation need and provide a basis for identifying the scale of sites required to meet that need.
- 1.14 On 7<sup>th</sup> August – 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014, further public consultation was undertaken on a GTLP Draft Options, which put forward options for dealing with a variety of issues surrounding Gypsy and Traveller development, as well as on an associated Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SA/SEA). A further 'Call for Sites' was also held at the same time as the consultation on the GTLP Draft Options. Following this consultation the preferred options were identified and assessed together with the results of the refreshed March 2015 GTAA to enable the production of this GTLP Preferred Options Paper.

#### **What are the objectives of the GTLP?**

- 1.15 The GTLP has the following objectives:
- To allocate sufficient sites for Gypsy and Travellers to meet the need identified in the GTAA up to 2029;
  - To minimise the number of unauthorised sites by identifying a supply of deliverable and developable sites throughout the Plan period (up to 2029);
  - To deliver a supply of permanent sites in close proximity to existing settlements that improve access to healthcare, education and other services, and
  - To provide a clear policy framework for making decisions on applications regarding Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites in Wokingham Borough.

## **2. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Need**

#### **What is the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Need to 2029?**

- 3.1 The March 2015 GTAA evidenced a need for 52 additional permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Wokingham Borough between 2014 and 2029. In the first 5 year period (2014-2019) there is a requirement for 21 pitches (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Pitch Requirement (2014 - 2029)**

Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches* in Wokingham Borough in 2014	131
Pitch need from 2014 to 2019	21
Growth between 2019 and 2024	15
Growth between 2024 and 2029	16
<b>Total need to 2029:</b>	<b>52</b>

*\*This does not include the single Travelling Showpeople yard in the Borough.*

### **3. Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Need**

#### **What is the Travelling Showpeople Need to 2029?**

- 4.1 The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (published March 2015) provided up to date evidence about the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople in Wokingham Borough up to 2029. The Assessment found that there was no current need for additional Travelling Showpeople plots.

### **4. GTLP Preferred Options Paper**

- 4.1 This Preferred Options Paper (the GTLP Preferred Options) forms the next stage in the process that will enable the Council to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople until 2029, following on from the GTLP Draft Options. It does this by identifying the preferred ways in which pitches and sites could be identified for development and the criteria that could be used to assess development applications on these sites (and any others that may be proposed through future planning applications). Preference for particular options has been established following consideration of the comments made during the public consultation on the GTLP Draft Options which took place in between 7<sup>th</sup> August and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014. The preferred options are outlined in Section 5 (Issues A-K). By consulting on these preferred options, the Council will be able to identify any further issues before potentially taking these forward in the production of the GTLP to allocate sites and produce specific policies.

## **5. Options**

5.1 In order to establish appropriate criteria for site allocations and policies in the GTLP, a series of key issues (A-K) were identified and the options surrounding these outlined in the GTLP Draft Options. These issues were derived from various sources, including the following:

- Responses to the public consultation on the Draft Sustainability Appraisal SA/SEA Scoping Report on the GTLP and the initial 'Call for Sites' (18<sup>th</sup> July to 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013). Comments were raised on various matters such as overall site distribution in the Borough as well as how need should be met (issues A and C).
- [The Good Practice Guide for Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites \(DCLG, 2008\)](#) which contains guidance including matters such as site size, boundary treatments, pitch layout, amenity buildings and access (issues B, H, I and J).
- The Wokingham Borough GTAA (March 2015) which identified issues such as the level of need for transit sites and sites for Travelling Showpeople (issues F and G).
- Internal discussions between planning officers and elected members on various issues including retaining sites in Gypsy and Traveller use, phasing allocations and establishing potential reserve sites (issues D, E and K).

5.2 The Preferred Options in this document are derived from the responses to the consultation on the GTLP Draft Options in 2014 and the two 'Call for Sites' that took place in 2013 and in 2014, as well as the initial Sustainability Appraisal (SA/SEA) Scoping Report and the SA/SEA of the GTLP Draft Options. The suitability of each preferred option was assessed in light of national policy requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, as well as Wokingham's local policies in the adopted Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (see Figure 1 and paragraphs 1.2-1.5 for an introduction to these). In addition further discussion with elected members and consideration of the approaches adopted by other local authorities also informed the preferred options.

5.3 The various issues and preferred options we are seeking your views on are set out in this section. The accompanying consultation form should be used to record all responses.

### **A. What options are there to meet Gypsy and Traveller need?**

5.4 There are a variety of different ways in which Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's accommodation need can be met. This does not just have to involve creation of new sites but can also include enlargement or infilling of existing sites, as well as authorisation of suitable sites that currently

exist but may not have planning permission. National planning policy documents do not specify a particular method of site delivery and many local authorities utilise more than one method depending on varying factors such as levels of need, sustainability, the nature of existing Gypsy and Traveller sites and landscape sensitivity.

5.5 With regard to meeting Gypsy and Traveller need in Wokingham Borough up to 2029, the options for the way in which future pitch requirements may be met are:

- a) Expansion of existing authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites (i.e. making the site larger)
- b) Increasing the number of pitches on existing authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites (without increasing the size of site)
- c) Allocation of new sites
- d) Examining whether existing sites which do not benefit from full planning permission, are suitable to be granted planning permission
- e) Review of personal occupancy planning conditions on existing sites so that anyone within the Gypsy and Traveller community can occupy those sites (not just a named individual/family)
- f) Hybrid of all of the above options
- g) Other

**5.6 The preferred option is option f – using a hybrid mix of options a – e.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.7 The responses to the GTLP Draft Options consultation show a relatively even split between making existing authorised sites larger and increasing the number of pitches on existing sites. Members of the Gypsy and Traveller community expressed a preference for making existing sites larger to allow families to stay together, but some respondents also favoured creating new sites.

5.8 Adopting a single universal approach to meeting Gypsy and Traveller needs may not always suit a particular situation or meet the requirement for pitches. For example, not all existing authorised sites will be suitable for expansion – due to constraints such as protected trees or neighbouring dwellings – and the allocation of new sites within the Borough is similarly limited by the suitability of land. In order to meet the identified need for pitches, having the flexibility to use a variety of methods – option f - would allow the Council to select the most appropriate approach (or combination of approaches) to meet

need whilst taking account of local context in considering future planning applications.

**A. Approaches to meeting Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Requirements – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option f: using a hybrid mix of options a – e. This would allow the Council greater flexibility in choosing which approach (or combination of approaches) is appropriate to use depending on the situation.

**Question A1:** Do you agree with this approach? If not, why?

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**B. What size of sites should be allocated for Gypsy and Traveller sites?**

5.9 Existing Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Borough vary in scale from single pitches occupied by one household to large private or Council-operated sites with over ten pitches. Government guidance in [Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008](#)) states that there 'is no one ideal size of site or number of pitches' although sites with a maximum of 15 pitches are 'conducive to providing a comfortable environment which is easy to manage' (paragraph 4.7). The purpose of this option is to determine what standard the Council should set as a maximum site size to guide development in the Borough, with a presumption in favour of proposals up to and including the specified number of pitches. The options for this issue were derived from assessment of the scale of existing sites within Wokingham Borough and the recommendations of the DCLG Good Practice Guide.

5.10 With regard to the size of Gypsy and Traveller sites, the options are:

- a) 5 pitches and under
- b) 10 pitches and under
- c) 15 pitches and under
- d) 16+ pitches

**5.11 The preferred option is option c – 15 pitches and under.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.12 In the GTLP Draft Options consultation, the majority of respondents preferred option a (5 pitches or less) and some members of the Gypsy and Traveller community also expressed a preference for smaller sites. However, the

provision of sites of 5 pitches or less may not be appropriate in every situation – for example, where there is little suitable land to locate such sites, such as in an area prone to flooding - and would limit the Council’s ability to meet the overall need for pitches. During the GTLP Draft Options consultation a number of Gypsy and Traveller residents expressed a preference for larger sites (10 -15 pitches) that would allow families to stay together, and case studies from other local authorities show that sensitive consideration of the layout of larger sites can provide manageable spaces for communities.

5.13 On this basis, option c would enable the provision of a variety of different types of site to provide for both small family groups and larger communities. It is considered that limiting the overall size will help to allow occupants and owners a greater ability to manage and maintain their site.

**B. Site Size – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option c: 15 pitches and under. This would ensure the provision of a variety of different types of site.

**Question B1:** Do you agree with this approach? If not, why?

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**C. Should the Council seek to influence the geographical distribution of Gypsy and Traveller sites?**

5.14 The purpose of the GTLP is to enable the formation of a more diverse community across Wokingham Borough, one that includes the Travelling community. Policy TB10 of the [MDD Local Plan](#) (Traveller Sites) includes a number of criteria relating to site location including access to a range of services. Planning Policy for Traveller Sites states that: ‘Local planning authorities should ensure that sites in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate the nearest settled community, and avoid placing an undue pressure on the local infrastructure’ (paragraph 23). However, when allocating sites and determining planning applications, regard must be had to the reasons why the Gypsy and Traveller community may wish to locate in a particular area, such as proximity to traditional travelling routes or the presence of family on existing sites.

5.15 At present the distribution of sites within Wokingham Borough is uneven, having evolved over time on a site by site basis. Beyond the general guidance such as that quoted above, national planning policy and Wokingham’s Local Plan documents do not specifically state where Gypsy and Traveller sites

should be located, although there is a preference for brownfield sites, sites within or close to settlement and locations outside the Green Belt (as is the case with traditional housing). The options for this issue were derived from responses to the Draft GTLP Sustainability Appraisal SA/SEA Scoping Report and the initial 'Call for Sites' in 2013, as well as assessment and mapping of the existing distribution of sites in the Borough.

5.16 In terms of the geographical distribution of Gypsy and Traveller sites, the options are as follows:

- a) Should the Council use the existing distribution as a guide for future Gypsy and Traveller development?
- b) Should the Council look at more equal distribution of sites across the Borough? If so, should these be:
  - i) Split evenly between each Parish
  - ii) Split in proportion to the population of the Parish
  - iii) Split in proportion to the area of the Parish
  - iv) Split by number of settlements within or adjoining the Parish
- c) Should the Council not include a policy on site distribution in the GTLP?

**5.17 The preferred option is option c – the Council should not seek to include a policy on site distribution in the GTLP.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.18 Except in cases where it is the landowner, the Council cannot control what sites are suggested for allocation or where planning applications may be made for new Gypsy and Traveller pitches. A greater proportion of respondents to the consultation favoured using the existing site distribution as a guide (primarily when looking to expand existing sites) or splitting site provision evenly between the parishes. However, the former – whilst feasible – would limit the Council's ability to allocate pitches to meet the identified need, while the latter would be impractical given the differing nature of the parishes (including Green Belt and urban areas that are unsuitable for the development of Traveller sites). In addition, many Gypsy and Traveller residents considered it important to have sites located near local services, which is a criterion of policy TB10 of the MDD Local Plan.

5.19 By not including a specific policy on site distribution in the GTLP, the Council would have the flexibility to manage this factor on a case by case basis through the allocation of appropriate sites and the on-going assessment of individual planning applications. The creation of criteria-based policies in the GTLP (see

issues F-K) for assessing proposed Gypsy and Traveller sites would also assist in this process.

**C. Site Distribution – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option c: the Council should not include a policy on site distribution in the GTLP. This will be managed on a site specific basis.

**Question C1:** Do you agree with this approach? If not, why?

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**D. Should the Council phase site allocations?**

5.20 Phasing of delivery allows sites to be brought forward if the current allocated sites are failing to deliver the identified number of pitches. Without phasing, there is potential for sites to come forward too early in the plan period, which may then require more sites to be found later on. However, one way to potentially try to overcome this issue is to consider allocating reserve sites (this is discussed further in Issue E).

5.21 The Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) indicates that the Council could phase delivery of Gypsy and Traveller sites (paragraph 9) and this issue was subject to internal discussions. The options are:

- a) Phase by 5 year periods
- b) Have no phasing

**5.22 *The preferred option is option b – to have no phasing of sites.***

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.23 The purpose of phasing is to limit the release of a number of allocated sites over a series of five year periods during the lifespan of the GTLP. However, the Council would be limited in its ability to control when private sites come forward and therefore in practice phasing would not provide significant additional certainty about the timing of pitch delivery.

5.24 The Council will seek to allocate sufficient sites to meet the identified need for pitches in the Borough. Having this allocation – in addition to the assessment of planning applications for non-allocated 'windfall' sites that may also be suitable – would enable need to be met over the life of the GTLP without the need for phasing to limit when applications can be made. By allowing applications to be dealt with as these come forward, this will avoid the issue of otherwise

acceptable proposals having to be turned down because they do not conform to a phasing scheme in the Plan.

**D. Phasing of Site Allocations – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option b: to have no phasing of sites. Sufficient sites will be allocated to meet the identified need over the plan period and not having phasing will allow more flexibility to deal with applications for allocated sites as these are made.

**Question D1:** Do you agree with this approach? If not, why?

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**E. Should the Council allocate reserve Gypsy and Traveller sites?**

5.25 If the Council finds that it does not have enough Gypsy and Traveller sites to provide an adequate supply over a 5 year period, it could then identify for development a site or sites from a list of allocated reserve sites. These would still be subject to approval of a planning application, as is the case with residential (housing) sites. This issue emerged from discussion about potential phasing of site delivery (Issue D) and the approach to allocating conventional housing sites taken in policy SAL03 (Allocated reserve housing sites) of the MDD Local Plan adopted in February 2014. The options are:

- a) Allocate reserve Gypsy and Traveller sites
- b) Do not allocate reserve Gypsy and Traveller sites

**5.25 The preferred option is option b – not to allocate reserve Gypsy and Traveller sites.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.26 The Council would seek to allocate sufficient suitable sites to meet the identified need and would assess applications for other sites as/when they are made. Flexibility could also be included in potential site allocation policies in terms of the number of pitches to be provided on allocated sites to ensure that need is met without the need to find and allocate further additional sites that would be kept in reserve. Not having reserve sites would also allow applications for those potential sites to come forward without being contrary to a policy in the GTLP.

**E. Allocation of Reserve Sites – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option b: not to allocate reserve Gypsy and Traveller sites. As discussed above under Option D, sufficient sites will be allocated to meet the identified need over the plan period.

**Question E1:** Do you have any comments on this approach?

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**F. Should the Council allocate sites for Travelling Showpeople?**

5.27 The refreshed GTAA (March 2015) has identified that there is no specific need for Travelling Showpeople plots in the Borough. On this basis the options are:

- a) Allocate sites for Travelling Showpeople
- b) Do not allocate sites for Travelling Showpeople

**5.28 The preferred option is option b – not to allocate sites for Travelling Showpeople.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.31 Wokingham Borough has one site for Travelling Showpeople which has permission for storage rather than for residential use. No need for additional sites in the Borough has been identified by the GTAA and therefore it is not considered that specific allocations need to be made in the GTLP. However, it is acknowledged that needs can arise in the coming years and planning applications may be made on this basis. Therefore any applications for Travelling Showpeople sites will be assessed against the Development Plan for the Borough (including policy TB10 of the MDD Local Plan) and the policies in the GTLP once it is adopted.

**F. Sites for Travelling Showpeople – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option b: not to allocate sites for Travelling Showpeople. Any applications for such sites will be assessed in line with policies in Wokingham's Development Plan (including the GTLP once adopted).

**Question F1:** Do you have any comments on this approach?

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**G. Should the Council allocate transit sites?**

5.29 The refreshed GTAA (March 2015) has identified that there is no specific need for transit sites in the Borough. On this basis the options are:

- a) Allocate transit sites
- b) Do not allocate transit sites

**5.32 The preferred option is option b – the Council should not allocate transit sites.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.33 Whilst no specific need for transit sites was identified by the GTAA, it is acknowledged that the occupants of existing sites do have visitors – often family - that will require temporary accommodation during their stay in the Borough. Instead of providing dedicated transit pitches it is considered that more effective methods of accommodating these visitors are available, such as providing space on existing or new Gypsy and Traveller sites for this purpose or designing pitches that are large enough to accommodate visitors. These considerations could be included in future policies relating to site layout (see Issue H) to govern activity of this nature. Therefore any applications for transit pitches will be assessed against the Development Plan for the Borough (including policy TB10 of the MDD Local Plan) and the policies in the GTLP once it is adopted.

**G. Transit Sites – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option b: not to allocate transit sites. Other more effective methods of accommodating visiting families could be included in site policies in the GTLP.

**Question G1:** Do you have any comments on this approach?

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**H. How should the Council address site layout, safety and management?**

5.34 Once sites have been allocated and/or detailed applications for Gypsy and Traveller development are submitted, it is proposed that applications would need to be assessed against more detailed policy considerations. Planning Policy for Traveller Sites states that ‘Criteria based policies should be fair and should facilitate the traditional and nomadic life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community’ (paragraph 10). This includes consideration of the need for co-existence between the site and the local community, consideration of health and wellbeing, avoidance of undue pressure on local infrastructure (such as road and drainage networks) and the potential for mixed use sites (allowing occupants to live and work in the same location) (paragraph 11 of PTTS). The various matters identified below and the options to address this issue have been derived from the general requirements of national policy, as well as from

the guidance in the Good Practice Guide for Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites (DCLG, 2008) and through internal discussions.

5.35 The issues relating to site layout, safety and management are as follows:

- i. Pitch Size: There are different sizes of mobile homes and a need to accommodate occupants' travelling lifestyle by provision of space for at least one touring caravan per pitch. ([Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008](#)) states that there is no one standard size for a gypsy pitch.)
- ii. Fire Safety: Caravans must be 3 metres from site boundaries and static caravans sited at least 6 metres apart in order to reduce fire hazard ([Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008](#) )
- iii. Access and Parking: A site must have safe access and space for manoeuvring caravans, emergency and refuse vehicles, as well as adequate on-site parking
- iv. Infrastructure: A site must have adequate connections to services including sewerage, electricity and water
- v. Amenity Space: The provision of amenity space must be considered: this may consist of garden areas on individual pitches and communal amenity areas on larger sites
- vi. Site Management: Who will operate/manage the site (and whether they will live on-site) should be defined
- vii. Commercial Activity: If any commercial activity is proposed to be included on a new site then its nature and location needs to be considered, particularly regarding any potential impact on neighbouring properties
- viii. Livestock: If any animals (particularly horses) will be kept on the site then it must be considered what provision will be made for them (paddocks, stables etc.) and whether this will be appropriate (i.e. the ratio of number of animals to the space available). More information on [standards for keeping horses](#) can be found on the British Horse Society website.

5.36 The options on site layout, safety and management are:

- a) Include a policy with specific standards for site layout, safety and management in the GTLP, covering the issues raised above, or
- b) Do not include a specific policy but instead rely on existing guidance ([Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008](#)) and Environmental Health site licensing regulations.

**5.36 The preferred option is option a - to include a specific policy in the GTLP on site layout, safety and management.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.37 In the GTLP Draft Options consultation the majority of respondents considered that the Council should seek to consider some (or all) of issues i - viii in a criteria-based policy. The new policy would seek to cover all of the identified issues and would have a local emphasis, providing greater weight in decision-making than existing Government guidance.

**H. Site Layout, Safety and Management – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option a: to include a specific local policy on site layout, safety and management in the GTLP, including all of the identified issues.

**Question H1:** Do you agree with this approach and the key issues that have been identified? If not, why?

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**I. How should the Council address demarcation of site/pitch boundaries and landscaping?**

5.38 Paragraph 24 of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites states that local planning authorities should attach weight to matters including soft landscaping to positively enhance the environment and not enclosing a site with so much hard landscaping, high walls or fences that it would be isolated from the rest of the community. The Good Practice Guide for Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites (DCLG, 2008) states that: ‘The site boundary must provide clear demarcation of the perimeter of the site ... Boundaries should take into account adjoining land uses, and be designed with the safety and protection of children in mind’ (paragraph 4.10). The guidance also identifies that a ‘range of different boundaries may be used including fences, low walls, hedges and natural features. The aim should be to achieve a boundary that is clear but which is sympathetic to, and in keeping with, the surrounding area’ (paragraph 7.2).

5.39 The options to address these matters have been derived from the general requirements of national policy and policy TB10 of the MDD Local Plan (sections e and f), as well as from the guidance in the Good Practice Guide and through internal discussions. The issues relating to site boundaries and landscaping are as follows:

- i. Boundary Treatments: Site design/layout should clearly define individual pitches but without unduly 'enclosing' them e.g. with inappropriately high fencing, gates or conifer hedges
  - ii. Landscaping: Appropriate landscaping proposals should be included, taking into account both hard landscaping (hardstanding, walls, fencing and structures like bin stores) and soft landscaping (trees, lawns and other planting)
  - iii. Integration with Surroundings: Landscaping and boundary treatments should serve to soften any visual impact and protect privacy, but not to screen the site to such a level that it hampers cohesion with the neighbouring settled community
- 5.40 The options on the demarcation of site/pitch boundaries and landscaping are:
- a) Include a policy with specific standards for the demarcation of site-pitch boundaries and landscaping in the GTLP, or
  - b) Do not include a specific policy but instead rely on existing guidance ([Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008](#)) and Environmental Health site licensing regulations.

**5.41 The preferred option is option a – to include a specific policy on the issues identified to do with boundaries and landscaping in the GTLP.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

- 5.42 In the GTLP Draft Options consultation the majority of respondents considered that the Council should seek to consider some (or all) of options i - iii in a criteria-based policy. As with Issue H, the new local policy would seek to cover all of the identified factors and would provide a site-specific emphasis that would assist the determination of applications in the Borough.

**I. Site Boundaries and Landscaping – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option a: to include a specific local policy on boundaries and landscaping in the GTLP, including all of the identified issues.

**Question I1:** Do you agree with this approach and the key issues that have been identified? If not, why?

**J. Should standards be set for amenity buildings?**

- 5.43 As well as caravans and trailers on site, buildings may be provided such as private amenity buildings, community buildings, and a site office. Both the [Borough Design Guide SPD](#) and the [Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008](#) refer to amenity buildings. The Good Practice

Guide states that an amenity building *'must include, as a minimum: hot and cold water supply; electricity supply; a separate toilet and hand wash basin; a bath / shower room; a kitchen and dining area'* (paragraph 7.17). In addition: *'It is recommended that amenity buildings incorporate cost effective energy efficiency measures ... Any opportunities for using energy from renewable sources should be considered'* (paragraph 7.21, page 42).

5.44 The options to address the matters raised below have been derived from the guidance in the Good Practice Guide (2008) and through internal discussion. The following issues have been identified with regard to private/communal buildings:

- i. Number of Amenity Buildings: There is generally one private amenity building provided per pitch (this may be combined into one building subdivided between two pitches). Government guidance in the DCLG Good Practice Guide (2008) does not specify a ratio of amenity buildings to pitches, but communal amenity buildings serving a number of pitches are increasingly uncommon, particularly on newer sites
- ii. Size of Amenity Buildings: There is no standard size for private amenity buildings. They must provide basic facilities for washing/laundry, bathroom and kitchen; however larger amenity buildings also include living or dayrooms
- iii. Sustainability Standards: There is no requirement for amenity or other buildings on Gypsy and Traveller sites to meet sustainability standards (such as Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) or Code for Sustainable Homes). Paragraph 7.21 of the [Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008](#) recommends that amenity buildings incorporate 'cost effective efficiency measures'
- iv. Design of Amenity Buildings: Design of amenity and other buildings should reflect the character of the local area (i.e. through scale and materials) rather than having a standardised appearance on every site

5.45 The options on standards for private/communal buildings on Gypsy and Traveller sites are:

- a) Include a policy with specific standards for amenity buildings in the GTLP, or
- b) Do not include a specific policy but instead rely on existing guidance ([Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008](#)) and Environmental Health site licensing regulations.

**5.45 The preferred option is option a – to include a specific policy on amenity buildings in the GTLP.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.46 In the GTLP Draft Options consultation the majority of respondents considered that the Council should seek to consider some (or all) of options i - iv in a criteria-based policy. The new policy would provide specific guidance on amenity buildings based on site-specific considerations such as local character, and would therefore be more relevant to sites in the Borough than existing Government guidance.

**J. Standards for Amenity Buildings – Preferred Option**

The preferred option is option a: to include a specific local policy on amenity buildings in the GTLP, including all of the identified issues.

**Question J1:** Do you agree with this approach and the key issues that have been identified? If not, why?

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**K. Should the Council seek to retain Gypsy and Traveller sites in that use?**

5.47 Retaining Gypsy and Traveller sites will ensure that existing authorised sites and future development – sites that are allocated, expanded and others that come through the planning application process - remain as Gypsy and Traveller sites and are not lost to other types of development/use. The options relating to site retention (and restoration – see paragraph 5.19) were derived from internal discussion and also assessment of recent planning history and applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Borough, as well as an analysis of the approach being utilised by other local authorities.

5.48 If the Council should retain both existing and future Gypsy and Traveller sites, the options for achieving this are as follows:

- a) Using planning conditions\* to control the use of sites
- b) Using legal agreements\* to control the use of sites
- c) Relying on allocation of sites and an associated 'retention' policy in the GTLP
- d) A mix of the above

5.49 In addition, if the site ceases to be used by Gypsies and Travellers then the Council could seek to ensure that the land should be restored to its former condition. If the Council should seek to restore Gypsy and Traveller sites once their use ceases, the options for doing so are as follows:

- a) Using planning conditions\* to control the restoration of sites
- b) Using legal agreements\* to control the restoration of sites
- c) Relying on a 'restoration' policy in the GTLP
- d) A mix of the above

\*See Glossary for definitions.

**5.50 The preferred option for both parts of this issue (site retention and site restoration) is that the Council should seek to retain sites in Gypsy and Traveller use and require their restoration after that use ceases.**

**5.51 In terms of how this should be achieved, the preferred option for both parts of the issue is option d – using a mix of planning conditions, legal agreements and a 'restoration and retention' policy in the GTLP.**

*Reasoned Justification:*

5.52 This is the current approach taken by the Council, and including a policy on it in the GTLP would allow continued use of different methods to tailor the approach on a site-specific basis, depending on the needs of the occupants and the context of the site.

#### **K. Site Retention and Restoration – Preferred Option**

The preferred option for both parts of this issue (site retention and site restoration) is that the Council should seek to retain sites in Gypsy and Traveller use and require their restoration after that use ceases.

In answer to how this should be achieved, option d is preferred: using a mix of planning conditions, legal agreements and a 'restoration and retention' policy in the GTLP.

**Question K1:** Do you agree with this approach to site retention and restoration? If not, why?

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## **6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 The timetable for the preparation of the GTLP is outlined in the Council's Timetable ([Local Development Scheme](#)) for producing important planning policy documents. The next stage will be to consider all responses to the GTLP Preferred Options consultation, which will inform the next stage which is the production of the Proposed Submission version of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. This will include proposed sites that may be suitable for allocation. The Proposed Submission GTLP will be consulted on and further guidance will be issued at that point about how to respond.

## **Glossary**

Adoption	The procedure which makes a plan into formal Council policy.
Allocation / allocated site	<p>Allocation is the process that identifies resources such as land for a particular purpose.</p> <p>An allocated site is a piece of land which is identified for a particular use within a Development Plan document e.g. Gypsy and Traveller sites allocated by the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.</p>
Amenity building	A building that provides facilities for an individual Gypsy pitch (private) or a site (communal). These can vary in scale and in the facilities they provide, although a basic amenity building on a pitch 'must include, as a minimum: hot and cold water supply; electricity supply; a separate toilet and hand wash basin; a bath / shower room; a kitchen and dining area' (paragraph 7.17, <a href="#">Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide</a> (2008))
Amenity space	This can refer to a garden area on an individual pitch or a communal area of open space / playground on a larger site that is shared by a number of pitches.
Authorised site	<p>A site with planning permission for use as a Gypsy and Traveller site. These sites can be private or Council-owned.</p> <p>Most authorised sites in the Borough are permanent, but they can sometimes be temporary (see 'Temporary Sites').</p>
BREEAM	BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is an assessment and rating system which uses recognised measures of performance, set

	against established benchmarks, to evaluate a building's specification, design, construction and use.
Call for Sites	The way in which the Council gives the public an opportunity to suggest sites for potential Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople development. Respondents fill out a form with the details of the suggested site which is then received and considered by the Council.
Caravan	Mobile living vehicles also called touring caravans. Section 29 (1) of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 Act defines a caravan as 'any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another (whether by being towed, or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer) and any motor vehicle so designed or adapted'. Also referred to as 'vans'.
Code for Sustainable Homes	The national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes. It aims to reduce carbon emissions and promote higher standards of sustainable design above the current minimum standards set out by the building regulations. The code is voluntary rather than mandatory.
<a href="#">DCLG Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide (2008)</a>	This document provides general design guidance for Gypsy sites/pitches, including indicative site layout and case studies.
Development Plan	<p>A document setting out the local planning authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings in the authority's area. This includes adopted Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP) will be one of the Local Plans that form part of the Development Plan for Wokingham</p>

	Borough.
Existing sites	A term used in GTLP documents to refer to sites in the Borough that are currently occupied by Gypsies and Travellers or Travelling Showpeople. These may or may not be authorised at the current time.
Gypsy/Gypsies and Travellers	'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 or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.' (Annex 1, <a href="#">Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2012)</a> ).
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)	This was a study carried out for the Council to calculate the need for additional Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation in the Borough.
Legal Agreement (also called Planning Obligations or Section 106 Agreements)	A legal obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) that is usually used to control the impacts of a development proposal.
Licensing	The licensing of caravan sites (both Gypsy and Traveller sites and mobile home parks) is undertaken by Environmental Health and is separate from the planning system. Site licensing focuses on matters of layout, fire safety, sanitation and other facilities. Only authorised sites (those with planning permission) can receive a licence and conditions on the licence will reflect those on the planning permission (such as the number of caravans allowed on the site).
Local Plan	The plan(s) for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning

	<p>authority in consultation with the community. In Wokingham this includes the Core Strategy and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan, and will include the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (once adopted). Together with any adopted Neighbourhood Plans, the Local Plans will form part of the overall Development Plan for the Borough.</p>
Material consideration	<p>A material consideration is a matter that should be taken into account in formulating planning policy and deciding a planning application (or on an appeal against a planning decision). There is no exhaustive list of material considerations, but those that would be relevant to the GTLP would include noise, traffic and design issues, as well as guidance in local and national policy documents such as the <a href="#">Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document</a>, produced by WBC, and the <a href="#">National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</a>, <a href="#">Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS)</a> and the <a href="#">Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide</a>, all produced by Central Government.</p>
Mobile Home	<p>Legally a caravan but not normally capable of being moved by towing. Also known as 'trailers', 'static caravans' or 'chalets'.</p>
<a href="#">National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</a>	<p>This document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.</p>
Phasing	<p>Phasing of site allocations allows sites to be brought forward for development at different times in the future, depending on factors such as the changing need for sites. The alternative is allowing sites to be developed on an ad hoc basis over time.</p>
Pitch	<p>A pitch is the space required to accommodate one household and their caravans, parking</p>

	<p>space and enough room for turning vehicles. There is no 'one-size fits all' measurement for a pitch; as with standard housing, this depends on the size of individual families and their particular needs.</p> <p><a href="#">Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide (2008)</a> states that an average family pitch must be capable of accommodating an amenity building, a large mobile home (trailer) and touring caravan, a small garden area and parking space for two vehicles. This guidance is reiterated in the Wokingham <a href="#">Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012)</a>.</p>
Personal Occupancy Condition	A Planning Condition that specifically links the use of a site to a particular named individual and their dependants. Such a condition often requires that the use should cease as soon as the named person(s) no longer occupy the site and that the site should be restored to its former condition once the use ceases.
Planning Condition	A requirement attached to a planning permission that seeks to limit or direct the manner in which the approved development is carried out. For example, a condition could require that a site is not occupied by any persons other than Gypsies and Travellers.
<a href="#">Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS)</a>	This document encompasses Government planning policy for Gypsy and Traveller sites. The PPTS came into effect at the same time as the <a href="#">National Planning Policy Framework</a> and should be read in conjunction with it.
Plot	A piece of land of unspecified size which accommodates Travelling Showpeople's caravans, trailers, mobile homes and sometimes equipment. This terminology differentiates between residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and mixed-use plots

	for Travelling Showpeople, which will need to incorporate space or be split to allow for the storage of equipment such as fairground rides. These areas used for storage are also called 'yards'.
Reserve site	A site that is allocated but will only be brought forward for development if the main allocated sites are not delivering sufficient numbers of pitches.
Settled community	A term used to refer to non-Travellers.
Site	An area of land where Gypsy and Travellers live. These can be privately owned (often by particular families) or socially rented (where the site owned by a council or registered social landlord). A site may consist of a single pitch, or may have a number of pitches and be home to several families/households.
Suggested site	A term used in GTLP documents to refer to sites that have been submitted to the Council for use by Gypsy and Travellers or Travelling Showpeople as part of a 'Call for Sites'. These can include undeveloped sites, sites that are currently in another use, and existing sites that may not have planning permission (unauthorised sites). All of the suggested sites will be appraised by the Council to assess their suitability for allocation as part of the production of the GTLP.
Sustainability Assessment (SA) (including Sustainable Environmental Assessment (SEA))	An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.
Sustainability / Sustainable Development	This is a broad concept generally used to refer to our ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and the

	strategies being used to achieve this goal (e.g. renewable energy).
Temporary site	This is an authorised site that has been granted temporary planning permission. At the end of the specified time period (usually between 2-4 years, defined by a planning condition) the use of the site must cease and the site should be restored to its former condition.
Transit site	A permanent site intended for short-term temporary use by Travellers on the move.
Travelling Showpeople	<p>'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 dependant's more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers.' (Annex 1, <a href="#">Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2012)</a>)</p> <p>Travelling Showpeople's needs are distinct to the needs of the wider Gypsy and Traveller community. Pitches on a Travelling Showpeople site are referred to as plots. Whilst Gypsy and Traveller pitches are typically residential, Travelling Showpeople plots are usually mixed-use (i.e. residential and storage use).</p>
Unauthorised development	Land privately owned but without the benefit of planning permission.
Unauthorised encampment	Land occupied by Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople without the benefit of planning permission or the permission of the land owner. Can include land at the side of a road.

Windfall Site	A windfall site is a site that has not been specifically identified or allocated in the Local Plan. However, applications for development on such sites will still be judged according to policies in the Local Plan.
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*For further planning terms see the Glossary in the [MDD Local Plan](#).*

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