

Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

Scope and Options Consultation

March 2023

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1.0 Introduction

What is the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

1.1 Improving the standard of new and existing homes and ensuring housing supply meets demand is a priority for North Northamptonshire Council, as set out in the [Corporate Plan](#). This includes accommodation for the Gypsy and Traveller community.

1.2 In response the Council is producing an important Development Plan Document called the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (otherwise referred to as ‘the Plan’). This will set out planning policies and site allocations to meet the identified accommodation needs for gypsy and travellers¹ and ensure high standards of design, development and living conditions.

1.3 The identification of sites and broad locations to accommodate the existing and future need for Gypsy and Travellers through the planning process, alongside site design guidance, will ensure a better quality of life and living conditions, promote better integration with the settled community, provide a more stable environment in which educational attainment and access to health services and employment can be improved, and reduce the number of unauthorised encampments. For the Council it is key to ensuring enforcement powers are effectively implemented.

What is the Scope and Options consultation?

1.4 The Scope and Options consultation is the start of the plan making process where regulations specify that representations must be invited on what the Local Plan ought to contain. The aim of this consultation document is to invite views of interested parties on the scope and contents of the Plan. It provides information on what are expected to be key policy areas for the Plan and contains a series of questions and options which relate closely to the key policy areas identified. This includes the vision and outcomes for the Plan, meeting future requirements, size of sites, geographical distribution, allocation of reserve sites, assessment criteria for sites, provision of transit sites, site design, and retention of sites. It is important to emphasise that no decisions have been made on the content of planning policies at this stage in the process, such as the location of allocated sites or the number of pitches/plots that will be required. The consultation document is intentionally high level to ensure a frontloaded consultation process and because the technical evidence to inform decisions continues to be developed.

What is the policy context?

1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework² (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policy on a range of matters.

1.6 Paragraph 4 explains that ‘*The Framework should be read in conjunction with the Government’s planning policy for traveller sites, and its planning policy for waste. When preparing plans or making decisions on applications for these types of development, regard should also be had to the policies in this Framework, where relevant.*’

1.7 Paragraph 35 states that plans are ‘sound’ if they are ‘*Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the areas objectively assessed needs ...*’

1.8 Paragraph 62 then states that (emphasis added) ‘*Within this content, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people,*

¹ For the purposes of this document, the term ‘Gypsy and Traveller’ will include the many different people and groups that fit under the umbrella term, which can include Roma people, Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsy Travellers, New Travellers, Liveaboard Boaters and Travelling Showmen. Where the reference is specific to a group, such as Travelling Showmen, it will be stated.

² [National Planning Policy Framework](#), 2021

students, people with disabilities, service families, **travellers**²⁷, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes²⁸).' The footnote to this section states 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites sets out how travellers' housing needs should be assessed for those covered by the definition in Annex 1 of that document.'

1.9 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites³ sets out the government's planning policy for traveller sites. Paragraph 3 states that the overarching aim of government 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'

1.10 In producing local plans, local planning authorities should:

- Set pitch targets for Gypsies and Travellers and plot targets for Travelling Showpeople, which address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of Travellers in their area, working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities
- Identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against their locally set targets
- Identify a supply of specific, developable sites, or broad locations for growth, for year 6 to 10 and, where possible, for years 11-15
- Relate the number of pitches or plots to the circumstances of the specific size and location of the site and the surrounding population's size and density
- Protect local amenity and environment
- Set criteria-based policies to meet identified need and/or provide a basis for decisions in case applications nevertheless come forward.

1.11 Paragraph 13 of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites states that 'local planning authorities should ensure that traveller sites are sustainable economically, socially and environmentally'.

1.12 The Government launched its consultation on updating the NPPF in December 2022. Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy⁴ and its supporting documents cover key elements of the planning system and outline the Government's ongoing planning reforms. While a lot of the detail is yet to emerge, the proposals confirm the future status of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, which sits alongside the NPPF, will be considered in drafting National Development Management Policies.

1.13 The [North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031](#) (JCS) was adopted on 14 July 2016.

1.14 Policy 31 of the JCS protects existing lawful Gypsy and Traveller sites, plots and pitches and sets out criteria to be used when assessing the suitability of sites for allocation, and for the purposes of considering planning applications for such sites.

1.15 The supporting text to Policy 31 in Paragraph 9.55 explains that ongoing monitoring of site provision and vacant pitches should be undertaken by the Local Planning Authorities alongside discussions with Gypsies and Travellers to ensure that any additional need that may arise over the plan period is identified and can be considered when need assessments are updated, and planning applications are determined.

1.16 The Council is reviewing and updating the JCS through the preparation of the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan that will cover the period up to 2041. The [Scope and Issues Consultation](#) was published in March 2022. The outcomes of the consultation exercise and officer response were reported to the Council's Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel on 14 December 2022⁵

What evidence is available to inform the plan?

1.17 The [North Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment](#) was published in March 2019 (2019 GTAA), this currently provides the most up to date assessment of Gypsy and Traveller

³ [Planning policy for traveller sites](#), 31 August 2015

⁴ Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy, December 2022

⁵ <https://northnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=162&MId=894>

4 | Regulation 18 Scope and Options North Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan – Planning Communities Executive Advisory Panel, March 2023

accommodation needs in the North Northamptonshire area. The 2019 GTAA provides an assessment of the accommodation needs for the former local authority areas of Kettering Borough, Corby Borough, East Northamptonshire District and the Borough of Wellingborough.

1.18 Following the formation of North Northamptonshire Council and to support the preparation of the Plan the Council has commissioned further work to ensure an up-to-date evidence base for the Plan. This further work includes a GTAA Update, a Pitch Deliverability Assessment and further specialist advice to support the preparation of the Plan.

1.19 The GTAA Update will provide an updated and consolidated evidence for North Northamptonshire, which quantifies the number of sites for Gypsy and Travellers that are required to be provided through the planning process up to 2033. This will take into account changes to the baseline position since the 2019 GTAA.

1.20 The Pitch Deliverability Assessment will provide a more detailed analysis of need and identify solutions for meeting need.

2.0 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Need

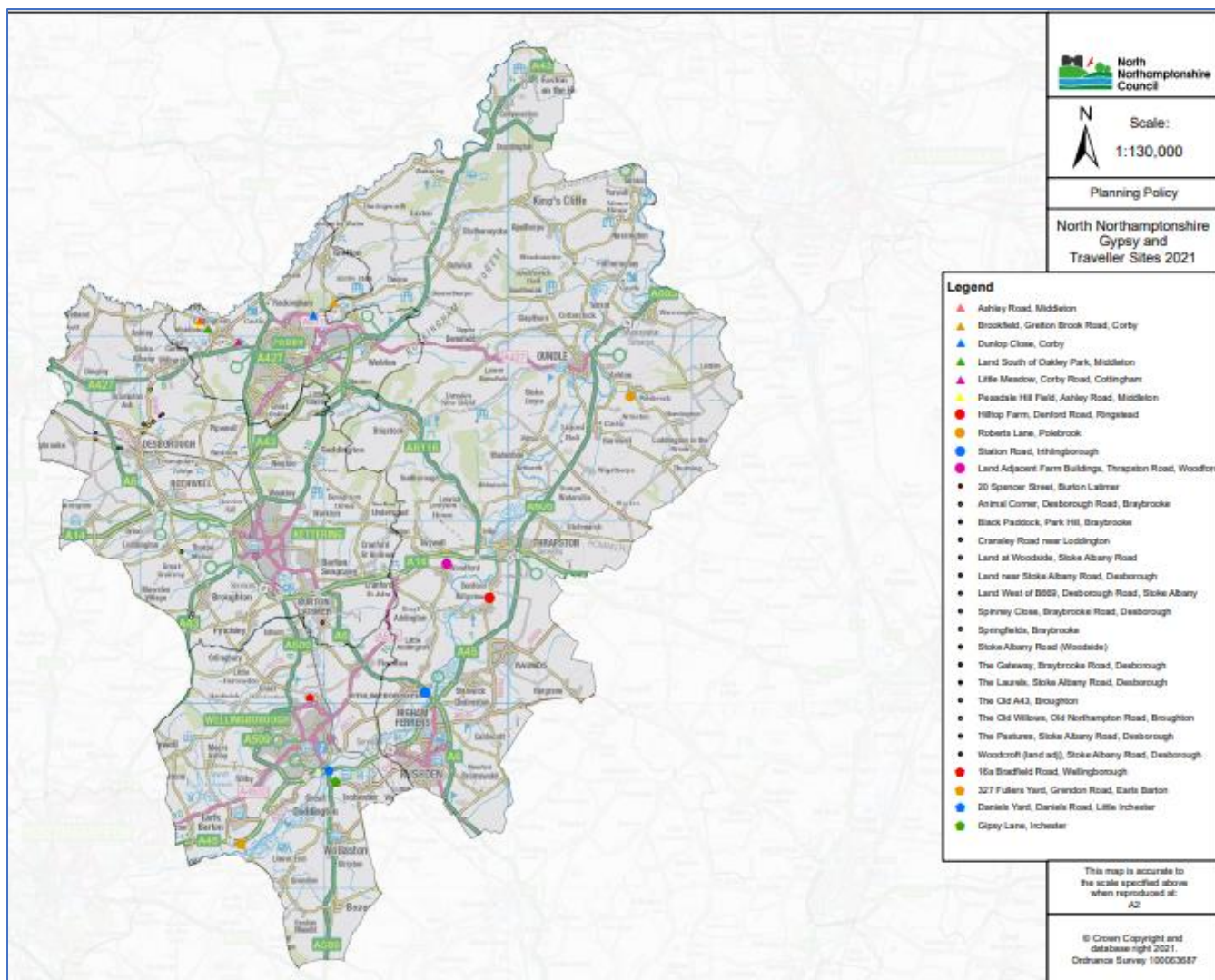
What is the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Need to 2033?

2.1 The current GTAA published in March 2019 provides an assessment of need for each of the former local authority area of Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering, and Wellingborough. However, in recognition of the planned Local Government Reorganisation, the 2019 GTAA also provided a summary of the overall need for North Northamptonshire. This showed an overall need for Gypsy and Traveller households that met the planning definition in North Northamptonshire for 34 pitches, a need for up to 32 additional pitches for undetermined households and need for 44 additional pitches for households that did not meet the planning definition.

Where are the existing sites?

2.2 The existing Gypsy and Traveller sites can be seen on Figure 1. The maps show that a considerable proportion of the sites are located in the northwest of North Northamptonshire in the Corby/ Desborough area. A smaller proportion of sites are located in the south/ southeast of North Northamptonshire.

Figure 1



3.0 Travelling Showmen Accommodation Need

What is the Travelling Showmen Need to 2033?

3.1 The current GTAA published in March 2019 evidenced a need for 14 additional plots in North Northamptonshire over the GTAA period to 2033.

Where are the existing sites?

3.2 The GTAA identified 5 authorised sites for travelling showmen in North Northamptonshire; these are located at Roberts Lane, East Northamptonshire (comprising 4 plots), Abbots Amusements, Wellingborough (comprising 3 plots), Appleton Yard, Wellingborough (comprising 9 plots), Bond Site, Wellingborough (comprising 9 plots), and Shepherds Yard, Wellingborough (comprising 3 plots), as illustrated in Figure 1.

4.0 Options

4.1 The following section sets out various options on which views are invited, based on the key policy areas that have been identified following a review of the existing evidence base, including 2019 GTAA and responses to the recent consultation on the Scope and Issues for the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan.

4.2 The Plan will look ahead to the 2041 in line with the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan. This will ensure that the Plan lasts for at least 15 years on adoption as required by current national planning policy. It is recognised that the updated GTAA will only provide evidence to 2033 and that an early review of the Plan may be necessary.

A. What are the Vision and Outcomes?

4.3 Spatial plans should include a vision for the area once the plan has been implemented. The Plan should include a vision of what the plan is aiming to achieve with regard to provision for Gypsy and Travellers.

4.4 A draft vision has been proposed, this will be reviewed and developed following consultation but provides a starting point for comment:

Vision

North Northamptonshire will meet the existing and future need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in appropriate locations through the provision of sufficient sites. Sites will be well-designed and provide suitable living conditions and a range of accommodation to meet different needs. The number of unauthorised developments and encampments in North Northamptonshire will be reduced.

Question - Vision

Q1 Please indicate which of the following options reflect your views:

- a) Support the Vision of the Plan
- b) Disagree/ Propose changes to the Vision (Please specify how the vision should be changed)

4.5 To achieve the vision the Plan will need to contain objectives which set out the actions needed to deliver the vision. A set of draft Outcomes have been proposed:

- To identify sufficient accommodation to meet the existing and future need for Gypsy and Travellers. For the first five years the plan will identify a specific supply of deliverable sites, for the remainder of the plan period the plan will identify sites or a strategy for accommodating needs.
- To provide a clear framework for making decisions on planning applications for Gypsy and Travellers.
- To set requirements to ensure sites are suitably located in appropriate locations and to provide design standards which ensure suitable living standards and high-quality sites.
- To set out the approach to transit sites and/ or temporary stopping places.

Question – Outcomes

Q2 Please indicate which of the following options reflect your views:

- a) Support the Outcomes identified
- b) Disagree/ Propose changes to the Outcomes (Please specify how the Outcomes should be changed)

B. What options are there to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers?

4.6 The GTAA Update will provide an up-to-date assessment of needs and information on capacity of existing sites to accommodate additional provision. The updated evidence is most likely to identify a requirement for further provision, and the Council will need to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites and specific developable sites or broad locations.

4.7 Options for the way in which future requirements may be met include, but not limited to:

- a) Extending existing authorised sites where possible to meet the needs of existing residents and their families (i.e., making the sites larger)
- b) Increasing the number of pitches or plots on existing authorised sites (without increasing the size of the site)
- c) Allocation of new sites
- d) Examining whether existing sites which do not benefit from planning permission, are suitable to be granted planning permission
- e) Hybrid of all the above options
- f) Other (please specify)

Question – Meeting Gypsy and Traveller Requirements

Q3 Please indicate which of the options you think are appropriate and state why?

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

4.8 A pitch is an area normally occupied by one household, which typically contains enough space for one or two caravans but can vary in size according to the size of the household. A site is a collection of pitches occupied by Gypsies and Travellers. In North Northamptonshire existing sites range from a single pitch occupied by one household to a larger site of around 43 pitches. Whilst it has now been withdrawn, Government Guidance on Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites recommended that sites with a maximum of 15 pitches are 'conductive to providing a comfortable environment which is easy to manage'⁶.

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

Question – Gypsy and Traveller Site Size

Q4 Please indicate which of the options you think are appropriate (ring letter(s) above and state why?)

D. What size of sites should be allocated for Travelling Showmen?

4.9 Travelling Showmen sites often are mixed in nature and combine residential, storage and maintenance use. Typically, a plot contains enough space for one household, including equipment used to store fairground rides, vehicles, and other items as well as for living accommodation, and a yard comprises a collection of plots occupied by Travelling Showmen. Existing yards in North Northamptonshire vary in scale from 3 to 4 plots to larger sites of 9 plots.

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

Question – Travelling Showmen Site Size

Q5 Please indicate which of the options you think are appropriate (ring letter(s) above) and state why?

E. Should the Council seek to influence the geographical distribution of Gypsy and Traveller development?

⁶ Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide, May 2008

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11439/designinggypsites.pdf

4.10 The accommodation needs for Gypsy and Travellers corresponds with the spread of sites, with the greatest needs in the north-east and south-east of North Northamptonshire. This underlines data and analysis from the 2021 Census that emphasises the importance of close-knit family and social group⁷. Culturally, Gypsy and Traveller communities often live and travel together in family groups, even after forming new households through marriage and the need for additional pitches is often derived from the need to accommodate additional family members as they grow older and seek their accommodation. As such, it may be unrealistic to assume family groups would relocate completely to a new area as their needs change.

4.11 National planning policy states that when assessing the suitability of sites in rural or semi-rural settings, local planning authorities should ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled community.

4.12 Considering the existing geographical distribution of Gypsy and Traveller sites and the corresponding needs, the options are as follows:

- a) Use the existing distribution as a guide for future Gypsy and Traveller development
- b) Consider a more equal distribution of development across North Northamptonshire. If so, should development be:
 - i) A more even split between each Town and Parish
 - ii) A more even split in proportion to the population of the Town and Parish
 - iii) A more even split in proportion to the area of the Town and Parish
- c) Not seek to control site distribution

Question – Geographical Distribution

Q6 Please indicate which of the options you think are appropriate (ring letter(s) above) and state why?

F. Should the Council allocate reserve Gypsy and Traveller sites?

4.13 National planning policy requires a continuous 5-year supply of sites which are deliverable. Failure to meet the obligations of national planning policy has a number of effects. It can directly impact on the wellbeing of the Gypsy and Traveller community and, like with housing for the settled population, an insufficient supply weakens the Council's ability to resist development in inappropriate locations, and can lead to less sustainable patterns of development, and planning decisions by appeal.

4.14 If a shortfall in the 5-year supply of specific deliverable sites for Gypsy and Travellers is identified the allocation of reserve sites would enable the Council to identify a site or sites for development from a list of reserve sites to ensure a continuous 5-year supply. In addition, it enables a primarily plan led approach, with sites having been assessed as suitable and appropriately located and giving the opportunity to have specific detailed policies for these sites. These would still be subject to approval of a planning application, as is the case with residential sites. The options are:

- a) Allocate reserve sites for Gypsy and Traveller and/or Travelling Showmen
- b) Do not allocate reserve sites

Question – Allocation of Reserve Sites

Q7 Please indicate which of the options you think are appropriate (ring letter(s) above) and state why?

⁷<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/gypsiesandtravellerslivedexperiancescultureandidentityenglandandwales/2022>

G. What criteria should the Council use when identifying sites for allocation and considering planning applications?

4.15 Policy 31 of the JCS sets out detailed criteria to be used when assessing planning applications and the suitability of sites for allocation to help ensure sites are suitably located in appropriate locations, as follows:

- a) *the site is closely linked to an existing settlement with an adequate range of services and facilities;*
- b) *the site, or the cumulative impacts of the site, in combination with existing or planned sites, will not have an unacceptable impact on local infrastructure;*
- c) *the site provides a suitable level of residential amenity for the proposed residents;*
- d) *the site is served (or can be served) by an adequate water supply and appropriate means of sewage disposal;*
- e) *there is satisfactory access and adequate space for operational needs including the parking, turning, and servicing of vehicles;*
- f) *the health and well-being of occupants is not put at risk including through unsafe access to the site, poor air quality and unacceptable noise or unacceptable flood risk and contaminated land;*
- g) *the size of the site and number of pitches does not dominate the nearest settled community;*
- h) *the proposed development does not have a significant adverse impact on the character of the landscape and takes account of the Landscape Character Assessment of the area. Appropriate landscaping and treatment to boundaries shall be provided to mitigate impact.*

4.16 The Scope and Issues consultation on the Strategic Plan invited views on Policy 31 of the JCS. In response, some respondents suggested policy amendments, including emphasis on low impact, low energy properties, the need for greater consideration of environmental matters, opportunities for the community to manage their health and wellbeing, and promotion of Secured by Design principles. Other respondents objected to the requirement in criteria (a) that site is closely linked to an existing settlement and there was an objection to criteria (g) on the basis that it did not refer to the cumulative impact on the settled community in the same way as criteria (b) refers to the cumulative impact on infrastructure. Another respondent sought clarification that sites should not be located on larger urban extensions.

4.17 The Plan will not be read in isolation but in the context of the Strategic Plan which may include strategic policies that address the amendments to Policy 31 of the JCS suggested by respondents. It is anticipated that the Strategic Plan will set out policies for future growth and development which are relevant to the consideration of Gypsy and Traveller provision such as infrastructure priorities, the need to address inequalities, drive up the quality of design and underpinning placemaking principles, provide a response to climate change, and offer protection to the natural and historic environment. Furthermore, Government consultation on reforms to planning policy include proposals to create National Development Management Policies that will cover planning considerations that typically apply in decision making, such as general policies for conserving historic assets, and preventing inappropriate development in areas of high flood risk.

Question – Assessment Criteria

Q8 As the Plan can delete, amend, or supersede the adopted Policy 31 of the JCS, the options are as follows:

- a) Support the assessment criteria
- b) Disagree/Propose changes to the assessment criteria

Please explain your answer and detail any specific amendments you would like to see to the criteria in Policy 31, and why?

H. Should the Council allocate transit sites or emergency stopping places?

4.18 Transit sites meet the needs of gypsy and traveller households who are visiting or passing through the area. Transit sites include full facilities where Gypsy and Travellers can live temporarily, usually for up to three months. An alternative to transit sites is emergency stopping places, these have more limited facilities

than transit sites. Other alternatives also include temporary sites and temporary stopping places, negotiated stopping places and fair and event sites.

4.19 The 2019 GTAA identified that there are increasing numbers of unauthorised encampments in many parts of North Northamptonshire. There is currently no public transit provision, although the GTAA reported that there were instances of transit provision on some large private sites. The GTAA recommended that the Council should work to identify opportunities for the provision of emergency stopping places.

4.20 Further work is required to identify the number of emergency stopping places which should be provided. The GTAA recommends that this is progressed on a North Northamptonshire wide basis rather than identifying provision within each of the four former Council areas.

Question – Transit Sites and Temporary Stopping Places

Q9 Which option should be progressed to meet the needs of gypsy and traveller households visiting or passing through the area?

- a) Allocate emergency stopping places
- b) Use an alternative option, for example, transit sites or temporary sites. Please specify which alternative option should be considered and the reasons for this.

Are there any sites or locations you think would be suitable, please state why?

I. How should the Council address site design?

4.21 Policy 31 of the JCS provides criteria which require that sites: provide a suitable level of residential amenity; are served (or can be served) by an adequate water supply and appropriate means of sewage disposal; have satisfactory access and adequate space for operational needs including the parking, turning and servicing of vehicles; and that the health and well-being of occupants is not put at risk including through unsafe access to the site, poor air quality and unacceptable noise or unacceptable flood risk and contaminated land.

4.22 The 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide', which was withdrawn in September 2015, set out good practice in respect of the design of Gypsy and Traveller sites. This included guidance in relation to site layout, access and orientation, site services and facilities, health safety and accessibility and layout of pitches.

4.23 Good design is important and will help ensure that sites provide suitable living conditions for occupants, can be accessed safely, are sustainable and can be suitably accommodated in the surrounding landscape.

4.24 A policy could be included in the Plan setting out design principles which provided detailed design requirements for sites. The alternative is to rely on more general design policies which could be set out in other Local Plans such as the Strategic Plan, or by government, or other legislation, for example Environmental Health site licencing regulations.

4.25 A policy setting out design principles could address issues such as:

out	ss	ntation
ndary treatment	of pitches	lscaping
ing	n space	services and facilities
ting	imunal facilities	• Amenity buildings

Question – Site Design

Q10 Which option should be progressed:

- a) Include a policy setting out design principles (please specify what issues the policy should address).

b) Rely on general design policies and other legislation to address the design of sites.

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

4.26 Policy 31 of the JCS protects existing lawful sites, plots and pitches for gypsies and travellers. Including a policy in the Plan to retain Gypsy and Traveller sites would help ensure that sites remain as Gypsy and Traveller sites and are not lost to other types of development/ use helping to maintain supply. This could apply to existing sites, allocations and sites which come through the planning application process.

Question – Retention of sites

Q11 Which option should be progressed:

- a) Include a policy to retain Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- b) Don't actively seek to retain Gypsy and Traveller sites.

5.0 Process and Next Steps

5.1 The current consultation is the first stage in preparing the Plan and runs from XX until XX 2023.

5.2 Comments can be returned via the following means:

- By email: planningpolicy@northnorthants.gov.uk
- By post: Planning Policy Team, North Northamptonshire Council, Deene House, New Post Office Square, Corby NN17 1GD

5.3 The responses to the consultation, and technical evidence mentioned previously, will inform and contribute to the development of detailed planning policies and proposals, including suggested sites and design policies. The Draft Plan will be consulted upon, and further guidance will be issued at that point about how to respond.

5.4 The timetable for each subsequent stage of public consultation is set out below:

Draft Plan published for consultation – September/October 2023

Publication consultation – January/February 2024

Submission to the Secretary of State – April 2024

Public Examination – July 2024

Adoption – February 2025

Question – Scope

Q12 Are there any issues that you consider have been missed and should be considered within the scope of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan?