

PLANNING COMMUNITIES EXECUTIVE ADVISORY PANEL 19 July 2023

Briefing Title	Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan - Responses to Scope and Options Consultation
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Scope and Options Consultation Summary Report

1. Purpose of Briefing

- 1.1. This report summarises the responses received to the Scope and Options consultation undertaken as part of the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and explains the next steps.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Public consultation was undertaken between 5 April and 31 May 2023 on the [Scope and Options](#) and associated [Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#) as part of the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. This report provides a summary of the responses received and explains the next steps in the process.
- 2.2 The consultation at this first formal stage in the plan making process encouraged many helpful and constructive comments and can be considered valuable with nearly 100 individual responses received.
- 2.3 Collectively the responses represent a wide range of views that support continued preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and emphasise the need to continue strengthening the supporting evidence base and engaging with the gypsy and traveller community, as well as with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders to inform policy development.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Panel:
- a) Notes the content of the 'Scope and Options Consultation Summary Report' (Appendix A) as a document which will be used to inform the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.

4. Briefing Background

Consultation Summary

- 4.1 The Scope and Options consultation was held over 8 weeks between 5 April and 31 May 2023 and invited views on what should be included in the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and a range of high-level options to address issues within the plan, including the following key policy areas:
- Vision and outcomes for the Plan.
 - Options to meet future requirements.
 - Site size.
 - Geographical distribution.
 - Allocation of reserve sites.
 - Assessment criteria for site allocation and determination of planning applications.
 - Transit sites and temporary stopping places.
 - Site design.
 - Retention of sites.
- 4.2 The consultation document invited respondents to comment on 12 questions based around the content above or to make any other comments they wished to do at this stage.
- 4.3 In addition, respondents could also comment on the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.
- 4.4 The consultation was promoted in a variety of ways including correspondence via the Council's planning policy consultation database, online questionnaire on the Councils Consultation and Engagement Hub website, site visits, staff bulletins, duty-to-cooperate meetings, press releases and social media.

Consultation Responses

- 4.5 In total, there were 98 responses to the Scope and Options consultation and associated Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, although some had no comment to make at this stage and not all respondents answered all the questions. A wide range of stakeholders submitted responses, including statutory consultees, town/parish councils, businesses, residents, and interest groups. Most responses were submitted online (87 responses) through the Council's Consultation and Engagement Hub, with the remainder (11 responses) email responses. A small number of people from the local Gypsy and Traveller community in North Northamptonshire have given their views via one to one meetings and site visits.
- 4.6 A summary of the responses and initial officer response is set out in the accompanying consultation summary report at Appendix A. A brief overview of the responses to each policy area is outlined below.

Vision and Outcomes

- 4.7 There was general support amongst the respondents for the vision and outcomes, particularly the emphasis on reducing the number of unauthorised developments and encampments. However, some of this was qualified and subject to amendments or a change in emphasis. Some comments referred more to the implementation of the vision as opposed to the vision itself.

Accommodation Options

- 4.8 A wide range of comments were received with support split relatively even between the options provided. Responses to the consultation indicated that having the flexibility to use a variety of options would allow the Council to adopt the most appropriate approach whilst taking account of local context such as levels of need, sustainability, the nature of existing gypsy and traveller sites and landscape sensitivity.

Site Size

- 4.9 All size of sites were supported by respondents who answered this question, with least support for larger sites. It was also recognised that the most appropriate size of site would be dependent on local circumstances and other factors.

Geographical Distribution

- 4.10 Majority of respondents favoured a more equal distribution of development but there were a mix of views and recognition that other factors will influence the location of sites.

Allocation of Reserve Sites

- 4.11 There were a mix of views as to whether reserve sites should be allocated, although slightly more respondents favoured not allocating reserve sites than allocating them.

Criteria Based Policy

- 4.12 Responses broadly supported a criteria-based policy to guide the consideration of locations for gypsy and traveller development. However, there were some specific requests for amendments to the criteria and policy wording which will be considered further. Some comments referred more to the implementation of the criteria-based policy as opposed to the actual criteria.

Short-Term Accommodation

- 4.13 The allocation of emergency stopping places was the option favoured by the highest number of respondents. Many of the concerns raised related to ensuring that the sites identified are in suitable locations and do not become permanent provision.

Site Design

- 4.14 Most respondents who answered this question i.e. excluding 'don't know,' supported the inclusion of a policy setting out design principles. Respondents highlighted multiple issues to be addressed in the design policy.

Site Retention

- 4.15 There was strong support for the inclusion of a policy to retain existing authorised gypsy and traveller sites.

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

- 4.16 Respondents, including the Environment Agency and Natural England, provided supportive comments on the scope and content of the Sustainability Appraisal.

5. Timeline

- 5.1 The response provided to the consultation will be used to inform the development of the draft Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. This work will include:

- Continue to strengthen the supporting evidence base. This will include updated information on accommodation needs, design advice and a detailed evaluation of existing sites to accommodate extra capacity, along with updated Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment in accordance with the regulations.
- In recognition that Gypsy and Travellers are hard to reach groups, officers will work with the Community Development Officer to engage directly with the local Gypsy and Traveller community through offering a series of face-to-face meetings.
- Maintain discussions with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders as part of ongoing duty-to-cooperate requirements, including preparation of statements of common ground as required by the National Planning Policy Framework
- Upload consultation responses to the website alongside the consultation summary report.

- 5.2 The next formal stage of the process is consultation on the Draft Plan. The latest Local Development Scheme (reported elsewhere on the agenda) indicates this stage will take place in September/October 2023 to allow sufficient time for the work outlined above to be progressed.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

- 6.1 The following were considered: Resources, Financial and Transformation; Legal and Governance; Relevant Policies and Plans; Risk; Consultation; Equality; Climate and Environmental Impact; Community Impact, and Crime and Disorder Impact. If applicable, the outcome of any consultations, assessments, considerations, and implications considered necessary during preparation of this report are detailed below:

- Financial – The cost of plan preparation, consultation, technical advice, legal support, and examination is to be met from within the Planning Policy team’s revenue budgets.
- Legal and Governance – The preparation of planning policy is a legal requirement under Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A public consultation was held in April and May 2023 in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- Risk – The Local Development Scheme includes a risk assessment of issues that could affect the Councils ability to deliver the Local Plan(s) in accordance with the programme. Failure to consider representations to the Scope and Options consultation may result in an unsound plan at Examination, or legal challenge.
- Equality - The Scope and Options consultation documents were subject to an equalities assessment, and this will be reviewed and updated for the Draft Plan.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The consultation encouraged many helpful and constructive comments which will inform the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. Further work now needs to be undertaken to strengthen the evidence base, including updated assessment of need, detailed assessment of sites deemed as potentially able to meet identified need and ongoing engagement.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 [EAP Planning Communities, 27 March 2023](#)