

North Somerset Council Local Development Framework

Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document



Issues and Options

Contents Page

1. Introduction

- 1.3 What is the Local Development Framework?
- 1.6 Why do we need a Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document?
- 1.12 Objectives of this Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document
- 1.13 What national planning policy does this Development Plan Document need to comply with?
- 1.17 The draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy
- 1.23 Existing Gypsy and Traveller planning policy in North Somerset
- 1.26 Race Relations and Inclusive Communities
- 1.29 Definition of Gypsies and Travellers

2. What is an Issues and Options Document?

- 2.2 Timetable
- 2.5 Community Involvement
- 2.9 Considering possible sites (Call for Sites)
- 2.10 Work that has already gone into preparing this document
- 2.11 Meeting the requirements of the Sustainability Appraisal
- 2.14 What happens next?

3. Setting the Context

- 3.1 North Somerset
- 3.7 History and Culture of Gypsies and Travellers
- 3.11 National Gypsy and Traveller context
- 3.14 Local Gypsy and Traveller context

4. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

- 4.1 Evidence Base
- 4.2 West of England Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
- 4.4 Community Involvement with the Assessment
- 4.5 Key results of the West of England GTAA
- 4.6 Accommodation Preferences and Location of Sites
- 4.7 Travelling Patterns
- 4.8 Average Size of Households
- 4.9 Transit Requirements

5. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Options

- 5.1 Selecting new sites
- 5.5 Site Requirements
- 5.7 Minimum Site Requirements
- 5.11 Concentration or dispersal of sites?
- 5.13 Separate Residential /Transit sites
- 5.17 Planning Constraints and Opportunities
- 5.22 Green Belt
- 5.27 Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- 5.30 Flood Risk Areas
- 5.33 Nature Conservation (International and Nationally Recognised Environmental Designations)
- 5.38 Conservation Areas/Listed Buildings/Archaeological Sites
- 5.41 Public Open Space
- 5.42 Proximity to Towns and Villages (Accessibility to services)
- 5.45 Vehicular Access
- 5.46 Landscape Impact
- 5.48 Residential amenity
- 5.51 Greenfield or Brownfield?
- 5.54 Health and Safety
- 5.55 Major Development sites
- 5.59 Summary of factors influencing choice of sites
- 5.60 Analysis of existing Sites
- 5.63 Appraising existing sites
- 5.64 Appraising private sites with temporary permission
- 5.66 Retaining existing sites
- 5.67 Appraising Unused and Surplus Public Sector Land

6. Monitoring and Enforcement

- 6.1 Monitoring
- 6.2 Indicators
- 6.3 Enforcement

7. The Next Steps

8. Appendices

- 1 Glossary of Terms
- 2 Invitation for the submission of sites

Maps

Map 1	North Somerset
Map 2	Important Environmental Constraints in North Somerset
Map 3	Flood Risk areas in North Somerset

Tables

Table 1	Sources of Evidence
Table 2	Requirement for Gypsies and Travellers 2006- 2016 (GTAA)
Table 3	Locational Requirements for Gypsy and Traveller Sites
Table 4	Locations where Gypsy and Travellers Sites may be acceptable
Table 5	Locations where Gypsy and Traveller Sites will not be appropriate
Table 6	Existing Gypsy and Travellers Sites in North Somerset



1. Introduction

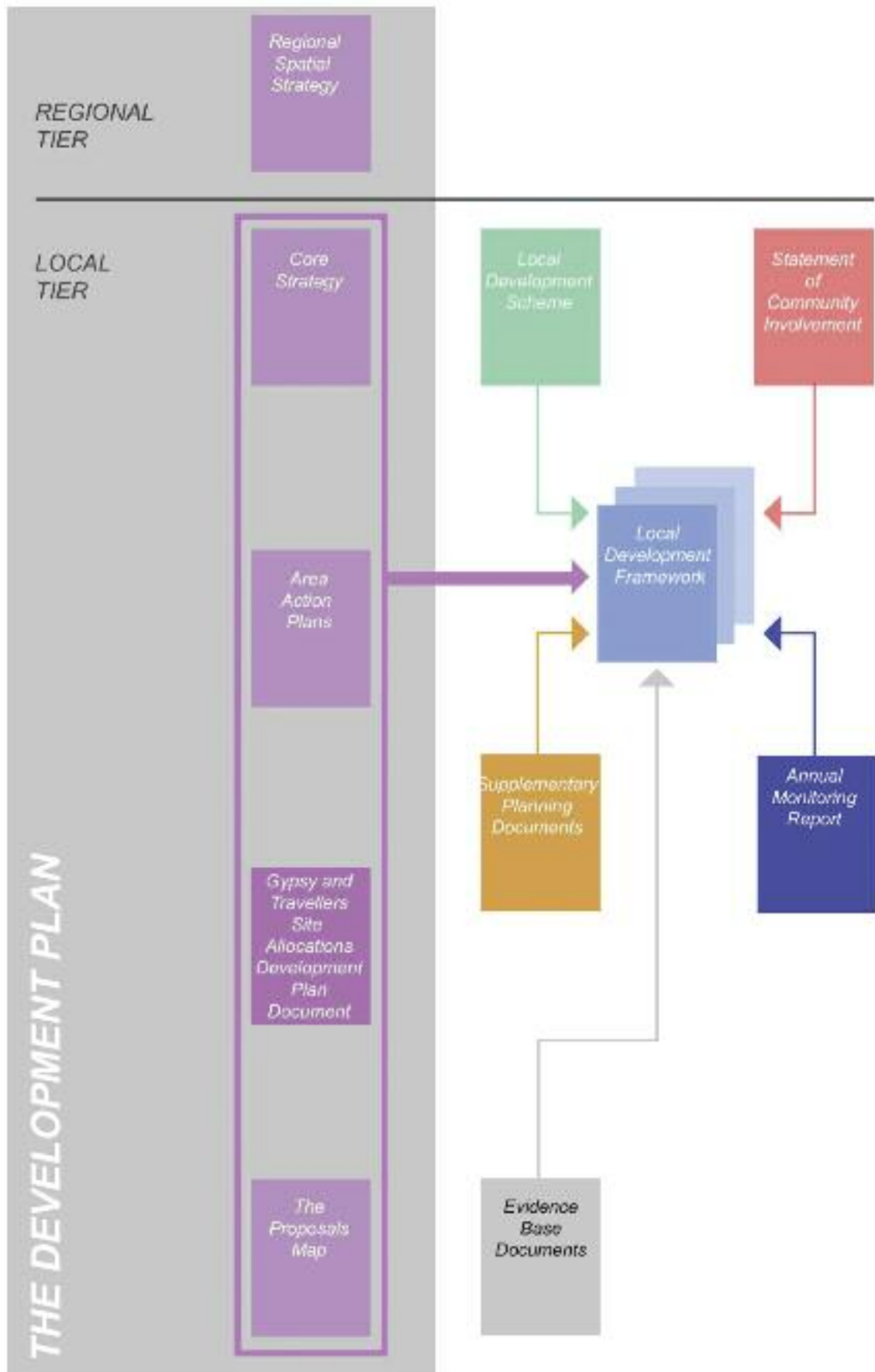
- 1.1 This Issues and Options paper is an opportunity for the community at large to comment on the Planning Authority's perception of what needs to be done around a particular issue and the ways in which this can be addressed. It tackles what has been a difficult subject to address, both nationally and locally, namely the provision of sufficient accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 1.2 The issues and options listed in this document are not statements of North Somerset Council's intent but merely offer starting points for discussion. Readers should also note that the council has made no decision in favour of any possible sites, nor has the council discounted the possibility of further sites coming forward for consideration.

What is the Local Development Framework?

- 1.3 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Authorities to prepare a series of Local Development Documents (LDDs), which will form the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the area. The LDF is essentially a "suite" of planning documents that, when adopted, will set the long term spatial planning strategy for North Somerset.
- 1.4 The LDF will include:
 - **The Core Strategy** which will set out the long term spatial vision for the whole of North Somerset;
 - **Site Specific Allocation Documents** which will identify specific sites for development e.g. Gypsy and Traveller Sites;
 - **Area Action Plans** for areas of significant change;
 - **Supplementary Planning Documents** which will give detailed guidance on specific subjects or sites;
 - **The Proposals Map** which will identify specific sites and policies
 - **Statement of Community Involvement** which sets out how consultation and engagement will be undertaken;
 - **Annual Monitoring Report** which will monitor the policies, proposals and assumptions contained in the LDF;
 - **The Local Development Scheme** which sets out the various documents that the council plan to produce over the next three years.

Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document

- 1.5 A requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is that the LDF must be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).



Why do we need a Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document?

- 1.6 There is likely to be continuing pressure for unauthorised encampments if provision is not made for sufficient authorised sites (both permanent and transit). This may have a detrimental effect on relationships between the settled community and the Gypsy and Traveller community. A lack of accommodation also has a negative effect on the welfare and social integration of Gypsy and Traveller families with the settled community.



- 1.7 Circular 01/2006 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites' requires that the number of pitches set out in Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) must be translated into specific site allocations. Therefore, to foster safer, stronger and more cohesive communities, this Development Plan Document has been identified as a priority in order to allocate sufficient new sites to help meet the unmet accommodation need for Gypsies and Travellers in North Somerset.

- 1.8 The draft South West RSS identifies the need for an additional **36 residential and 10 transit pitches** in North Somerset for the period 2006–2011. For assessing demand beyond 2011, an acceptable growth rate in the Gypsy population of 3% per annum is assumed in the RSS unless detailed assessments are undertaken which indicate otherwise.
- 1.9 If sufficient sites are not identified then increasingly Gypsy and Traveller planning applications will be decided on appeal and not necessarily in the most suitable or sustainable locations. An increase in authorised site provision in the most sustainable locations would reduce the likelihood of less suitable sites being granted consent. In addition, if more authorised sites are made available, this will strengthen the council's ability to use effective enforcement powers.
- 1.10 **In order to bring potential sites forward the council are undertaking a "Call for Sites" exercise where landowners are requested to put forward land which they consider to be suitable for a Gypsy and Traveller site (See Appendix 2).**
- 1.11 This document does not cover the needs of Travelling Show people. Although the draft RSS identifies a need for 51 pitches up to 2011 for Travelling Show people in the West of England area, the allocation of sites to meet this need will be undertaken in consultation with other authorities and through a separate Site Allocation Document.

Objectives of this Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document

- 1.12 The objectives of this document is:
- To aid in the elimination of unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampments and associated nuisance in North Somerset through the provision of adequate authorised accommodation;
 - To ensure that the identified needs of Gypsies and Travellers that permanently reside in North Somerset are met through the allocation of suitable and sustainable sites;
 - To support and create healthy and inclusive communities in North Somerset, balancing the needs of residents today with the need to protect and preserve the environment for future generations;
 - To identify broad locations where Gypsy and Traveller Sites would be appropriate;
 - To eliminate racial discrimination and tension by ensuring that Gypsies and Travellers can play a full and responsible role in the community.

What national planning policy does this Development Plan Document need to comply with?

- 1.13 Nationally, planning requirements and advice are set out in Planning Acts, Policy Statements and Government Circulars. North Somerset Council must comply with the legislation and legal requirements contained in these documents when preparing the Local Development Framework.
- 1.14 With regard to national guidance on planning for Gypsies and Travellers, **Circular 01/2006 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites'** provides guidance on the planning aspects of finding suitable sites for Gypsies and Travellers and how local authorities and Gypsies and Travellers can work together to achieve this aim.
- 1.15 It is now a requirement under the 2004 Housing Act (Section 225) for the council to carry out a Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment and to take a strategic approach in order to address a lack of suitable housing for Gypsies and Travellers. The council therefore has a statutory obligation not only to provide suitable site provision, but also to ensure suitable housing is available for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 1.16 In preparing this document, the council is also required to have regard to other statutory duties, which include those in respect of homelessness under Part V11 of the Housing Act 1996 and to our obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Under this Act, councils have a general duty to actively seek to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations.

The draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy

- 1.17 The South West Regional Assembly is currently the Regional Planning Body for the South West of England and, as such, is responsible for the production of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), which outlines the regional planning context and 'spatial' vision for the South West until 2026. The final approval of the RSS is expected in June 2009.
- 1.18 Circular 01/2006 describes how the process of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is integral to the planning process. Local authorities should carry out robust accommodation needs assessments, which assess overall levels of need, identifies any unmet needs for accommodation and subsequently identifies future pitch requirements.

1.19 The results of accommodation assessments feed into Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks. Based on the West of England Gypsy and Traveller Assessment (2007), the draft RSS sets out how many additional pitches are required in the South West for Gypsies and Travellers in the period until 2011. It breaks this figure down to a specific requirement for each local authority in the South West. For North Somerset there is a need for an extra 36 residential and 10 transit pitches.

1.20 To guide the location of future sites the RSS includes the following policy:

“ Local Authorities will identify realistically deliverable sites in their Development Plan Documents to provide for 1634 additional pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in the region over the period 2006-2011, distinguishing between residential and transit pitches to deliver the distribution of pitches contained in Table 4.3 (of the RSS). Where it is appropriate to make provision beyond 2011 and other data is not available, provision should allow for a 3% compound growth in requirements per annum. Local Planning Authorities should take account of the specific needs of different groups of Gypsies and Travellers in site allocations. The provision of temporary accommodation in connection with festivals and other similar annual events is an important requirement, but should not be regarded as formal transit provision to meet the requirements identified in Table 4.3.”

Policy GT1 of The draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy

West of England Housing Market Area	Residential Pitch Requirements	Transit Pitch Requirements
HMA	208	90
North Somerset	36	10
Bath & North East Somerset	19	20
Bristol City	24	0
South Gloucestershire	58	25
West Wiltshire	14	5
Mendip	57	30

**Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Requirements to 2011
(Table 4.3 of draft RSS)**

- 1.21 The Council's preferred approach to meeting the current identified shortfall in authorised accommodation in North Somerset is to make sufficient accommodation provision until 2011, which is the same period as the draft RSS policy. This will ensure that this document is in general conformity with the RSS.
- 1.22 Provision beyond 2011 would be subject to future assessments and take into account the capacity and occupancy rates of new sites found through this document.

Existing Gypsy and Traveller planning policy in North Somerset

- 1.23 The North Somerset Replacement Local Plan (March 2007), the policy document which the Local Development Framework will replace, contains a Gypsy and Traveller policy (H/12), which is currently used to assess applications for new Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- 1.24 Until such a time as this Development Plan Document is formally adopted, Policy H/12 of the Local Plan and Circular 01/2006 will be used to assess new applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites. **Any new sites coming forward in this way will help to reduce the need identified in the RSS.**
- 1.25 Policy H/12 of the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan states:

"Proposals for the use of land for the stationing of residential caravans occupied by gypsies or other travellers or as permanent bases for travelling show people will be permitted in the Green Belt in very special circumstances only.

Elsewhere, such proposals will be permitted having regard to a search sequence commencing with previously developed and under-utilised land within urban areas, then other suitable land within urban areas, then within and immediately adjacent to urban areas, followed by other settlements and finally only when all options in other locations have been exhausted, in the open countryside; and where:

- i. there is an identified need for the site to be located within North Somerset; and*
- ii. the site is well related to local services and facilities, such as schools and health and welfare facilities; and*

- iii. *the site is already or capable of being adequately screened and would otherwise respect the landscape character of the locality; and*
- iv. *the proposal would not unacceptably prejudice the amenities of adjoining occupiers; and*
- v. *the site is capable of being provided with foul and surface water drainage, including appropriate infrastructure and facilities to manage wastes; and*
- vi. *there is adequate parking and safe access into and out of the site; and*
- vii. *in the case of sites for travelling show people, there is evidence of a previous connection with the local area and an intention to continue this connection.*

Proposals for transit sites for gypsies and travellers and small-scale business-related activities will be considered in the context of the above criteria, excluding (ii) and (vii.)”

Race Relations and Inclusive Communities

- 1.26 Issues surrounding Gypsies and Travellers have traditionally been divisive. In particular, the identification and provision of sites has historically caused tension and has generated a hostile response from many parts of the community. North Somerset Council has a statutory general duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to ‘pay due regard’ to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to promote good race relations between different racial groups.
- 1.27 As legally recognised ethnic groups, Gypsies and Irish Travellers are protected by the Race Relations Act and included in the scope of the duty to promote race equality and good race relations. This means that it is unlawful for any individual or organisation to treat Gypsies or Irish Travellers less favourably than other groups, or to discriminate against them directly or indirectly.
- 1.28 As the council wishes to promote sustainable, inclusive communities, when consulting on this document **the council will not tolerate any racial representations.** This aside, Gypsies and Travellers will not receive any preferential treatment and are subject to the same planning rules and restrictions as the ‘settled’ community.

Definition of Gypsies and Travellers

- 1.29 The planning definition is outlined in Circular 01/2006 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites' Para 15 and states:

"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 dependant's educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such."

- 1.30 As the purpose of the planning system is to regulate the use and development of land in public interest, the planning definition seeks to capture those with a specific land use requirement, arising from their current or past nomadic way of life. This is the definition appropriate to this planning document.

- 1.31 The planning needs of Travelling Show people are identified in Circular 04/2007 and, as such, are specifically excluded from the planning definition and also from the scope of this document.

2. What is an Issues and Option Document?

- 2.1 This document is the first major step towards preparing a document that allocates land for Gypsy and Traveller sites. It invites stakeholders to comment on various options to meet the unmet accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in North Somerset. **It also provides stakeholders with an opportunity to put forward land to be considered for allocation by the council.**

Timetable

- 2.2 The production and subsequent consultation on this document marks the start of a two year process before North Somerset Council can formally adopt the 'final version' of this document. The diagram below sets out the key stages and dates leading to the completion - what we term, adoption of the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document. These are statutory plan making stages which the Government requires this plan to be prepared in accordance with.

Stage	Target Date
Project Commencement	November 2008
Pre-Production Brief for consultation	January 2009
Issues and Options Document for consultation (CURRENT STAGE)	May/June 2009
Consultation on Pre-submission Document (WILL INCLUDE SPECIFIC SITES)	September/October 2009
Agree changes to Pre -Submission Document in the light of consultation	January 2010
Submit Submission document to Secretary of State	March 2010
Examination Period	March – Dec 2010
Adoption of Sites Allocations Document	March 2011

- 2.3 The responses to this Issues and Options document will be considered before preparing the “Pre-Submission Document, which will include proposed site allocations.
- 2.4 The “Pre- Submission Document” will then go out for public consultation and responses to that document will be fed into the production of a final ‘Submission’ document. The Submission document will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration at an Examination. The inspector’s findings from this Examination will be binding on the council.

Community Involvement

- 2.5 The active involvement of communities is now a key element in all stages of plan preparation. This is particularly important in the context of this Issues and Options Document, which many consider is a sensitive and controversial topic. **This document is out for public consultation for six weeks between 11 May 2009 and 22 June 2009.** This is your chance to comment on the questions in this document and help shape future drafts of the document.
- 2.6 A key aim of this Issues and Options paper is to seek consensus on important issues early in the planning process. This is known as ‘front-loading.’ If ‘front-loading’ works correctly, when the final document is submitted, there should be general community agreement on key issues and the way options have been chosen and selected. It is appreciated that



not everyone may agree with what is being promoted or the reasons why. However, the various stages set out above will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to put forward their thoughts, ideas and suggestions in an open and fair way.

- 2.7 A key challenge of this document is also to reach out to the wider community and to engage with those sections of the community traditionally known as 'hard to reach groups'. The new planning system places a greater emphasis on councils to involve local residents in the plan making process and the council wishes to ensure that all sections of the community can have their say with regard to the proposals set out in this document.
- 2.8 The Council's Statement of Community Involvement provides more information about how we involve people and organisations in the production of new plans. This can be viewed on the council's website, www.n-somerset.gov.uk and is also available in hard copy from the council.

Considering possible sites (Call for Sites)

- 2.9 Anyone who wishes land to be allocated for Gypsy and Traveller sites should ensure that their sites are brought forward early in the process so that they can be considered by the council and subjected to 'sustainability appraisal'. To make sure this happens, it is very important that the plan is prepared with your input and that we appropriately consider all of the possible alternatives and options.

If you wish to put forward a site then this needs to be submitted early in the process to ensure they are given full consideration. (SEE APPENDIX 2).

Work that has already gone into preparing this document

- 2.10 As part of the pre-production work on this document, the council undertook consultation on a Pre-production Brief in January/February 2009. This exercise enabled key issues and emerging themes to be debated with selected identified stakeholders. Full details of the consultation on the Pre-Production Brief are detailed in the supporting Consultation Report that accompanies this document.

Meeting the requirements of Sustainability Appraisal

- 2.11 The concept of sustainability is at the heart of this Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Development Plan Document. As part of its production, the Council is required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the document. The purpose of SA is to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of spatial plans, such as this Issues and Options Document.
- 2.12 In order to meet sustainability requirements, North Somerset Council will produce a SA, which will ensure the final version is sound and conforms to sustainability principles, as set out by the Government.
- 2.13 Consultation was undertaken in October/November 2007 on the generic Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for the Local Development Framework. This document sets out a Framework for how the SA will be carried out for all Development Plan Documents, including this Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document. A link to this document can be found at www.n-somerset.gov.uk

What happens next?

- 2.14 Responses made during the consultation stage of this document will be considered and the results will help shape future work. A report will be prepared at the end of the statutory consultation period, which will outline how views have been considered and how the document has been changed in light of these responses. To assist comments there are a series of questions that we would like you to answer.

3. Setting the Context

North Somerset

- 3.1 North Somerset covers an area of around 37,500 hectares (145 square miles) with a population of 204,700¹. It lies south west of Bristol, abutting the city boundary to the north and east, the Severn estuary coast to the west and the Mendip Hills in the south. There is a varied landscape with coastal and rural international and national designations i.e. Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 3.2 The district contains an international airport, a deep sea west coast port, part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, part of the Forest of Avon, a large area of Green Belt stretching south west from the edge of Bristol, as well as areas of low-lying levels and moors. The M5 runs from north to south through the district and the mainline railway from Bristol to the South West also crosses North Somerset stopping at five stations along its route.
- 3.3 North Somerset's primary town is Weston-super-Mare accounting for just under 40% of North Somerset's population, which along with Clevedon (12%) and Portishead (9%) are located on the coast. The other main population centre of Nailsea (9%) is located within the rural levels and moors landscape approximately seven miles from Bristol.
- 3.4 North Somerset's economy, travel patterns and leisure and retail patterns are heavily influenced by its' close proximity to Bristol and easy access to the M5 motorway. Each of the four main towns has a high level of out-commuting to Bristol and its' north fringe by private car with low public transport use (less than half the national average). The majority of villages are also within commuting distance of Bristol and therefore to varying degrees have a significant dormitory role. There are serious housing affordability issues with affordable housing completions falling well below the required amount.
- 3.5 Weston-super-Mare is recognised in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy as being a Strategically Significant Town. Traditionally seen as a seaside town the economic base of Weston has weakened considerably over the last twenty years with the structural changes in tourism compounded by the loss of key manufacturers. Recent focus has been on the need to strengthen the retail, tourism and employment base of Weston.

- 3.6 Other economic drivers are Bristol International Airport located on the A 38 some 4.5 miles from the edge of Bristol, but which lacks convenient access from the centres of Weston and Bristol and the deep sea port of Royal Portbury Dock which is the southern part of the Port of Bristol Operations located at the mouth of the River Avon.

History and Culture of Gypsies and Travellers

- 3.7 Gypsies and Travellers have lived in and moved through the UK for centuries. Their culture and habit of nomadism, which distinguishes them from the settled community, has persisted, even though the majority over the years have integrated with the housed population.
- 3.8 Romany Gypsies have been part of British society since the 15th century, and Irish Travellers since the 1800s. Today, these two groups differ in family size, economic activity, language and certain cultural traditions. However, they also have much in common, most significantly a cultural tradition of nomadism.
- 3.9 Despite a tradition of nomadism, the degree to which Gypsies and Travellers now actively travel varies greatly. Traditional patterns of work are changing and although a minority still regularly travel (predominantly for work and cultural reasons), the majority of Gypsies and Travellers now lead a settled life. Nevertheless, research indicates that the majority also prefer to live among a community of family and friends, often in caravans.
- 3.10 This aside, the ability to travel remains an important part of Gypsy and Traveller culture. Some communities live in extended family groups and prefer to travel as such. This is a key feature of their traditional way of life, which has an impact on planning for their accommodation needs. Another aspect of their traditional way of life is early marriage. It is still expected that the family will provide for those with special needs and the elderly.

National Gypsy and Traveller context

- 3.11 According to the July 2008 bi-annual caravan count figures, there are over 17,500 Gypsy and Traveller caravans in England. Over 75 % of these caravans are on authorised sites, the majority being well-managed and an accepted part of the local community. The remaining caravans are divided between unauthorised encampments (camping on land they do not own) and unauthorised developments (developing their own land without planning permission).
- 3.12 The commission for Racial Equality highlight that Gypsies and Travellers experience the worst health and education status of any disadvantaged group in England. Circ 01/2006 indicates a clear link between a lack of good quality authorised sites for Gypsies and Travellers and poor health and education. Clearly, the provision of more authorised sites and a settled 'base' would benefit access to health and education services.
- 3.13 According to the Department for Communities and Local Government, the social exclusion experienced by Gypsies and Travellers is highlighted by the following statistics:
- The average life expectancy is 12 years less for women and 10 years less for men than the settled population;
 - Of Gypsy and Traveller mothers, 17.6% have experienced the death of a child, compared to 0.9% in the settled population;
 - In 2005, only 20.7% of Irish Travellers and 9.1% of Romany Gypsy pupils gained GCSE qualifications, compared to a national average of 42.5%.

Local Gypsy and Traveller context

- 3.14 In 2009 there were 39 Gypsy and Traveller families living in caravans that permanently reside in North Somerset .These are distributed between seven on council owned sites and thirty two on privately owned, usually owner occupied, pitches. Since the 'family' is still the strongest social unit and family based self employment is very common, sites are often home to an extended family of several generations. There are currently no transit sites in North Somerset.
- 3.15 The other group of Gypsies and Travellers, which are more visible, are families passing through North Somerset on a seasonal basis, setting up on unauthorised encampments, usually on the roadside or unoccupied private or public land. It is these sites which most strongly affect local public opinion and can lead to a negative perception of Gypsies and Travellers.

- 3.16 As unauthorised encampments are very short term, if there is no transit provision there is rarely an opportunity to pursue legal processes. It also reinforces prejudices on both sides. It can be anticipated that there will always be families in transit who will not be accommodated on local family sites and are not seeking permanent residential accommodation in this area. Therefore, there will always be a demand for transit provision and this is reflected in the requirements emerging from the Regional Spatial Strategy.

4. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Evidence Base

- 4.1 A sound evidence base is an essential part of the preparation of proposals for the allocations of new sites for Gypsy and Traveller residential and transit pitches. Table 1 below identifies the baseline information upon which the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Development Plan Document will rely upon. Further evidence will be identified as the plan progresses.

Table 1

Main information Sources	Scope
West of England Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required by S225 of the Housing Act 2004; • Accommodation assessment required of Gypsies and Travellers residing in or resorting to the particular area.
Bi-annual Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Counts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caravan counts undertaken in January and July of each year; • Includes public and private, authorised and unauthorised sites.
Schedule of Unauthorised Encampments	Updated from data collected.
North Somerset Annual Monitoring Report 2008	Published in January each year.

West of England Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

- 4.2 North Somerset Council, like all local authorities has a statutory duty to carry out an assessment on the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers living in the District. This came into force in the new Housing Act 2004. These assessments, are known as Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA).

- 4.3 North Somerset Council has worked with the former Avon authorities (Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council) to plan for and undertake a West of England Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). The assessment was completed in summer 2007 and the final version of the study is available to download on the council's website.

Community Involvement with the Assessment

- 4.4 In preparing the GTAA, consultation and engagement with the Gypsy, Traveller and Showmen communities was comprehensive and sustained. An advisory group of Gypsies, Travellers and Showmen was formed, entitled the 'Gypsy, Traveller & Showmen Consultation Forum'. The Forum included community members from across all four Local Authorities. The Forum played an active part in the development of the GTAA, including participating in the development of questionnaires to both housed and 'sited' (including roadside) families. The involvement of Gypsies, Travellers and Showmen in the design and delivery of the GTAA survey represents an advance in community involvement and should facilitate better community relations in the future. Community members are stakeholders in the project and capacity has been developed in an often socially excluded community.

Key results of the West of England GTAA

- 4.5 The West of England GTAA found that the total requirement for residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers (across the West of England) is 127 pitches until 2011, with family growth requiring an additional 44 pitches to be provided between 2011–2016, taking the total requirement until 2016 across the West of England to 171 pitches. These pitch requirements are over and above current provision, meaning that these are 'new' pitches. The final accommodation requirements for each Local Authority are set out below:

Table 2 Requirement for Gypsies and Travellers 2006–2016

Authority	Residential Pitches	Transit Caravan Capacity
Bath and North East Somerset	19	20
Bristol	24	0
North Somerset	36	10
South Gloucestershire	48	25
TOTAL 2006–2011	127	55
Bath and North East Somerset	3	0
Bristol	6	0
North Somerset	13	0
South Gloucestershire	22	0
Total 2011–2016	44	0
Total 2006–2016	171	5

Source: Table 47 GTAA

Accommodation Preferences and Location of Sites

4.6 When Gypsy and Travellers were interviewed as part of the GTAA the overwhelming accommodation preference was for owner-occupied sites. Both housed and sited respondents were equally keen on exploring this further. The majority of respondents interviewed had close family connections to the locality in which they resided, and expressed a desire to live within their current unitary authority. In addition most respondents also expressed a strong preference to live in smaller family sized sites preferably not bigger than 5 pitches with the ability to be able to accommodate their extended family or cater for older family members.

Travelling Patterns

- 4.7 Respondents throughout the study area reported a high degree of travelling, most particularly in the summer months. These stated behaviours are supported by government bi-annual Gypsy and Traveller count data. There is evidence of considerable demand for both a network of short term stopping places and transit sites across the study area. With regard to suitable locations for transit sites, the majority of respondents cited proximity to motorways and main transport routes as important.

Average Size of Households

- 4.8 Across the West of England, the average size of households for the communities surveyed is 3.9 people, with an average of 2.5 caravans per household. The population is young and growing at 3% per annum. There is a considerable number of young people of all ethnic groups, (although Irish Travellers are statistically predominant in the 0–16 age range) who will require accommodation within the next 10 years. It is likely that the majority of all these young people will seek caravan accommodation although not necessarily within the study area if marriage occurs with individuals from other localities.

Transit Requirements

- 4.9 In addition to the provision of permanent authorised pitches, the West of England GTAA also provides an estimate for transit pitch requirements. The study suggests that North Somerset's 'portion' should be 10 transit pitches. In this context, transit sites are permanent but any residents are only allowed to stay on these sites for short periods of time, up to 28 days in any 3 month period. Currently there are no transit sites available in North Somerset.

5. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Options

Selecting new sites

- 5.1 Circular 01/2006 states that criteria for the allocation of Gypsy and Traveller sites must be fair, reasonable, realistic and effective in delivering sites. The Government also has new powers to intervene in the plan-making process if it considers that the constraints being proposed by a local authority are too great or have been inadequately justified.
- 5.2 The three main issues discussed in this section are:
- Site requirements;
 - Planning constraints and opportunities;
 - Analysis of existing sites.
- 5.3 This chapter sets out some options that the council believes to be the best choice in providing a starting point for discussing the future accommodation options for Gypsy and Travellers in North Somerset. In summary, the Council needs to provide an additional 36 residential pitches and 10 transit pitches by 2011. The unmet need in accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers could be met in the following ways:
- Identifying the most favourable areas and factors which will determine where further Gypsy and Traveller sites could be sited;
 - Investigating the feasibility of changing the planning conditions of some existing Gypsy and Traveller sites in order that more pitches can be accommodated either on site or as an extension;
 - Identifying and appraising unused North Somerset Council land and other surplus public sector land in order to check whether any of this land could be suitable for Gypsy and Traveller sites;
 - Inviting the identification of other possible sites.
- 5.4 This package should be viewed as a series of interrelated options that the Council could pursue in order to generate additional sites in North Somerset. Considering the past difficulties in identifying sites for Gypsies and Travellers, it is not a question of which “one” of these options will be used, as it is likely that elements from a number of these approaches will be needed.

Site Requirements

- 5.5 Before considering the factors that need to be taken into account when deciding on the best location for new Gypsy and Traveller Sites, there are a number of options regarding the size and distribution of sites.

Minimum Site Requirements



- 5.6 Research shows that Gypsy and Traveller families tend to be larger than those in settled society and, in addition, it is not uncommon for several generations of a family to live together on a site. Larger than average families, combined with the need for large vehicles to tow caravans, creates particular requirements for parking. Consequently, the council suggests it may be necessary to impose minimum size requirements for future sites.

- 5.7 Pitches on permanent residential sites must be capable of accommodating an amenity building, which includes at a minimum: *hot and cold water supply; electricity supply; a separate toilet; a bath/shower room; a kitchen, large trailer, touring caravan, drying space for clothes, lockable shed and parking space for two vehicles.*
- 5.8 For transit sites the amenity building needs to include a *hot and cold water supply, electricity supply and a toilet.*
- 5.9 Research shows that small Gypsy and Traveller sites, generally between 1-10 pitches, have a better chance of integrating into the natural and built environment. This site size tends to work better by allowing for better maintenance, management and control. In support of this, the West of England GTAA found that the aspiration of most Gypsy and Travellers was for small, family sites. The council therefore hopes that future Gypsy and Traveller sites can blend into the surrounding environment by respecting the scale of the environment.

Question 1

What is the ideal size for a Gypsy and Traveller's site in North Somerset?

Concentration or dispersal of sites?

- 5.10 At present nearly 80% (33 pitches) of the current provision are located on adjacent sites midway between Congresbury and the M5 on the A370. This concentration can put additional pressure on local services and further provision in this locality could hinder the integration of gypsy and travellers with the local community.
- 5.11 However, this area does enjoy good access and there are well established physical and social links with neighbouring villages. In addition clustering of sites can encourage social links between family groups. Choices about the distribution of new sites around the District will need to be taken in this document and the avoidance of an over concentration of Gypsies and Travellers in one location is an issue that will need to be debated.

Question 2

Do you think that Gypsy and Traveller sites should be concentrated in one area of the district or should there be a policy of dispersal?

Separate Residential /Transit sites

- 5.12 Travelling is still an important feature of Gypsy and Traveller identity and lifestyle. Some are still highly mobile without a permanent base and others travel for significant parts of the year, especially during the summer months.
- 5.13 Transit sites, as the name suggests, are intended for short term use (up to 28 days in any 3 month period) by Gypsies and Travellers in transit. The site itself is permanent but residents can only stay on a temporary basis. Unlike permanent, authorised sites, transit sites are generally only 'furnished' with basic facilities, such as hard standings and toilets. It is important that they are close to main roads but given their transient nature it is not so critical that they are located close to local facilities.
- 5.14 There is little agreement about the best format for transit pitches except that they should be close to identified transit routes. Many permanent sites accommodate relatives who are in transit and this is a preferred option for families who have this available to them. A resident site manager is generally considered a necessity on large sites or public sites. It is generally accepted that mixed transit/permanent accommodation on **council** sites is not a practical option.
- 5.15 Presently there are no authorised transit sites in North Somerset, which results in unauthorised encampments that have potential to cause damage and community tension. If authorised transit sites existed, Police and the council could refer unauthorised encampments to them, minimising disruption to both travelling families and local residents.

Question 3

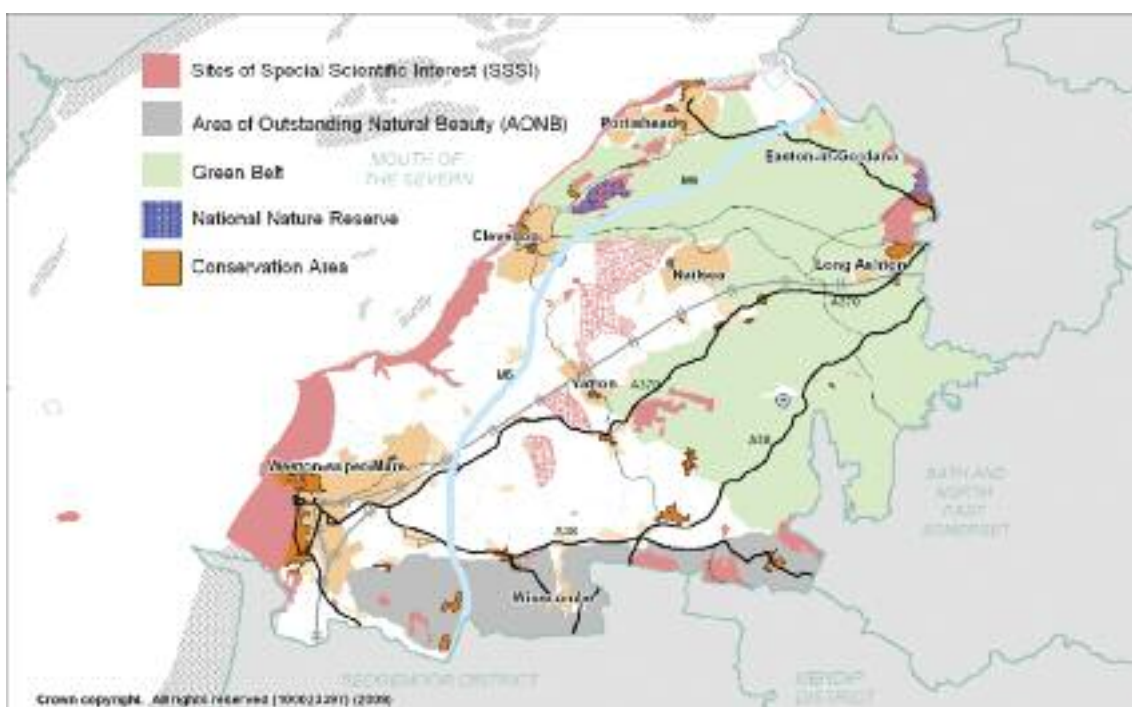
Should transit and residential sites be provided separately?

Planning Constraints and Opportunities

- 5.16 This Issues and Options document stops short of identifying specific sites for future Gypsy and Traveller use. Sites will be introduced at the next stage – Publication (Draft Submission) Document. Please note that stakeholders and landowners still have an opportunity to suggest sites as

part of this Issues and Options consultation (**see Appendix 2**). It is considered that this approach to be fair and equitable with the local community and stakeholders having an opportunity to say whether they agree or disagree with the council's proposed approach prior to specific sites being allocated at the next stage.

- 5.17 It is imperative that any search for new Gypsy and Traveller sites takes into account existing planning constraints and what factors need to be considered in determining the best location for new sites.
- 5.18 Future Gypsy and Traveller sites should be situated in locations that are acceptable in sustainability terms, are deliverable and appeal to both the settled community and Gypsies and Travellers. The council has developed a list of planning criteria that should be used to determine the best location for new sites. This covers and appraises the entire district and will help in identifying areas that could accommodate future Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- 5.19 One of the biggest challenges of this document is to ensure that an adequate supply of suitable, sustainable and deliverable sites is allocated in order to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. Maps 2 and 3 broadly outline the main environmental constraints in North Somerset.
- 5.20 The majority of the district is constrained in some way be it flood zone, Green Belt, an existing urban area or the Mendip Hills AONB. However there are areas that could accommodate new sites and the council must adopt a balanced approach to meeting the unmet accommodation need of Gypsies and Travellers.



Green Belt

- 5.21 This area encompasses the northern part of the District up to the southern boundary of Bristol. In general the Green Belt is between six and twelve miles wide and includes a number of smaller villages such as Dundry, Winford, Abbots Leigh and Barrow Gurney. Larger towns and villages such as Easton-in-Gordano, Portishead and Long Ashton are “windows” in the Green Belt whilst Clevedon, Yatton, Nailsea and Backwell lie on the western extremity of the Green Belt boundary.
- 5.22 In terms of constraint the coastal area of the Green Belt and land around Dundry Hill are of high landscape value and there are a number of ancient woodlands and Forestry Commission holdings close to the edge of Bristol. In terms of opportunities there are a number of settlements within or in close proximity to the Green Belt and these are well located to provide essential services and employment opportunities. The M5, A370 and A38 cross the area giving it good accessibility.
- 5.23 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent the uncontrolled spread of urban areas into open countryside and to keep land permanently open. There is a general presumption against development which would be harmful to green belt objectives and Circ 1/2006 makes it clear that new gypsy and traveller sites in the Green Belt are inappropriate development.



- 5.24 Circ 01/2006 also states that alternatives should be explored before Green Belt locations are considered for Gypsy and Traveller sites. However it goes on to state: *“Alterations to the Green Belt boundary can be used in exceptional circumstances for housing and other types of development inappropriate for the Green Belt. Such alterations have often been used in cases where a local authority’s area contains a high proportion of Green Belt land and no other suitable sites outside the Green Belt exist”.* (Para 51)
- 5.25 Considering that approximately 60% of land in North Somerset is outside of the Green Belt, it is reasonable to concentrate the search for sites in locations unconstrained by this policy constraint. If sufficient sites cannot be allocated on land outside of the Green Belt then Circular 01/2006 states that in such exceptional circumstances Green Belt land should be brought forward through the plan-making process and would need to be specifically allocated as a Gypsy and Traveller site only.

Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 5.26 This area lies in the southern part of the District, stretching from the edge of Weston-super-Mare to Blagdon Lake in the east. The majority of the area is rural in character although the M5 passes through the middle of the zone and there are a number of small villages e.g. Blagdon, Christon, Loxton within its boundaries. Larger villages such as Winscombe and Banwell are either excluded from the AONB or are located on its boundary.
- 5.27 The primary objective of AONB’s is the conservation of the natural beauty and landscape and this is a major constraint throughout this zone. In addition the eastern extremity of the AONB is remote from major settlements and there are significant areas of nature conservation interest throughout the area. The western end of the AONB offers better opportunities for service provision and employment. Being closer to Weston-super-Mare and its surrounding villages this area enjoys good access to the A38 and M5.
- 5.28 As an environmentally sensitive landscape, North Somerset Council would not support any site allocations for Gypsies and Travellers in the Mendip Hills AONB unless applicants can prove that the site would be well related to the character of the local landscape and would not compromise the objectives of the designation. Site allocations on well screened previously developed land could be considered appropriate.

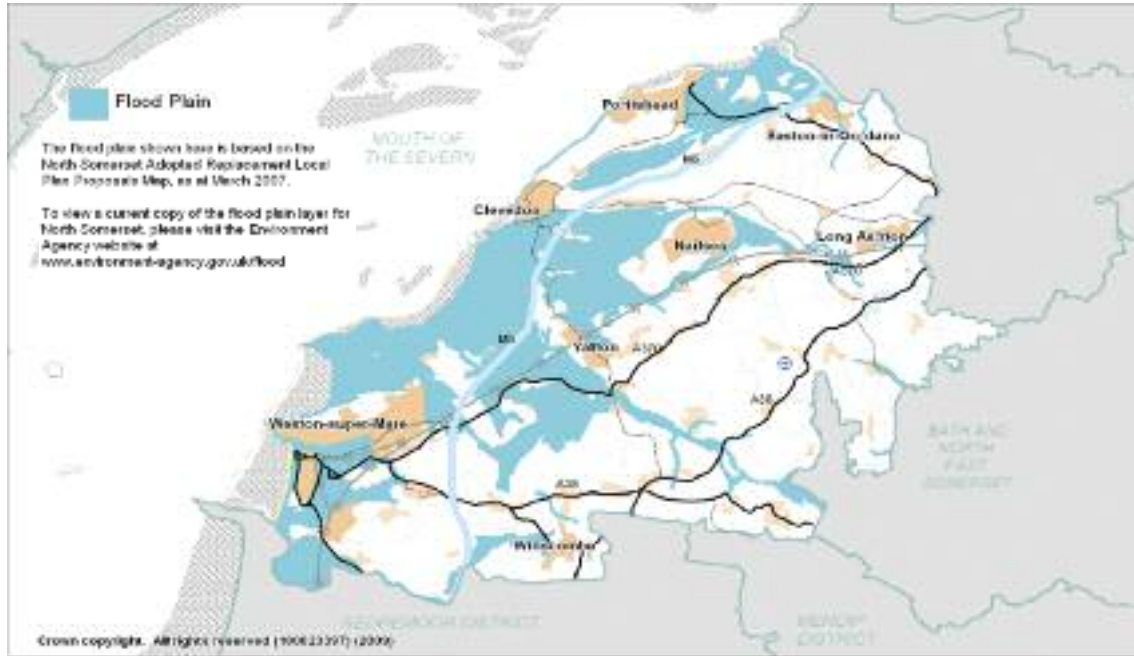
Flood Risk Areas

5.29 According to PPS 25 "Development and Flood Risk, " caravans and mobile homes intended for permanent residential use are classified as '**highly vulnerable**' development, while sites used for short-let caravans (i.e. transit sites) are classified as '**more vulnerable**' development. PPS 25 states that highly vulnerable development should not be permitted in Flood Zone 3 (high probability). This zone covers land assessed as having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding or a 1 in 200 or greater probability of flooding from the sea in any year. The council acknowledges that there are some conventional 'brick and mortar' dwellings, in land classified as Flood Zone 3. This aside, it is the council's responsibility to steer development away from vulnerable areas, however, all sites will be considered on their merits.



5.30 North Somerset Council will follow the Sequential Test, as outlined in PPS 25 (Annex D), in order to steer all new Gypsy and Traveller sites to areas with the lowest probability of flooding (Zone 1). Only if there are not enough suitable or reasonably available sites in Zone 1 will the council consider sites in Flood Zone 2, applying the Exception Test (as outlined in PPS 25) if required. Only when there are not enough suitable or reasonably available sites in Flood Zones 1 and 2 will the council consider the suitability of land in Flood Zone 3 for Gypsy and Traveller sites.

- 5.31 The council through consultants have undertaken a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which will inform the site selection process for this document and is available on the council's website



Map 3 Flood Risk areas in North Somerset

Nature Conservation (International and Nationally Recognised Environmental Designations)

- 5.32 International designation of a site of nature conservation importance offers the highest level of protection from development, while sites of national nature conservation interest are also afforded a very high level of protection. These areas are valued for their wildlife habitats and the roles they play towards protecting our environmental heritage for current and future generations.

- 5.33 North Somerset has four sites protected under international (European) law:

- The Severn Estuary;
- The Avon Gorge Woodlands;
- The Mendip Limestone Grasslands;
- The North Somerset and Mendip Bats.

- 5.34 North Somerset also includes many examples of sites of national importance: 38 areas are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the area also contains two National Nature Reserves, comprising part of the Gordano Valley and Leigh Woods.

5.35 194 sites are listed in the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan as 'wildlife sites', which are important local areas for biodiversity. It is important that habitats rich in species are not confined to reserves but that networks of such habitats exist throughout an area to allow dispersal and interbreeding between different populations.

5.36 These sites encompass a wide variety of wildlife habitats, including UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats. For example, North Somerset holds a significant resource of ecologically valuable aquatic habitats, including many types of UK BAP priority coastal habitats, such as mudflats, sand dunes, salt marsh, and maritime cliffs and slopes. As well as a number of inland lakes, North Somerset has an extensive network of watercourses, comprising rivers, streams, rhynes and ditches. These habitats support many types of mammals, birds, fish, invertebrates and plants.



Conservation Areas/Listed Buildings/Archaeological Sites

5.37 There are 34 Conservation Areas in North Somerset, varying in scale from the Victorian areas in Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon, to whole villages such as Walton-in-Gordano and Loxton. Concentrated in these conservation areas but also distributed throughout the district there are approximately 1200 listed buildings which need protection from unsympathetic development.

5.38 Historic Parks and Gardens are also an important part of North Somerset's heritage. They are important in both historical and landscape terms and may also be of wildlife and recreational value. Within North Somerset, Ashton Court, Barrow Court, Clevedon Court, Leigh Court, Tynesfield, Barley Wood, Bristol University Botanic gardens and Rayne Thatch and Grove Park, Weston-super-Mare are included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. There are also other local gardens, parks and grounds that are of more local significance and worthy of protection.

5.39 Archaeological remains are not only important for their historical and educational interest, but are often important features in the landscape. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) contains details of all known sites, structures, landscapes or other areas of archaeological interest in North Somerset and is continually being updated. The most important archaeological sites are known as Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

Public Open Space

5.40 There are many sports grounds and areas of public amenity value which are heavily used and much valued by local communities. These areas, although often well located to community facilities, are totally unsuitable for any form of alternative use as this would result in a deficiency in recreational open space and a loss of valuable green space.



Proximity to Towns and Villages (accessibility to services)

5.41 One of the key aims of the planning system is to create inclusive, sustainable mixed communities. In pursuit of this objective, the active participation of Gypsies and Travellers in their local communities is to be encouraged and not hindered by the location of sites.

5.42 Circular 01/2006 suggests that local planning authorities, in deciding where to provide for Gypsy and Traveller sites, should first consider locations in or near existing settlements. These normally score the highest in sustainability terms because of close proximity to health and education facilities, shopping centres, access for refuse collection and access to strategic transport networks. Such locations are far more sustainable than remote sites where children will have to be bussed to school and the majority of journeys will have to be undertaken by car.

5.43 The West of England GTAA found that the majority of Gypsies and Travellers would prefer to live in rural areas. Public consultation on this Issues and Options document will need to establish if this is true for families in the North Somerset area. Regardless of location, all future sites need to respect the scale and character of the existing local community and not dominate the existing built environment.



Vehicular Access

- 5.44 Although where possible policies should seek to reduce the reliance on the car, it must be recognised that new Gypsy and Traveller sites require good vehicular access for the caravans and large vehicles. Good visibility at the entrance to sites must be secured and access to sites through narrow country lanes should be avoided. This is particular important for transit sites where there is likely to be greater traffic movement.



Landscape Impact

- 5.45 Gypsy and Traveller sites should respect the scale of the existing environment and, as much as possible, blend into the surrounding environment. Potential sites that are well screened and not in visually prominent positions will have a greater chance of being allocated than sites that are in visually open or exposed positions. This is because Gypsy and Traveller sites, like any form of new residential development, should not result in a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the local environment.
- 5.46 New sites should be well screened or capable of being screened through landscaping and bunding. Long or short distance views into sites from public vantage points should be avoided.



Residential Amenity

- 5.47 Although it is important that sites are well related to settlements and associated facilities the design and layout of new sites must have regard to protecting the amenities of nearby residential properties by screening, orientation, noise attenuation measures etc.
- 5.48 Activities on Gypsy and Traveller sites could potentially be a source of dispute amongst neighbours and can easily lead to serious health and safety hazards. The council's priority is the safe housing of families and ideally, families with permanent accommodation should make arrangements for work and horse related activities to be accommodated off site.
- 5.49 Before a mixed use scheme could be deemed acceptable, there would need to be important consideration of the compatibility of any proposed activity with the existing surrounding land uses. This is particular relevant when considering sites close to existing development.

Greenfield or Brownfield?

- 5.50 Previously developed land also known as brownfield land is defined as: *Land which is, or was, occupied by a permanent structure. This includes all land covered in the curtilage of a development, whether developed or not.*

- 5.51 In this context, the council will try and direct new development to appropriate previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings. This is a principle of sustainable development, which underpins the entire planning process and is a policy approach that applies to all citizens seeking to develop land.
- 5.52 The council is concerned to ensure that, as a scarce resource, land should be used prudently and re-cycling previously developed land, and making more efficient use of it, will assist in alleviating some of the pressures to develop 'greenfield' sites and in the open countryside. Circular 01/2006 states that the establishment of a well planned or soft landscaped Gypsy and Traveller site on previously developed land can be seen as positively enhancing the environment.



Health and Safety

- 5.53 Selecting the right location for future sites is crucial to ensuring the success of the site. If sites are not suitable for health and safety reasons they will not be endorsed by the Gypsy and Traveller community and will not be allocated in this plan. Sites situated near refuse sites, industrial processes or other environmental hazards will obviously have a detrimental effect on the general health and well being of residents and pose particular safety risks to young children. Such areas should be avoided.

Major Development Sites

- 5.54 The draft Regional Spatial Strategy identifies two major urban extensions within the district – at South West Bristol (9,000 dwellings) and east of Weston-super-Mare (9,000 dwellings). While North Somerset objects to the scale and location of these RSS proposals, should these areas

eventually be confirmed then each should be considered as an area of search to accommodate a gypsy and traveller site. Such sites could be fully integrated with the new community in a sustainable location close to new and existing facilities.

5.55 This means that developers would be required to set aside some land to be used for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. Gypsies and Travellers are recognised ethnic groups under housing legislation and therefore are entitled to the same access to housing as the settled community. In the future, it is considered that one way to meet their long term housing needs is to include Gypsy and Traveller pitches as part of planning for mixed and balanced communities via legal agreements.

5.56 Considering the proposed size of these urban extensions (9,000 dwellings each) it would not be unreasonable to ensure that Gypsy and Traveller needs are included in any master plans.

5.57 North Somerset's Core Strategy will bring forward the urban extensions should they be confirmed in the Regional Spatial Strategy and there will be an opportunity to formally consider whether each major urban extension includes provision for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.



Summary of factors influencing the choice of sites

5.58 Many factors will influence the selection of an “appropriate location” for new Gypsy and Traveller sites and in order to identify suitable sites, set out below is a method for evaluating possible locations. The factors listed should not be regarded as an exhaustive list as for some sites there will be other factors to be considered.

Table 3 Locational Requirements for Gypsy and Traveller Sites

Priority will be given to sites that are located:

- On previously developed land;
- Within or close to villages/towns outside of Green Belt or Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Within or adjacent to major development sites;
- Within reasonable distance from local facilities;
- Where there is capacity within local facilities;
- With good access to main road network (important for transit sites);
- With good and safe access to highway;
- On well screened or capable of being screened sites;
- On land that can accommodate a maximum of 10 pitches;
- Where they will have no adverse impact on residential amenities.

This should not be regarded as an exhaustive list as there may be other factors to consider when specific sites are examined in detail.

Question 4

Are there any more factors in Table 5 that should be included?

Question 5

Are there are factors in Table 5 that should be deleted?

Question 6

Do you agree with this method of evaluating potential sites?

5.59 A sequential approach to sites selection will need to be undertaken, looking at less favourable sites only if sites in preferred locations are not available. The overriding need to find sites however, means that if none come forward in preferred locations those in less favourable more environmentally constrained locations will need to be assessed. This may mean considering sites which have some impact on areas such as the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, local conservation designations, or where local services are not so readily available, providing the impact would be acceptable or mitigation would be possible. Table 4 identifies the sorts of areas which may need to be considered in these circumstances. Table 5 list areas where Gypsy and Travellers sites are likely to have an unacceptable impact.

Table 4 Locations where Gypsy and Travellers Sites may be acceptable

Locations which may need to be considered if sites in preferred locations are not available.

- Remote open countryside;
- Greenfield land (unless no suitable brownfield can be found);
- Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Remote from main road network (critical for transit sites);
- Remote from facilities (not so critical for transit sites);
- Where local services are not readily available;
- Local nature conservation designations;
- Local archaeological designations;
- Woodland areas;
- Flood risk areas;
- Sites where there is some adverse visual impact.

This should not be regarded as an exhaustive list as there may be other factors to consider when specific sites are examined in detail.

Question 7

Are there any more factors in Table 4 that should be included?

Question 8

Are there are factors in Table 4 that should be deleted?

Table 5 Locations where Gypsy and Traveller Sites will not be appropriate

Gypsy and Traveller sites are likely to have an unacceptable impact on:

- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Green Belt;
- Conservation Areas;
- Listed Buildings;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- National Nature Reserves;
- Historic Parks and Gardens;
- International and Nationally Recognised Environmental Designations;
- Public Open Space /Playing Fields;
- Areas subject to severe flood risk (Flood Zone 3).

This should not be regarded as an exhaustive list as there may be other factors to consider when specific sites are examined in detail.

Question 9

Are there any more factors in Table 5 that should be included?

Question 10

Are there are factors in Table 5 that should be deleted?

Analysis of Existing Sites

5.60 The Council is aware that finding new land for Gypsy and Traveller sites is difficult because of special land designations e.g. AONB, environmental constraints and the high cost of land suitable for development. Given the difficulty in finding land for sites in areas acceptable in planning terms, it is probable that other solutions will need to be considered. Consequently, one option that the council proposes to explore is any gains offered from existing sites.

5.61 Options include:

- Appraising existing private authorised sites to see whether they have the physical potential to formally incorporate additional pitches within their legal boundaries or on adjoining land;
- Appraising all privately owned sites with temporary planning permissions in order to see if, through the planning system, they should be made permanent;
- Appraising existing council owned Gypsy and Traveller sites to see if they could contribute more than that already agreed.

Table 6 Existing Gypsy and Travellers Sites in North Somerset

Site	No of Pitches	Planning Ref
Willowmead, Moor Lane Weston-super-Mare	5	03/P/0555/F 05/P/2665/RG3
Box Bush Lane	1	97/0590
Clevedon Rd Failand	1	1527/92
Moorland Park Hewish	21	0978/91 2431/92
Moorland Park Hewish (Extension)	12	05/P/2124/F
Travellers Rest Puxton	2	94/1042 06/P/1118/F

A Pitch is defined as:

5.62 Area of a Gypsy/Traveller site where a single household live in their caravans (trailers). Pitches may vary between being large enough for one residential trailer (or mobile home) and one touring (small) trailer to spacious enough to hold one or two large mobile homes and several 'tourers' as well as working vehicles.

Appraising existing sites



- 5.63 Although this will be explored, initial investigations seem to indicate that most if not all sites are operating to capacity and that any intensification would lead to overcrowding and unacceptable site conditions. Although this would be a cost effective method for meeting some of the identified shortfall of need in North Somerset (because it would not involve the development of new sites) this must not be at the expense of good planning.

Question 11

Do you agree that intensifying the use of existing Gypsy and Traveller sites should be explored?

Appraising private sites with temporary permission

- 5.64 It has been common for existing private site permissions obtained on appeal to gain temporary permission, either restricting the use of land as a Gypsy or Traveller site for a limited period (normally between two and five years) or restricting the permission to the applicants and/or their family,

predominantly because of an expectation that alternative sites will be available when the permission expires.

- 5.65 There are two small sites with temporary/personal permissions (Box Bush Lane and Travellers Rest). This document will need to assess whether these sites are in the most suitable and sustainable locations and will therefore need to assess whether new land/sites would be more suitable than these current sites. The health, education and welfare needs of the site residents will need to be taken into account before any decision is taken on these sites.

Question 12

Do you agree that temporary planning permissions for Gypsy and Traveller sites should be reviewed?

Retaining existing sites

- 5.66 It is important to state that any land identified for new Gypsy and Traveller pitches in this planning document will be subject to planning conditions in order to ensure that pitches are not converted to 'mainstream' housing or other buildings and remain as Gypsy and Traveller pitches in perpetuity.

Question 13

Do you agree that there should be a policy to safeguard existing and any proposed Gypsy and Traveller sites and to retain these sites in perpetuity?

Appraising Unused and Surplus Public Sector Land

- 5.67 As part of the on-going exercise to meet the land use requirements of this Development Plan Document, council officers are appraising all unused North Somerset Council land. Discussions will also be held with other public bodies e.g. Highways Agency, Primary Care Trust to establish if they have any surplus land that may be suitable for a Gypsy and Traveller site.
- 5.68 This approach to identifying potential sites is endorsed in Circular 01/2006 (page 9), which states that "*Authorities should also consider making full use of the registers of unused and under-used land owned by public bodies as an aid to identifying suitable locations. Vacant land or under-used local authority land may be appropriate*".

- 5.69 It should be noted that much of the council's land is not suitable or available for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, as the majority is either public open space, parks or is too small to accommodate pitches. However, any potential sites that this exercise yields will be introduced at the next stage of production.

Question 14

Do you agree that appraising unused and surplus public sector land is a good way of identifying potential land for future Gypsy and Traveller sites?

6. Monitoring and Enforcement

Monitoring

- 6.1 Reviewing and monitoring the delivery of sites for Gypsy and Travellers will be crucial to achieving the Plan's objectives. The indicators identified below aim to keep under review the capacity of existing provision of pitches, plus monitor the effectiveness of this Development Plan Document in meeting the shortfall of accommodation need.

Indicators

- Success rate of applications;
 - Number and size of unauthorised encampments/developments;
 - Number of additional pitches created (permanent and transit);
 - Level of vacancy on council/private sites;
 - Outcome of appeal decisions relating to Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- 6.2 The Annual Monitoring Report, which is a requirement of the planning system, will provide an annual update of these indicators and, if necessary, outline any action that may be required to address specific issues. North Somerset prepares its Annual Monitoring Report in January each year and it is available to download from the council's website.
- 6.3 The council will constantly monitor applications in the planning system to assess the 'current' level of unmet accommodation need against the benchmark figure in the West of England GTAA. Any sites that gain planning permission before this Development Plan Document is adopted will count towards a reduction in the overall number of pitches required.

Question 15

Do you think the approach to monitoring systems set out above is sufficiently detailed to be able to identify the correct outputs and trends and to ensure that the effectiveness of this Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document can be assessed?

Enforcement

- 6.4 One of the key objectives of this Development Plan Document is to reduce the level of **unauthorised encampments** and general nuisance caused by illegal Gypsy and Traveller developments. Technically, an unauthorised encampment is where Gypsies and Travellers camp on land that they do not own, without the owner's permission, whereas an **unauthorised development** is where Gypsies and Travellers own the land but do not have planning permission to set up camp.
- 6.5 Although North Somerset Council acknowledge that currently there is a shortage of authorised accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, we do not support the formation of, and continuing existence of, unauthorised sites. They can be highly damaging to community relations and result in distrust of the planning system.
- 6.6 It is anticipated that the provision of more authorised residential pitches and transit provision will enhance the abilities of the council and the Police to undertake effective enforcement action. If North Somerset had authorised transit sites, the council and Police would be able to direct unauthorised encampments to these sites, which presently cannot happen.

7. The Next Steps

- 7.1 Once adopted, this Development Plan Document will set out how the under provision of sites will be rectified, having taken into account the views of stakeholders and partners within the relevant statutory framework.
- 7.2 The response to this present Issues and Options consultation will inform the next stage of production, known as the "Publication" (Draft Submission) Document. This will indicate in more detail specific sites to meet the need for Gypsy and Travellers.
- 7.3 It is acknowledged that finding suitable sites is difficult in this area. Members of the public and statutory consultees are asked to consider the issues raised by this document carefully and participate fully in finding solutions to the unmet need in North Somerset.
- 7.4 Please note that the options discussed in this document are not statements of the council's intent, merely a starting point for discussion and debate. If at the end of the consultation period on these documents you still have an objection to their content then you will have a right to submit your views to an independent inspector who will preside over an Examination. However, it is hoped that by the council undertaking extensive consultation the number of objections can be minimised.
- 7.5 Anyone wishing to discuss concerns relating to this document or wishing to obtain further information should contact the Planning Policy Team at North Somerset Council on 01934 426177. For those wishing to comment on the document, or who wish to put forward sites for consideration, representations can be submitted online <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/gypsyandtravellersites> , or by email: planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk

**North Somerset Council
Planning Policy and Research Team
Somerset House
Oxford Street
Weston-super-Mare
BS23 1TG**

Any comments should be submitted by 22 June 2009.

8. APPENDIX 1 – Glossary of Terms

Amenity Building

8.1 Presently there is no single definition of an amenity building. This aside, the overall size will depend on the size of the family, while draft government guidance states that at a minimum they should include: hot and cold water; electricity supply; separate toilet; a bath/shower room and a kitchen and dining area.

Annual Monitoring Report

8.2 The Annual Monitoring Report shows how the policies contained within Local Development Documents are performing and monitor their effectiveness. The Annual Monitoring Report is published in January of each year.

Caravan

8.3 A caravan is any structure designed or adapted for human habitation that is capable of being moved from one place to another. Twin unit caravans are included in the definition although they cannot be moved when assembled.

Development Plan

8.4 A development plan consists of the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy and the Development Plan Documents contained within the Local Development Framework.

Development Plan Document

8.5 Local Development Documents are statutory documents with Development Plan status, and carry significant weight in the determination of planning applications. Independent scrutiny is required before they are adopted.

Gypsy /Traveller

8.6 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 dependant's educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such.

Local Development Document

8.7 The collective term for Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents and the Statement of Community Involvement.

Local Development Framework

8.8 A Local Development Framework is a portfolio of Local Development Plans that provide the framework for delivering the spatial strategy for the area. Collectively they will be replacing the Local Plan and Structure Plan.

Local Development Scheme

8.9 Program setting out the proposed documents within the Local Development Framework and the timetable for their production.

Pitch/Plot

8.10 Area of a Gypsy/Traveller site where a single household live in their caravans (trailers). Pitches may vary between being large enough for one residential trailer (or mobile home) and one touring (small) trailer to spacious enough to hold one or two large mobile homes and several 'tourers' as well as working vehicles.

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004

8.11 The Act which sets out the requirement to produce a Local Development Framework.

Planning Inspectorate

8.12 Body which considers the appropriateness of planning policies, taking into account public consultation responses.

Planning Policy Statement

8.13 National planning policy produced by the Government as part of the new planning system.

Regional Spatial Strategy

8.14 The Regional Spatial Strategy will set a regional framework that addresses the spatial implications of broad issues such as housing, investment, transport, the economy and environment. This will be a statutory document and the Local Development Framework will have to be in general conformity with its policies.

Site

8.15 An area of land laid out and used for Gypsy and Traveller caravans. Sites vary in type and size and can range from one-caravan private family sites on Gypsy and Traveller's own land, to larger sites accommodating up to 20 pitches.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

8.16 The consideration of policies and proposals to assess their impact on the environment. This is to be undertaken as part of a Sustainability Appraisal prepared under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (European Union Directive 200/42/EC).

Statement of Community Involvement

8.17 The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the council intends to engage the community and stakeholders in the planning process.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

8.18 Strategic Environmental Assessments will underpin the Development Plan process. They are environmental assessments of policies, plans and processes and are important when addressing issues and options at an early stage of plan preparation.

Supplementary Planning Document

8.19 A Local Development Document that holds less weight than a Development Plan Document when determining planning applications. It is not subject to an independent examination, but is subject to community and stakeholder involvement.

Sustainability Appraisal

8.20 The 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.

Sustainable Community Strategy

8.21 Prepared by the North Somerset Strategy, the Sustainability Community Strategy '*Improving our communities together*' provides a framework for all stakeholders and agencies that have an interest in improving the quality of life in North Somerset.

Transit site

8.22 Authorised Gypsy and Traveller site intended for short-term use by those in transit to other areas. The site is permanent, but people who stay on it may only do so for a temporary period (normally up to 28 days in any 3 month period). Normally these sites have fewer facilities than permanent residential sites.

9. APPENDIX 2 – Invitation for the submission of sites

Background

- 9.1 North Somerset Council is preparing a plan on how to achieve enough sites for Gypsies and Travellers. The plan will set out how decisions will be made on where Gypsy and Traveller sites will be allowed. It will also eventually allocate land for Gypsy and Traveller sites, to meet the identified shortfall of authorised accommodation in the District.
- 9.2 As part of this work, the council is inviting you to suggest land which you think could be used as a site(s) for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. This information pack contains all the information that the council is seeking at the moment. The pack contains the following:
- An outline of relevant issues you should consider;
 - Guidance on completing the submission form;
 - What the next steps in the process are.
- 9.3 Please note that by giving this information to the council you are accepting that the information could be available to view by any other person, under the Freedom of Information Act (2000).
- 9.4 Please note that a submitted site will not automatically be included in forthcoming documents and that the council reserves the right to decide which sites are included in this document.
- 9.5 Please also note that all sites considered as options for inclusion in the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document will have their social, environmental and economic impacts assessed by the council in accordance with the requirements of sustainability appraisal.

Issues to consider when submitting a site for consideration

- 9.6 If you wish to tell the council of land you think would be suitable for a site, it would be helpful to read the Issues and Options document, specifically the sections on Planning Constraints and Opportunities (Tables 3, 4 and 5). In addition it would be helpful to take the following information into account:

Site Location

- 9.7 Sites should be capable of development to an approved standard including being suitable in health and safety terms for residential occupation.
- 9.8 Preferably sites should be in or near existing settlements with access to local services. This does not necessarily mean that more remote locations will not be considered.
- 9.9 Sites on 'brownfield' (previously developed land) will be encouraged because they normally perform favourably in sustainability terms. Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk) states that Gypsy and Traveller sites are 'highly vulnerable' and should be avoided in areas at high risk of flooding.
- 9.10 The site should be, or have the capacity to be screened, in order to protect family privacy and not impact on the amenity of the surrounding environment.
- 9.11 Sites identified should not be a risk to highway safety and should be accessible for towed caravans without causing undue disturbance.

Guidance on completing the submission statement

- 9.12 Before submitting details of a site, you should be aware that:
- All the sites proposed may be subject to future public consultation, to ensure that the site selection process meets the statutory requirements of the plan making process. Confidential proposals cannot be accepted;
 - Anonymous proposals cannot be accepted, as we will need to be able to contact you in the future. You may wish to use an agent (e.g. planning consultant, solicitor, estate agent, family member, etc.) to submit proposals on your behalf;
 - Sites put forward and assessed will not necessarily be selected for inclusion in later documents;
 - Sites put forward for consideration should only be submitted on the Call for Sites response form. This helps to provide the information needed to consider the site proposals. Please provide as much information as possible for each site – but still submit a form even if all of the information requested is not known;
 - A separate form should be used for each site;
 - Each request should be supported by an accurate plan (see below);

- There should be a reasonable chance that sites will become available for development or redevelopment in the period up to 2011;
- Sites must be within the administrative area of North Somerset (if sites cross an administrative boundary into another Local Authority we would also like to know the full extent of the site);
- If you feel that you need to provide supporting information at this stage, please summarise it on a separate sheet(s). If we require more information we will contact you again.

Plans

- The boundary of the site must be clearly marked on an OS map base, supplied at A4 or A3 size. The scale must be sufficient to enable the boundary of the site to be clearly identified (for the majority of the sites the scale would need to be 1:1250 or less). The north point should be shown;
- Any properties shown should be numbered or named to ensure the exact location of the site is clear. Please highlight the proposed site in red and include all land necessary to carry out the proposed development e.g. land required for access, landscaping etc. If you also own adjacent land please also edge this in blue;
- Plans can be obtained from North Somerset Council (Tel:01275 884292) or the following organisations can supply appropriately scaled Ordnance Survey Maps:-

Stanfords (29 Corn St Bristol): www.stanfords.co.uk :
0117 929 9966.

Blackwells (89 Park St Bristol): 0117 926 2322.

Mail Boxes etc (42 Triangle West Bristol): www.mbe.co.uk :
0117 922 7671.

The national map centre: **www.planningmaps.co.uk**

- The plan must show at least two named roads, to ensure that the site can be correctly identified. A postcode would also help to locate the site (even if this is for adjacent land or buildings), and grid references should be supplied if available;
- Plans should be clearly annotated with the name/location of your site and your name and contact details (in case they become detached from the form);
- Officers of the council may be able to help you to identify the site that you want to put forward on a map of acceptable standard. Please feel free to contact officers if you require assistance with this aspect of putting your suggestions forward. For further information please contact the North Somerset Council Planning Policy Team on 01934 426 177;

Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document

The number of pitches each site could accommodate should be stated.

ALTHOUGH NOT A LEGAL REQUIREMENT PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO FIND OUT WHO OWNS THE SITE AND INFORM THE LANDOWNER THAT YOU ARE SUGGESTING THEIR LAND AS SUITABLE FOR A GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE

Gypsy and Travellers

Site Allocations Development Plan Document

Call for Sites Response Form



This form should be used to provide information in response to North Somerset Council's Call for Sites.

Before completing the form please refer to the attached guidance notes. One form should be completed for each site put forward, and each site must be accompanied by a site plan on which the site boundaries can be clearly identified (please refer to the guidance notes for more information). If you require the form or guidance notes in a different format, for example Braille, audiotape, large print or computer disc, or community languages, please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01934 426 177

Further forms can be downloaded from the North Somerset Council website www.n-somerset.gov.uk/gypsyandtravellersite Completed forms should be submitted to the following address by 22 June 2009.

By e-mail: planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk
By post: North Somerset Council
Planning Policy Team
Somerset House
Weston-super-Mare BS23 1TG

Whilst we recognise that it might not be possible to supply all the requested information, please supply as much information as possible. For enquiries or assistance please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01934 426177.

1. Your details

Name _____

Company/Organisation (if relevant) _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Telephone _____

email _____

I am (please tick all those that apply)

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Owner of (all or part of) the site | <input type="checkbox"/> | Land Agent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Planning Consultant | <input type="checkbox"/> | Developer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Registered Social Landlord | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amenity/Community Group | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Local Resident | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Site Details

Site Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Grid Reference (if known) e.g. 358269,172793 _____

Site Area (Hectares)(if known) _____

Current Use(s) _____

Relevant Planning History (if known – please include relevant planning application reference number(s))

3. Site Ownership

I (or my client)... Is sole owner of the site Owns part of the site
Do not own (or hold any legal interest in) the site whatsoever
If Owner/Part Owner, have you attached a title plan and deeds with this form? Yes No

If you are not the owner, or own only part of the site, do you know who owns the site or the remainder of it (please provide details)?

Does the owner (or other owner(s)) support your proposals for the site? Yes No

4. Market Interest

Please choose the most appropriate category below and indicate what level of market interest there is/has recently been in the site.

	Tick	Comments
Site is owned by a developer	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Site is under option to a developer	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Enquiries received	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Site is being marketed	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Not Known	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

5. Utilities

Please tell us which of the following utilities are available to the site

	Yes	No	Unsure
Mains water supply	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mains sewerage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electrical supply	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gas supply	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public highway	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landline telephone/broadband internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____			

6. Availability Issues

Please tell us which of the following issues are relevant to the site

	Yes	No	Unsure
Land in other ownership must be acquired to develop the site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restrictive covenants exist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Current use needs to be relocated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical constraints (topography, trees, other)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public rights of way cross or adjoin the site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contamination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please provide any relevant information of likely measures to address any of the above that you answered "Yes" to:

7. Timescale For Availability

Please indicate the approximate timescale for availability:

	Tick
Immediately	<input type="checkbox"/>
Up to 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 – 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 – 15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beyond 15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have indicated that the site is not immediately available, please explain why:

8. Other Relevant Information

Please use the space below to for additional information or further explanations on any of the topics covered in this form (any additional information should be submitted on a separate sheet).It would be useful to know if any design work had been undertaken to show how many pitches could be provided

Thank you for your time. We will be in touch if we require any further information.

Completed forms should be submitted by 22 June 2009.

**This publication is available in large print,
Braille or audio formats on request.**

**Help is also available for people who require council
information in languages other than English.**

Please contact 01275 884 599