

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local authorities are required by Government, through the Housing Act 2004, to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers alongside the settled population, and develop a strategy that addresses any unmet need that is identified.
- 1.2 The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan sets out how the Council will meet Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation needs in Central Bedfordshire until 2031.

National policy

- 1.3 The Department for Communities and Local Government published 'Planning policy for traveller sites' (PPTS) in March 2012, to accompany the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). PPTS sets out the Government's policy approach to planning for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites, with the overarching aim to ensure fair and equal treatment for Gypsies and Travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life whilst respecting the interests of the settled community.
- 1.4 Local Plans are required to set pitch targets for Gypsy and Travellers and plot targets for Travelling Showpeople which addresses the likely accommodation needs in the area, based on local evidence. The Plan is required to:
 - Identify a five year supply of specific deliverable sites and other, developable sites to accommodate growth for years 6-10 and where possible 11-15;
 - Ensure the number of pitches and plots reflect the size and location of a site, and the size of the surrounding population; and
 - Protect local amenity and the environment.
- 1.5 Consideration must also be given to the National Planning Policy Framework which sets out the Government's overarching planning policies for England, with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

Local policy

- 1.6 The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan forms part of the statutory development plan for Central Bedfordshire. It contains policies relating to Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople development and specifies the number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots required in Central Bedfordshire and sites that will deliver these pitches and plots over the plan period. The document also contains planning policies against which planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites will be assessed.
- 1.7 The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan sits alongside the Development Strategy, which sets out the overall approach to new development in Central Bedfordshire for the period to 2031.
- 1.8 PPTS requires Gypsy and Traveller plans to outline provision for fifteen years, which is up to 2028 in the case of Central Bedfordshire. However, the Council has resolved to plan up to 2031 to bring the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan in line with the Development Strategy.
- 1.9 Policies contained within the Development Strategy will also apply when considering proposals for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople development.

Purpose of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

- 1.10 Everyone should have the opportunity for a decent home. Travelling is an integral part of cultural identity for Gypsy and Traveller households. It is legally accepted that nomadism, and living in a caravan is a reflection of the cultural heritage of Gypsy and Irish Traveller families, not simply a lifestyle choice. Gypsies and Travellers are recognised ethnic groups and are entitled to the same access to housing as the settled community.
- 1.11 Local Authorities have a statutory duty to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers and develop a strategy to address unmet need. There are also practical reasons for making provision for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation. Gypsies and Travellers can sometimes find themselves in a cycle of 'enforced' nomadism, being continually moved on by the authorities because of the shortage of authorised sites. As a result, Gypsies and Travellers are often more disadvantaged than any other ethnic group in terms of access to healthcare and education. The lack of authorised public sites and the difficulties associated with getting planning permission for private sites, has meant Gypsies and Travellers have to set up home on land belonging to others or on their own land without permission.

- 1.12 If provision is not made for enough authorised sites, unauthorised camping is likely to continue. The problems associated with unauthorised sites, such as the costs of taking enforcement action, the tension that exists between Gypsies and Travellers and the settled community and the social exclusion experienced by Gypsies and Travellers on unauthorised sites, will continue. The aim of this Local Plan is to reduce the occurrence of unauthorised sites by making sufficient new provision for Gypsies and Travellers in the area.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.13 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive requires the assessment of environmental impacts of actions contained in a wide range of plans and programmes, including planning policy documents.
- 1.14 SEA and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) are very closely linked. SA aims to integrate sustainability into decision making by appraising the plan using environmental, social and economic objectives. SEA also aims to facilitate sustainable development, but its emphasis is on integrating environmental considerations into decision making through a thorough analysis of environmental issues.
- 1.15 Although the requirement to carry out both an SA and SEA is mandatory, it is possible to satisfy the requirements of both pieces of legislation through a single appraisal process. The SA therefore incorporates the requirements of both the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and the SEA Regulations.
- 1.16 A Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating an SEA, has been undertaken which should be considered together with the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.

Appropriate Assessment: the Habitats Directive

- 1.17 When preparing planning policy documents, the Council needs to assess whether an 'Appropriate Assessment' is required under the European Directive 92/43/EEC – The Habitats Directive.
- 1.18 The Habitats Directive establishes a network of internationally important sites designated for their ecological status, and requires the maintenance or restoration of wildlife habitats and species of interest to a favourable condition. These are referred to as Natura 2000 sites or European Sites, and comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). There are no Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites in Central Bedfordshire (North). There are 5 European sites outside of the Council's boundary but within the potential influence of the plan.

- 1.19 The Sustainability Appraisal concludes that the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan would have no adverse effects on these sites, either alone or in combination with other plans.

Site selection process

- 1.20 Planning policy for travellers sites states that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific, deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of sites against their locally set targets, and identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years six to ten and, where possible, for years eleven to fifteen.
- 1.21 In order to ensure that sufficient land is available to meet accommodation needs in Central Bedfordshire up to 2031, the Council conducted a call for sites in Spring 2012 inviting landowners to submit details of land for consideration as a Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople site. The portfolio of Council owned land was also considered as part of this process.
- 1.22 Local planning authorities are required to ensure that sites are sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. In order to identify the most appropriate sites, each site was subject to a three stage assessment process:
- The first stage assessed sites in terms of their immediate suitability, such as being located within Flood Zone 3 or in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Sites that failed one of the criteria were instantly dismissed.
 - The second stage assessed sites against issues which could be mitigated, such as zones of lower flood risk, archaeology, access from the public highway, and landscape. A site could be dismissed at this stage if an issue couldn't be satisfactorily overcome.
 - The third stage used a scoring system to assess sites in terms of access to facilities and services, such as health, schools and public transport; the provision of utilities and servicing for waste and recycling; and whether the site is on greenfield or brownfield land.
- 1.23 This sequential approach allows unsuitable sites to be filtered out early in the process. Sites must satisfy assessment at each level in order to pass onto the next.
- 1.24 In identifying sites for allocation, other considerations were made outside of the three stage assessment process, including the overall impact of a new site and its size on the nearest settlements and the preferences of the Gypsy and Traveller community of where they wish to live.

- 1.25 A full report on the site assessment process has been published as a Technical Report to this Pre Submission document.
- 1.26 The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan identifies sites to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in Central Bedfordshire up to 2031. These sites are included in sections 6 and 7 of this document.

Community engagement

- 1.27 A Consultation Statement has been prepared which sets out the consultation that has been undertaken during the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. The Statement sets out how consultation activities have been advertised, who has been consulted and how they have been consulted. It also identifies the ways that people commented upon the Plan and the key issues that were raised.

What happens next?

- 1.28 The 'Pre-Submission' Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan is subject to formal consultation. Any representations received will be considered by a Planning Inspector, following submission to the Secretary of State (anticipated in October 2013). It is expected that following the Examination process and the consideration of the Inspector's Report, the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan will be adopted in July 2014.

2. Vision and Objectives

- 2.1 The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan has the following Vision, to ensure the delivery of sites to meet the required needs for the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople community in Central Bedfordshire up to 2031:

By 2031, Central Bedfordshire will provide a sufficient number of sustainable and high quality sites to meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities, enabling access to services and facilities. There will be a reduced incidence of unauthorised developments and encampments, and increased integration between the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople community and the settled community.

- 2.2 In order to meet this Vision the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan has the following objectives:

- 158 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and 8 Travelling Showpeople plots will be delivered between 2013 and 2031 to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople between in Central Bedfordshire.
- The number of unauthorised sites will be minimised by identifying a supply of deliverable and developable sites throughout the Plan period.
- A supply of permanent sites will be delivered in close proximity to existing settlements that improve access to healthcare, education and other services.
- Provide a clear policy framework for making decisions on planning applications regarding Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites in Central Bedfordshire.

3. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Need

What is a Gypsy and Traveller Pitch?

- 3.1 A pitch is the space required to accommodate one household and their caravans, parking space and enough room for the turning of vehicles. A study in the East of England found that the average household size across the region was 1.7 caravans. However, this will vary from area to area and according to family need. There is no-one size fits all measurement of a pitch, as in the case of the settled community, this depends on the size of the individual families and their particular needs.
- 3.2 Guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide 2008) states that as a general guide, it is possible to specify that an average family pitch must be capable of accommodating an amenity building; a large trailer and touring caravan (or two caravans); drying space for clothes/a small garden area; a lockable shed (for bicycles, wheelchair storage etc); and parking space for two vehicles. Smaller pitches must be able to accommodate at least an amenity building; a large trailer; drying space for clothes; and parking for at least one vehicle.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs to 2031

- 3.3 Planning policy for gypsy and traveller sites states that local authorities should use a locally derived, robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs to inform the preparation of local plans and make planning decisions. In 2006 the Council, in partnership with the Bedfordshire local authorities, undertook a sub regional study to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Traveller in Bedfordshire and Luton. This study provided an indication of the number of pitches required in between 2006 and 2011, and important observations on the specific needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community in Bedfordshire and Luton, which have been considered in preparing this Local Plan:
- The Gypsy and Traveller community prefer smaller sites. However, there was also some need identified for larger family pitches to accommodate larger modern trailers.
 - There was a strong preference for provision of family owned sites.
 - There was a desire for additional capacity to be provided on new sites to allow families to accommodate visitors.
 - Most households wished to remain in the area they are currently settled in.

Draft Pre-Submission Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (February 2013)

- The Gypsy and Traveller community were supportive of clear restrictions on the size of sites and where appropriate supported a “cap” on the number of people living on a site on a permanent basis and for transit / visiting.
- The Gypsy and Traveller community wanted sites to be effectively managed.
- The Gypsy and Traveller community often supported a procedure for regular inspection of sites, covering the provision of basic facilities including water and sanitation, as well as health and safety.
- Support for security of tenure for families living on authorised local authority sites being brought in line with that for social housing tenancies.
- Many of the Gypsy and Traveller households within the study area are very settled, travel is predominately seasonal, and 81.1% of households in Bedfordshire and Luton have not travelled in the last 12 months.

3.4 The national and regional planning policy context changed significantly since the original study was completed in 2006. In February 2013 the Council therefore commissioned a Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment to provide up to date evidence about the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in Central Bedfordshire up to 2031.

3.5 The assessment found a need for 158 additional permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Central Bedfordshire between 2013 and 2031. In the first 6 year period (2013-2018) 66 pitches are required to address the backlog of need and household growth. The remaining 92 pitches are required to meet future household growth from 2018 to 2031.

3.6 A 2.5% compound growth rate has been used to identify likely need arising from household growth from 2013 to 2031. This is based on long term trends which indicate the number of Gypsy and Traveller caravans on site has increased by 134% nationally in the past 34 years, which equates to a net growth of around 2.5% per annum.

Table 1: Pitch Requirement at January 2013

Number of pitches in Central Bedfordshire in 2006	118
Pitch need from 2013 to 2018 (to meet backlog)	39
(Minus pitches coming back into use)	-6
Growth between 2013 and 2018 (2.5%)	33
Growth between 2019 and 2023 (2.5%)	31
Growth between 2024 and 2028 (2.5%)	36
Growth between 2029 and 2031 (2.5%)	25
Total need to 2031	158

Providing permanent Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

- 3.7 This Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan identifies sites to deliver 158 pitches to meet the accommodation need in Central Bedfordshire until the end of 2031. The trajectory included in appendix 1 demonstrates the five year supply of specific deliverable sites and identifies other, developable sites to accommodate growth from years 6-19. Annual monitoring over the duration of the Plan period will ensure there is an appropriate, deliverable supply of sites.
- 3.8 Any windfall applications for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation will be considered against policies GT5, GT7 and GT8 and other relevant policies in the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire. The need for additional windfall sites will need to be demonstrated as part of any application. Between now and the adoption of this Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, any windfall planning permissions granted for Gypsy and Traveller pitches will contribute to the overall provision of need.

Policy GT1: Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Requirement

The Council will make provision for 158 pitches to meet identified Gypsy and Traveller needs in Central Bedfordshire up to the end of 2031.

Visitor Space and Transit Pitches

- 3.9 A preference was expressed in the 2006 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for permanent family sites with visitor spaces, which enable the Gypsy and Traveller community to accommodate members of their family who are visiting. A visitor space would be offered on a short term basis to visiting friends and families of the Gypsies and Travellers residing on the site. These pitches would be in addition to the permanent pitches on site.
- 3.10 All planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites will be considered against Policy GT5, GT6 and other relevant policies in the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

Policy GT2: Provision for Visitor Pitches

Provision will be made for visitor space on appropriate sites across Central Bedfordshire. Visitor space provision will be restricted to control the number of people visiting and their length of stay, to be determined on a site by site basis.

- 3.11 As well as visitor spaces, provision will be made for transit pitches. A transit pitch is intended for short term use by Gypsies and Travellers in transit. The pitch is itself permanent, while its residents are temporary, with a maximum period of stay imposed, usually by a site manager. Such sites are provided with basic amenities and services such as boundary fencing, hardstanding, water supply, toilet and washing facilities, waste disposal and (possibly) electricity. Permissions for transit pitches could restrict the size of sites and recommend a “cap” on the number of people allowed to stay on the pitch on a transit basis.
- 3.12 There are opportunities for providing transit pitches on existing permanent sites. The appropriateness of sites for this purpose will be determined on a site by site basis using Policy GT5 to determine applications.

Policy GT3: Provision for Transit Pitches

Provision for transit pitches will be considered on sites with permanent provision, at site locations determined in accordance with GT5 and in consultation with the Gypsy and Traveller community. Transit provision will be restricted to control the number of people visiting and their length of stay, to be determined on a site by site basis.

4. Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Need

- 4.1 Travelling Showpeople are defined as members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers.

What is a Travelling Showpeople Plot?

- 4.2 Travelling Showpeople's needs are distinct to the needs of the wider Gypsy and Traveller community. Pitches on a Travelling Showpeople site are referred to as plots. Whilst Gypsy and Traveller pitches are typically residential, Travelling Showpeople plots are mixed-use which incorporate space or are split to allow for the storage and maintenance of equipment. The plots also provide secure, permanent bases for the storage of equipment. There is no-one size fits all measurement of a plot as in the case of the settled community, this depends on the size of the individual families and their particular needs.

Accommodation needs to 2031

- 4.3 The Council, working with the other Local Authorities in Bedfordshire, commissioned a separate Accommodation Needs Assessment for Travelling Showpeople (2007). This Assessment made projections of Travelling Showpeople Plot needs between 2007 and 2010.
- 4.4 The February 2013 Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment provided up to date evidence about the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople in Central Bedfordshire up to 2031. The Assessment found a need for 8 additional permanent Travelling Showpeople plots in Central Bedfordshire between 2013 and 2031. This need is driven by household growth only.
- 4.5 A 1.5% compound growth rate has been used to identify likely need arising from household growth from 2013 to 2031. The growth rate for the Travelling Showpeople population is typically lower than Gypsies and Travellers at 1-1.5% per annum, and the higher rate was accepted by the Showman's Guild at the examination of the East of England Plan and is considered to remain a robust approach to calculating future growth in Central Bedfordshire.

Table 2: Pitch Requirement for Travelling Showpeople to 2031

Total existing pitches in 2012	25
Growth between 2013 and 2018 (1.5%)	2
Growth between 2019 and 2031 (1.5%)	6
Total need to 2031	8

Providing permanent Travelling Showpeople Plots

- 4.6 This Local Plan identifies sites to deliver 8 plots to meet the accommodation need in Central Bedfordshire until the end of 2031. The trajectory included in appendix 1 demonstrates the five year supply of specific deliverable sites and identifies other, developable sites to accommodate growth from years 6-19. Annual monitoring over the duration of the Plan period will ensure there is an appropriate, deliverable supply of sites.
- 4.7 Any windfall applications for Travelling Showpeople accommodation will be considered against policies GT5, GT7 and GT8 and other relevant policies in the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire. The need for additional windfall sites will need to be demonstrated as part of any application. Between now and the adoption of this Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, any windfall planning permissions granted for Gypsy and Traveller pitches will contribute to the overall provision of need.

Policy GT4: Travelling Showpeople Plot Requirement

The Council will make provision for 8 plots to meet identified Travelling Showpeople needs in Central Bedfordshire up to the end of 2031.

5. Consideration of New Sites and Expansion of Existing Sites

- 5.1 The following policies provide a more detailed policy framework against which planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites or pitches, visitor pitches, transit sites or pitches and Travelling Showpeople sites or plots will be assessed.
- 5.2 New sites should be planned sensitively to take account of the needs of both the travelling and settled communities. Issues of sustainability are important and relevant considerations include:
- The promotion of peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community;
 - The wider benefits of easier access to GP and other health services;
 - Access to local schools to enable Gypsy and Traveller children to attend school regularly;
 - A settled base that reduces the need for long distance travelling, and the possible environmental damage caused by unauthorised encampments;
 - Consideration of the effect of local environmental quality, such as noise or air quality, on the health and well being of any Gypsy and Travellers or on others as a result of the development;
 - Not locating sites in areas of high flood risk, and functional floodplains;
 - Access to local shops; and
 - Access to local employment opportunities.
- 5.3 New sites should be located next to, or in close proximity to existing settlements to benefit from access to facilities and services such as health and education. In sustainability terms, first preference should be given to sites that are better located to existing settlements and facilities. However, the results of the Bedfordshire and Luton Accommodation Needs Assessment (2006) did show that some Gypsy and Traveller families would prefer to live in the countryside, on privately owned and managed sites. Such locations will be considered where they are constraint free, or where any constraints could be satisfactorily mitigated.
- 5.4 National planning guidance indicates that new Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Green Belt will normally be considered inappropriate. The Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire confirms that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development, and planning permission will only be granted where there are demonstrable, very special circumstances that clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt. Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Green Belt should only be permitted exceptionally to meet a specific identified need.

Assessing planning applications

- 5.5 Planning applications will be judged using the policies in this Local Plan and the relevant policies set out in the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.
- 5.6 Applications will be considered on their merits in the context of site size and location, and the characteristics of the surrounding area. Planning permissions might restrict the size of sites and where appropriate recommend a “cap” on the number of people allowed to live on the site on a permanent basis or the number of caravans being stationed on a site. Proposals for mixed residential and business uses should have regard to the safety and amenity of the occupants and neighbouring residents. Applications for business use will be assessed against the criteria included within Policy GT8.
- 5.7 Consideration must also be given to site specific factors such as vehicular access from the public highway, as well as provision for parking, turning, servicing on site, and road safety for occupants and visitors.

Flood Risk

- 5.8 In accordance with Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, Gypsy and Traveller sites should not be permitted in areas of high flood risk as they are considered as highly vulnerable development.
- 5.9 In areas of flood risk, where a site is otherwise considered suitable for development, a flood risk assessment will be required to identify the extent of flood risk and recommend alleviation and mitigation measures necessary to address the problem.
- 5.10 Gypsy and Traveller sites will only be permitted in areas which are not liable to flooding, or where development does not give rise to flooding elsewhere, unless it is demonstrated that any effects can be overcome by appropriate alleviation and mitigation, as agreed by the Environment Agency and secured by planning condition or Section 106 agreement. Surface water drainage and storm water drainage systems should be installed where appropriate.

Highway Access

- 5.11 Safe and convenient vehicular access to a Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople site is essential. Access and road safety must adhere to the Highway Authority’s guidance. Gypsy and Traveller pitches or Travelling Showpeople plots will not be permitted where site access is deemed unsafe or inadequate. As well as an appropriate access, there must be adequate space provided on sites for the parking and turning of vehicles.

- 5.12 Access to nearby local services by foot, cycle or public transport should ideally be available, to reduce the reliance on private vehicles.

Residential Amenity

- 5.13 Consideration should be given to the potential for noise and other disturbance from the movement of vehicles, the stationing of vehicles on the site and any on site business activities. This will be judged on a site by site basis.
- 5.14 In order to protect the occupants of Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites, sites will not be permitted in the vicinity of railway lines, water bodies or power lines. Consideration will need to be given to noise and disturbance arising from roads adjacent to or in close proximity to sites. Sites should also be serviceable by electricity, water, drainage and sanitation.
- 5.15 Sites within walking distance of community facilities such as recreational facilities will be encouraged. An area for children to play may be required where access to existing facilities is not available.
- 5.16 More detail about site design is set out in the DCLG guidance document Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide (2008). Consideration should be given to this document in preparing and assessing planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites. Site design will also have to comply with the conditions of a license issued by the Local Authority under the Caravan Sites Control of Development Act 1960.

Policy GT5: Assessing planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites

Sites for Gypsies and Travellers will be granted planning permission providing that:

- Satisfactory evidence is submitted to justify local need for the scale and nature of the accommodation proposed;
- The scale of the site and the number of pitches would not dominate the nearest settled community and would not place undue pressure on local infrastructure;
- The site would not be located in an area at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplain;
- Satisfactory and safe vehicular access to and from the public highway is provided both to allow manoeuvrability of living accommodation to the site and the pitch, and to ensure the safety of other road users with the use of traffic calming measures where appropriate;
- Site layout including the use of hard and soft landscaping, ensures that any detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the locality is minimised, including impact on

biodiversity and nature conservation;

- The amenity of nearby occupiers will not be unduly harmed by the development;
- Pollution from light and noise sources on the site are minimised and visual and acoustic privacy is maintained for both site residents and the occupiers of nearby land and property;
- Sensitive boundary treatment, which may include hedges, walls and fences, is erected to provide clear demarcation of the perimeter of the site;
- Adequate schools, shops, healthcare and other community facilities are within reasonable travelling distance; and
- Suitable arrangements can be made for drainage, sanitation and access to utilities.

Planning permission for Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Green Belt will only be granted where there are demonstrable, very special circumstances that clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

5.17 Travelling Showpeople's needs are distinct to the needs of the wider Gypsy and Traveller community:

- They do not share the same cultures or traditions as Gypsies and Travellers.
- Travelling Showpeople sites combine residential, storage and maintenance uses, and require secure permanent bases for the storage of their equipment.

5.18 Applications for Travelling Showpeople sites will be assessed against the criteria in Policy GT5, and the specific criteria in Policy GT6 below.

Policy GT6: Assessing planning applications for Travelling Showpeople sites

Sites for Travelling Showpeople will be granted planning permission provided that:

- The criteria in Policy GT5 is satisfactorily met;
- Sufficient space is provided to accommodate the storage and maintenance of equipment; and
- Satisfactory and safe vehicular access to and from the public highway is provided both to allow manoeuvrability of living accommodation and equipment to the site and plot, and to ensure the safety of other road users with the use of traffic calming measures where appropriate.

Planning permission for Travelling Showpeople sites in the Green Belt will only be granted where there are demonstrable, very special circumstances that clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

The expansion of Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites

- 5.19 Existing, permanent Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites may be expanded to accommodate an additional, identified need for pitches/plots. This need is likely to arise from the expansion of families residing on the site.
- 5.20 The density of Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites varies depending on the scale, location and number of occupants. On some sites there may be opportunities to subdivide or infill existing pitches/plots in order to provide additional accommodation.
- 5.21 The following sequential approach should be adopted when assessing the expansion of a site:
1. Subdivision or infilling of existing pitches/plots will be preferential where there is sufficient space to do so and this would not be of detriment to the amenity of site occupants and neighbouring residents. New pitches would still need to meet the relevant licensing requirements.
 2. Expansion of sites directly adjacent to the current boundary, providing sufficient land to meet the identified need.
- 5.22 All planning applications for the expansion of existing sites will be considered against policies GT5, GT6, GT7, GT8 and other relevant policies in the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

Policy GT7: Assessing Planning Applications for the Expansion of Existing Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Sites

The expansion of existing sites for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople will be permitted provided that satisfactory evidence demonstrates the need for the scale and nature of accommodation proposed.

In order to safeguard the countryside, the expansion of sites should be achieved through the subdivision or infilling of existing pitches or plots.

Where a site cannot be subdivided, expansion will be considered provided that the area of expansion is directly adjoining the existing site and minimises the impact on the area.

Provision of space/facilities for business use on permanent sites

- 5.23 The Gypsy and Traveller community tends to be self employed, sometimes running their businesses from the site on which their caravans are stationed.
- 5.24 Gypsy and Traveller sites suitable for mixed residential and business uses should have regard to the safety and amenity of the occupants and neighbouring residents. Sites in the rural area will need to pay particular attention to minimising the impact of any business use on the countryside.
- 5.25 The Council will consider applications for business use for the Gypsy and Traveller community provided they meet criteria set out in the policy below.

Policy GT8: Provision of Space/Facilities for Business Use on Permanent Gypsy and Traveller Sites

Planning applications for business use on or directly adjoining Gypsy and Traveller sites for the Gypsy and Traveller community will be considered provided the following criteria can be met:

- The business use proposed is proportionate to the site and would not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on the visual appearance of the surrounding area;
- The amenity and safety of the occupants of the site and/or neighbouring residents should not be harmed;
- A safe, convenient and adequate standard of access can be provided;
- There are suitable areas for parking vehicles or storage of materials; and
- Appropriate safeguards are put in place to prevent the pollution of ground and surface water.