



# Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

Pre-submission (May 2013)

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## 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. It specifies the number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots required and identifies sites to meet this need. The plan also outlines the planning policies against which all planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites will be assessed.

### 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 sits alongside the Development Strategy, which sets out the overall approach to new development in Central Bedfordshire for the period to 2031. 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.
- 1.7 The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan specifies the number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots required in Central Bedfordshire and identifies sites that will deliver these pitches and plots over the plan period. The document also contains planning policies against which all planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites will be assessed. Policies contained within the Development Strategy will also apply when considering planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople development.

## **Purpose of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan**

- 1.8 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.
- 1.9 Local Authorities have a statutory duty to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and develop a strategy to address unmet need. There are also practical reasons for making provision for Gypsy, 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.
- 1.10 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**

- 1.11 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. 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.
- 1.12 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. 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**

- 1.13 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. 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. There are 5 European sites outside of the Council's boundary but within the potential influence of the plan.
- 1.14 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 Assessment

- 1.15 Planning Policy for Travellers Sites states that local planning authorities should identify enough deliverable sites to provide five years' worth of sites against locally set targets; and identify a supply of developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years six to ten and, where possible, for years eleven to fifteen.
- 1.16 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.
- 1.17 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.
- 1.18 This sequential approach allowed unsuitable sites to be filtered out. Sites must satisfy assessment at each level in order to pass onto the next. In identifying sites for allocation, additional considerations were made 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.
- 1.19 A full report on the site assessment process has been published as a Technical Report to this Pre Submission document. 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 section 6 of this document.

## **Community engagement**

- 1.20 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?**

- 1.21 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:

- 157 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and 22 Travelling Showpeople plots will be delivered between 2013 and 2031 to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople 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, providing stability for the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities and 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.

- 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.
  - 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 had not travelled in the previous 12 months.
- 3.4 The national and regional planning policy context changed significantly since the original study was completed in 2006. In January 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 157 additional permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Central Bedfordshire between 2013 and 2031. In the first 6 year period (2013-2018) 65 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 permanent pitches in Central Bedfordshire in 2013	182
Pitch need from 2013 to 2018 (to meet backlog) (Minus pitches coming back into use)	38 -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
<b>Total need to 2031</b>	<b>157</b>

## Providing permanent Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

- 3.7 This Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan identifies sites to deliver 157 pitches to meet the accommodation need in Central Bedfordshire until the end of 2031. The Gypsy and Traveller housing trajectory that accompanies this Plan 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. 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 157 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. Any planning applications for visitor space 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.

- 3.10 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. 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 22 additional permanent Travelling Showpeople plots in Central Bedfordshire between 2013 and 2031. In the first period (2013-2018) 13 plots are required to address household growth and existing need. The remaining 9 plots are required to meet future household growth from 2019 to 2031.
- 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%)	13
Growth between 2019 and 2023 (1.5%)	3
Growth between 2024 and 2028 (1.5%)	4
Growth between 2029 and 2031 (1.5%)	2
<b>Total need to 2031</b>	<b>22</b>

## Providing permanent Travelling Showpeople Plots

- 4.6 This Local Plan identifies sites to deliver 22 plots to meet the accommodation need in Central Bedfordshire until the end of 2031. The Gypsy and Traveller housing trajectory that accompanies this Plan 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, GT6, 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. Any windfall planning permissions granted for Travelling Showpeople plots will contribute to the overall provision of need.

### **Policy GT4: Travelling Showpeople Plot Requirement**

The Council will make provision for 22 plots to meet identified Travelling Showpeople needs in Central Bedfordshire up to the end of 2031.
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## 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 In order to benefit from access to facilities and services such as health and education, first preference should be given to sites that are located closer to existing settlements. 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.

### Development in the Green Belt

- 5.4 National planning policy (NPPF and PPTS) suggest Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Green Belt will usually be considered inappropriate development. 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. Sites within the Green Belt will only be allocated to meet a specific identified need.

- 5.5 Where an existing site or extension to an existing site in the Green Belt is allocated through the plan-making process, the site will remain within or “washed over” by Green Belt as the Council wishes to protect Green Belt boundaries, retain its key characteristics of openness and permanence, and prevent the removal of small areas from the Green Belt
- 5.6 PPTS enables local planning authorities to make an exceptional limited alternation to the defined Green Belt boundary to accommodate a site inset within the Green Belt, to meet a specific identified need for a traveller site, only through the plan making process and not in response to a planning application. Central Bedfordshire intends to make one alteration to the defined Green Belt boundary, to enhance the deliverability of a new Gypsy and Traveller Site at Land West of Barton-Le-Clay (See policy GT10)

### **Assessing planning applications**

- 5.7 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. 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. 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. 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. Sites will only be permitted where any effects can be overcome by appropriate alleviation and mitigation. Surface water drainage and storm water drainage systems should be installed where appropriate.



### **Highway Access**

- 5.9 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. Access to local services by foot, cycle or public transport should ideally be available, to reduce the reliance on private vehicles. An area for children to play may be required where access to existing facilities is not available.

### **Residential Amenity**

- 5.10 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, based on the proposals and the type and proximity of neighbouring development. Hard and soft landscaping should be used to ensure the impact on the character of the area and landscape is minimised, and site boundaries should be clear.
- 5.11 In order to protect the occupants of Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites, sites will not be permitted in the immediate 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.
- 5.12 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. A flood risk assessment will be required in areas of flood risk;

- Satisfactory and safe vehicular access to and from the public highway is provided to allow manoeuvrability of living accommodation to the site and the pitch;
- Site design demonstrates that the pitches are of a sufficient size to accommodate trailers/caravans, parking, and storage and amenity space for the needs of the occupants.
- 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;
- Sensitive boundary treatment, which may include hedges, walls and fences, is erected to provide clear demarcation of the perimeter of the site;
- 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;
- 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.

5.13 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.

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 are 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**

- 5.14 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. 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.
- 5.15 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 detrimental 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.
- 5.16 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 has no adverse impact on the area.

### **Provision of space/facilities for business use on permanent sites**

- 5.17 The Gypsy and Traveller community tends to be self employed, sometimes running their businesses from the site on which their caravans are stationed. 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.
- 5.18 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 granted provided that:

- 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.

## 6. Safeguarding sites

- 6.1 To ensure the levels of Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation are maintained and that a range of sites exist, current authorised sites with permanent planning permission will be safeguarded. This will also apply to the sites allocated in this Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and any windfall sites that receive permanent permission in the future.
- 6.2 Safeguarding will ensure that development or redevelopment of land for uses other than Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation would not be permitted. A permanent protected site will give certainty to the Gypsy and Traveller community and settled community.

### **Policy GT9: Safeguarded sites**

The Council will safeguard existing authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites, new allocated sites and windfall sites with permanent permission where there is an existing, demonstrable need for accommodation.

## 7. Gypsy and Traveller site allocations

### Land west of Barton Le Clay

- 7.1 The site is situated to the west of Barton Le Clay and the A6, and to the south of Faldo Road. Barton Le Clay offers a good level of services and facilities including a lower and middle school, a doctor's surgery and shops. This is recognised in the Development Strategy, which defines the settlement as a Minor Service Centre. The site could accommodate up to 10 pitches.
- 7.2 The site is adjacent to the A6 and to the east of Barton Industrial Estate. There may be issues relating to noise, light and odour that will require mitigation and a full assessment will be required in advance of a planning application being submitted.
- 7.3 The site is located within the setting of the Faldo Road Scheduled Ancient Monument and an appropriate buffer will be required to ensure the historical site is protected. The archaeological potential of the site will need to be investigated prior to the submission of a planning application.
- 7.4 There could be long ranging views of the site from the Chilterns AONB. Appropriate landscaping will be required to minimise the impact of the site on the wider landscape.
- 7.5 The site is located within the existing Green Belt. The defined Green Belt boundary will be amended in order to accommodate and enhance the deliverability of the site. The Council consider removing this site from the Green Belt would have limited harm on the openness of the countryside as the site is adjacent to the Faldo Road Industrial Estate, the A6 trunk road and the existing settlement of Barton-Le-Clay.

#### **Policy GT10: Land west of Barton Le Clay**

Land west of Barton Le Clay is allocated for 10 pitches. The development will need to provide the following:

- A full noise and odour assessment being undertaken prior to a planning application being submitted.
- Provision of appropriate buffer landscaping to minimise the impact of development on the landscape.
- Appropriate mitigation against the impact on the Faldo Farm Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- An archaeological field investigation being undertaken prior to an application being submitted.

## **Land south of Dunton Lane, Biggleswade**

- 7.6 The site is located midway between Biggleswade and Dunton and is currently used for agriculture. Biggleswade is within a reasonable travelling distance and offers a high level of facilities and services. This is recognised in the Development Strategy, which defines the settlement as a Minor Service Centre. The site is considered to be adequately accessible from Dunton Lane and could accommodate up to 10 pitches.
- 7.7 The site is located in the open countryside and careful screening will be required to minimise the impact of the site on the wider landscape.
- 7.8 The site is located within the wider setting of the Stratton Moat Scheduled Ancient Monument and an appropriate buffer will be required to ensure the historical site is protected. The archaeological potential of the site will be investigated prior to the submission of a planning application.

### **GT11: Land south of Dunton Lane, Biggleswade**

Land south of Dunton Lane, Biggleswade is allocated for 10 pitches. The development will need to provide the following:

- Provision of appropriate buffer landscaping to minimise the impact of development on the landscape.
- Appropriate mitigation against the impact on the Stratton Moat Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- An archaeological field investigation being undertaken prior to an application being submitted.

## **Land east of Potton Road, Potton**

- 7.9 The site is located to the northwest of Potton and to the north of an existing minerals site. Potton is within a reasonable travelling distance and offers a good level of services and facilities. This is recognised in the Development Strategy, which defines the settlement as a Minor Service Centre. The site could accommodate up to 10 pitches.
- 7.10 There may be issues relating to noise and dust arising from the neighbouring minerals site that will require mitigation. An assessment will be required in advance of a planning application being submitted. A buffer zone of an appropriate scale will be identified in order to protect the amenity of the site occupants.
- 7.11 The site is located within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area and accordingly a net gain for biodiversity will be sought as part of the development. The site is close to Gamlingay Heath County Wildlife Site and adequate buffering should be sought to ensure there is no adverse impact. The site forms part of the Greensand Ridge landscape character area and appropriate measures will be required to minimise the impact of the site on the landscape.

### **GT12: Land east of Potton Road, Potton**

- Land east of Potton Road, Potton is allocated for 10 pitches. The development will need to provide the following:
- A full noise and odour assessment being undertaken prior to a planning application being submitted.
  - Provision of an adequate buffer to safeguard the Gamlingay Heath Plantation County Wildlife Site.
  - Provision of appropriate landscaping to minimise the impact of development on the landscape.



## **Land east of Watling Street and south of Dunstable**

- 7.12 The site is situated within the Green Belt, to the south of Dunstable and to the east of the A5. There is an existing site with permission for 6 permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches. The allocation is an extension to the existing site, directly adjacent to the northern boundary, and could accommodate up to 9 additional pitches. This site is privately owned and occupied and will be privately managed by the current owner.
- 7.13 The site is in a rural location but is within a reasonable distance of Dunstable, one of the largest settlements in Central Bedfordshire, which offers a significant level of services. The site is directly adjacent to the A5 and can be satisfactorily accessed. The existing roadside verge, ditch and hedgerow should be retained and reinforced to improve privacy and mitigate against traffic noise.
- 7.14 The site is located within the Chilterns AONB and careful landscaping will be necessary. A landscape buffer will be required along the northern and eastern boundary to screen the site, define the boundary and provide separation from the pylons located to the east.

### **GT13: Land east of Watling Street and south of Dunstable**

Land east of Watling Street and south of Dunstable is allocated for 9 pitches. The site will not be removed from the Green Belt. The development will need to provide the following:

- Retention of the existing roadside verge, ditch and hedgerow, and a reinforcement of the hedgerow to improve privacy and reduce traffic noise.
- Provision of a landscape buffer to the northern and eastern boundaries.

## **1 Old Acres, Barton Road, Pulloxhill**

- 7.15 The site is situated off the A6, south of Pulloxhill and has been occupied since July 2004 by a single Gypsy and Traveller family occupying 8 caravans. The temporary planning permission has now lapsed. The site is allocated for up to 13 pitches comprising 8 pitches accommodating the current site occupants and an additional 5 pitches. This site is privately owned and occupied and will be privately managed by the current owner.
- 7.16 This site is in a rural location, but is within a reasonable distance to Barton le Clay, which offers a good level of services including a lower and middle school, doctor's surgery and shops. This is recognised in the Development Strategy, which defines the settlement as a Minor Service Centre.
- 7.17 Access to the site is acceptable and has the capacity to cater for the proposed number of pitches. Additional landscaping and boundary treatments will be required in extended the site, in accordance with policies GT5 and GT7.

### **Policy GT14: 1 Old Acres, Barton Road, Pulloxhill**

1 Old Acres, Barton Road, Pulloxhill is allocated for 13 pitches.
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## Land south of Fairfield

- 7.18 The site is situated to the south of Fairfield, Stotfold, between Lower Wilbury Farm and Stotfold Road. Fairfield has a small number of local services including a food shop and a lower school and is recognised as a Large Village in the Development Strategy. The site is also within a reasonable distance to Stotfold, a Minor Service Centre with a larger number of services and facilities, and also to Letchworth and Hitchin in the south. The site could accommodate up to 10 pitches.
- 7.19 Access to the site is considered to be acceptable and screening and planting will ensure that it is integrated within the landscape. The site could contain some contamination and a full contaminated land survey would be required in advance of a planning application.

### **Policy GT15: Land south of Fairfield**

Land south of Fairfield is allocated for 10 pitches. The development will need to provide the following:

- A full contaminated land survey being undertaken prior to a planning application being submitted.

## **Land east of the M1, Tingrith**

- 7.20 This site is located within the Green Belt to the east of the M1 in Tingrith and is occupied by a single Gypsy and Traveller family with temporary planning permission for 4 caravans. The site is allocated for up to 4 pitches, to accommodate the current family. This site is privately owned and occupied and will be privately managed by the current owner.
- 7.21 The site is in close proximity to the M1 motorway and this may present noise issues. However, the site is in residential use and the occupants will not be permanently resident on site. Additional screening along the boundary should be used to mitigate against any noise and landscape impact.

### **Policy GT16: Land east of the M1, Tingrith**

Land east of the M1, Tingrith is allocated for 4 pitches. The site will not be removed from the Green Belt. The development will need to provide the following:

- Provision of additional screening along the site boundary to minimise the impact of noise on the occupants and to mitigate against the impact on the landscape.

## 8. Travelling Showpeople site allocations

### **Kennel Farm Holding, off Dunton Lane, Biggleswade**

- 8.1 This site is located on the edge of Biggleswade, adjacent to some small industrial units at Stratton Park and the Manor Court mobile home site. Biggleswade offers a high level of facilities and services and is defined as a Major Service Centre in the Development Strategy. The centre of Biggleswade and nearby facilities at Saxon Gate will be accessible on foot or by cycling. The site will accommodate 4 plots to meet the local need identified in Biggleswade.
- 8.2 Vehicles associated with the Travelling Showpeople community are often long and can comprise a number of vehicles connected as one unit. Access requirements are unique and will require detailed analysis. The most appropriate point of access is considered to be to the north west of the site, using an existing roundabout on Saxon Drive and where the public highway is subject to a 40mph speed limit.
- 8.3 The site is located adjacent to an adopted watercourse and a flood risk assessment will be required to assess the likely impact of development and identify alleviation and mitigation measures.
- 8.4 The site is located adjacent to the Stratton Moat Scheduled Ancient Monument and an appropriate buffer will be required to ensure the historical site is protected. The archaeological potential of the site will be investigated prior to the submission of a planning application.

#### **GT17: Kennel Farm Holding, Biggleswade**

Kennel Farm Holding, Biggleswade is allocated for 4 plots for the Travelling Showpeople community. Limited and small scale commercial activity and maintenance will be permitted on this site provided this is connected to the Travelling Showpeople business only. The development will need to provide the following:

- Appropriate mitigation against the impact on the Stratton Moat Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- An archaeological field investigation being undertaken prior to an application being submitted.

## 9. Monitoring

- 9.1 Regular monitoring and review is necessary to assess the effectiveness of planning policies and proposals. There is a requirement for all Local Planning Authorities to publish an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) providing an assessment of its policies and progress towards achieving planning objectives and targets. The monitoring and evaluation process will form part of the feedback mechanism to ensure the effective operation of policies or highlight any revisions that may be required.
- 9.2 The Council will review the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show person Accommodation Assessment periodically to ensure there is a locally derived, robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs to inform the preparation of future local plans and make planning decisions.
- 9.3 PPTS requires local planning authorities to:
- Identify and update annually a five year supply of specific deliverable sites; and
  - Identify a supply of developable sites or broad locations to accommodate growth for years 6-10 and where possible 11-15.
- 9.4 The Council will monitor annually the delivery of Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots to ensure there is a supply of sites. Twice yearly counts are conducted to ascertain the number of caravans on each Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople site in Central Bedfordshire and to identify the level of hidden need (Gypsy and Travellers living in bricks and mortar housing). The following indicators will be used to monitor and review policies and proposals, and will be reported in the AMR:
- Net additional permanent Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople pitches
  - The levels of vacancy on permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites
  - The levels of vacancy on permanent Travelling Showpeople sites
  - The number of illegal encampments and enforcement action carried out
  - The number of applications by Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople approved and refused.

## Appendix 1: Glossary

**Site:** A Gypsy and Traveller Site is the area where Gypsies and Travellers live. One site may have a number of pitches and be home to a number of families.

**Pitch:** A pitch is the space required to accommodate one household and their caravans, parking space and enough room for the turning of vehicles. 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 individual families and their particular needs. However, 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 a touring caravan (or two caravans) drying space for clothes/ a small garden, a lockable shed and parking space for two vehicles.

**Permanent Pitch:** A pitch with planning permission where the residents have the right to remain on the site permanently

**Transit Pitch:** A transit pitch is intended for short term use by Gypsies and Travellers on the move. The pitch is itself permanent, while its residents are temporary, with a maximum period of stay imposed, usually by the site manager.

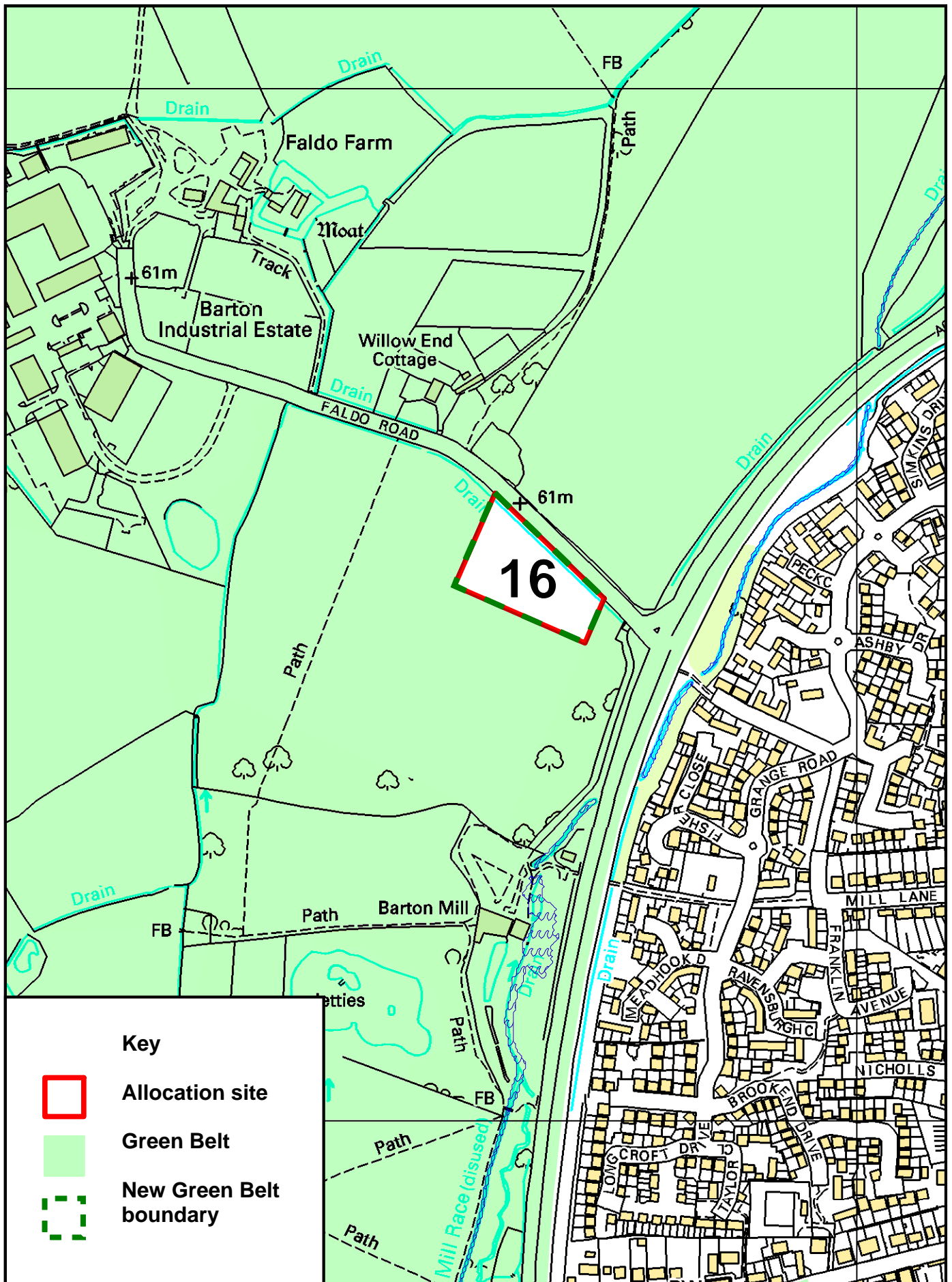
**Visitor Space:** Space on site that enables the Gypsy and Traveller community to accommodate members of their family who are visiting. A visitor space would be offered on a short term basis to visiting friends and families of the Gypsies and Travellers residing on the site. These pitches would be in addition to the permanent pitches on site.

**Plot:** A plot is a pitch on a Travelling Showpeople site (often called a 'yard'). This terminology differentiates between residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and mixed-use plots for Travelling Showpeople, which will need to incorporate space or be split to allow for the storage of equipment such as fairground rides.

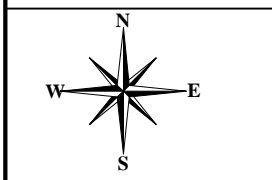
**Windfall sites:** These are sites that have not been identified for development in a Local Plan, but which subsequently become available for development. Any windfall planning permissions granted for Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots will contribute to meeting the overall need in Central Bedfordshire.

## **Appendix 2: Allocation Maps**






**Site 16 - South of Faldo Road, Barton**

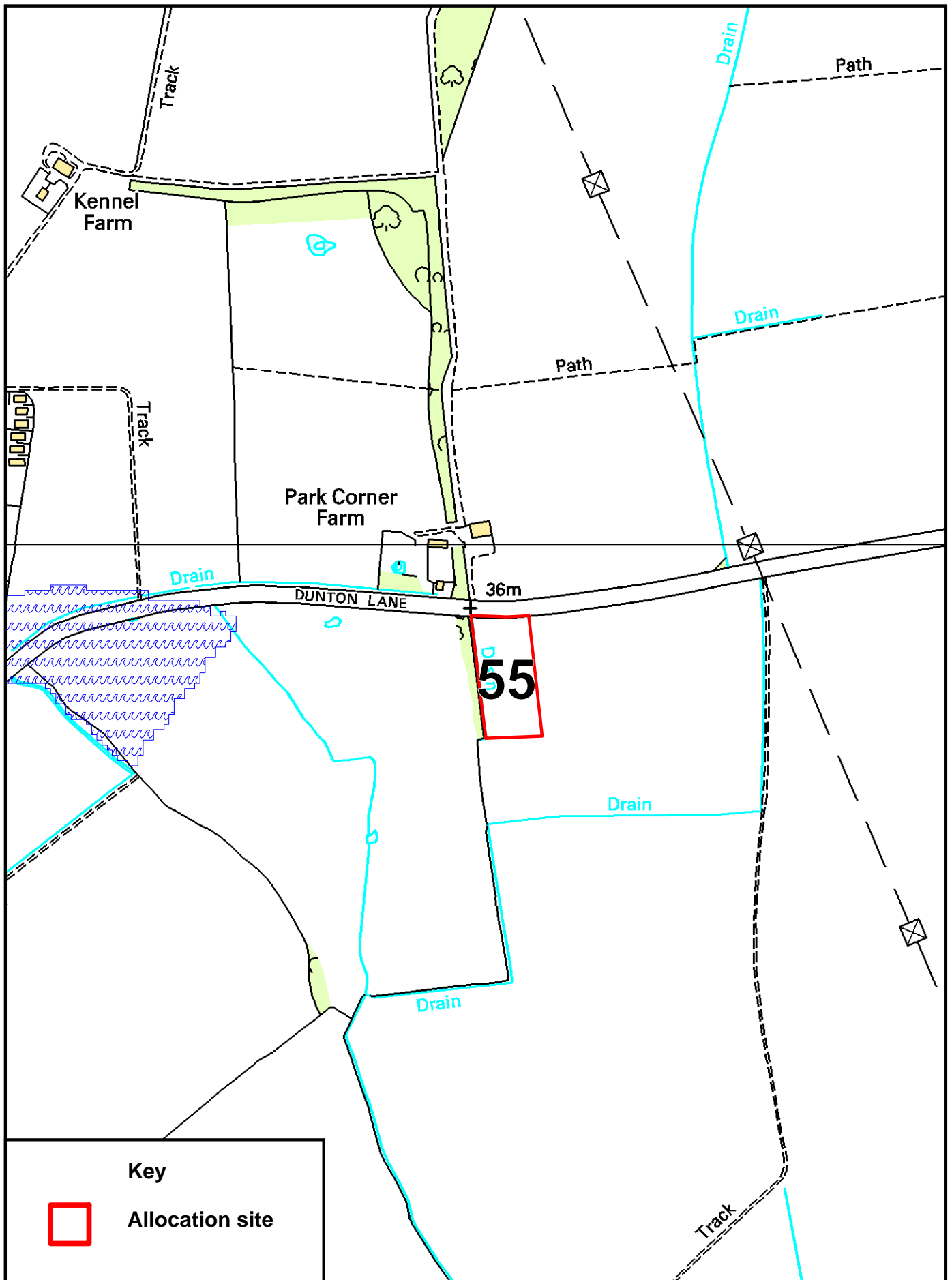


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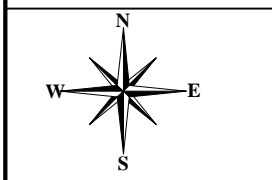
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**Site 55 - South East of Park Corner Farm, Biggleswade**

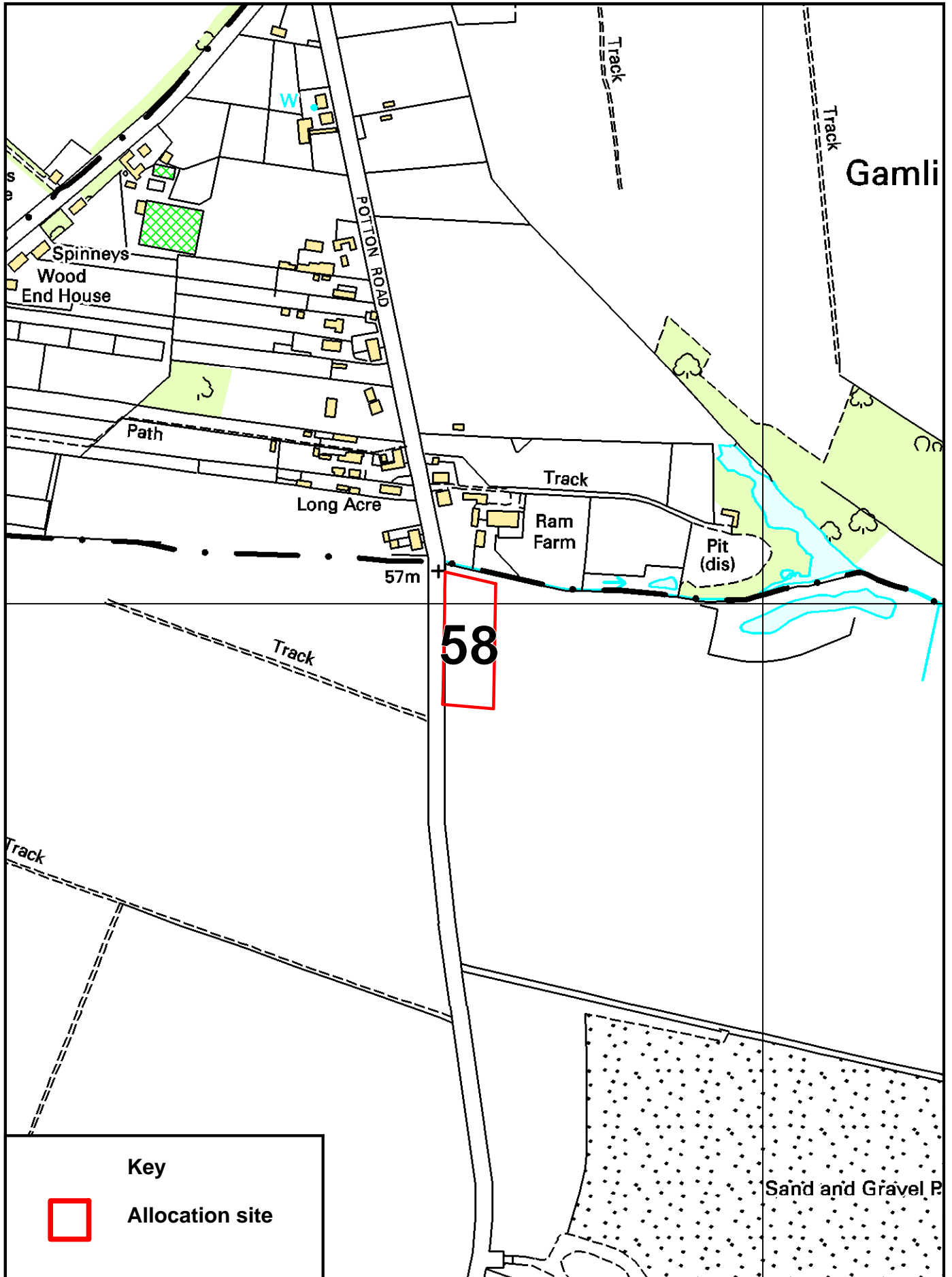


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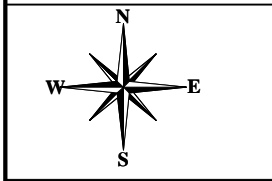
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**Site 58 - East of Potton Road, Potton**




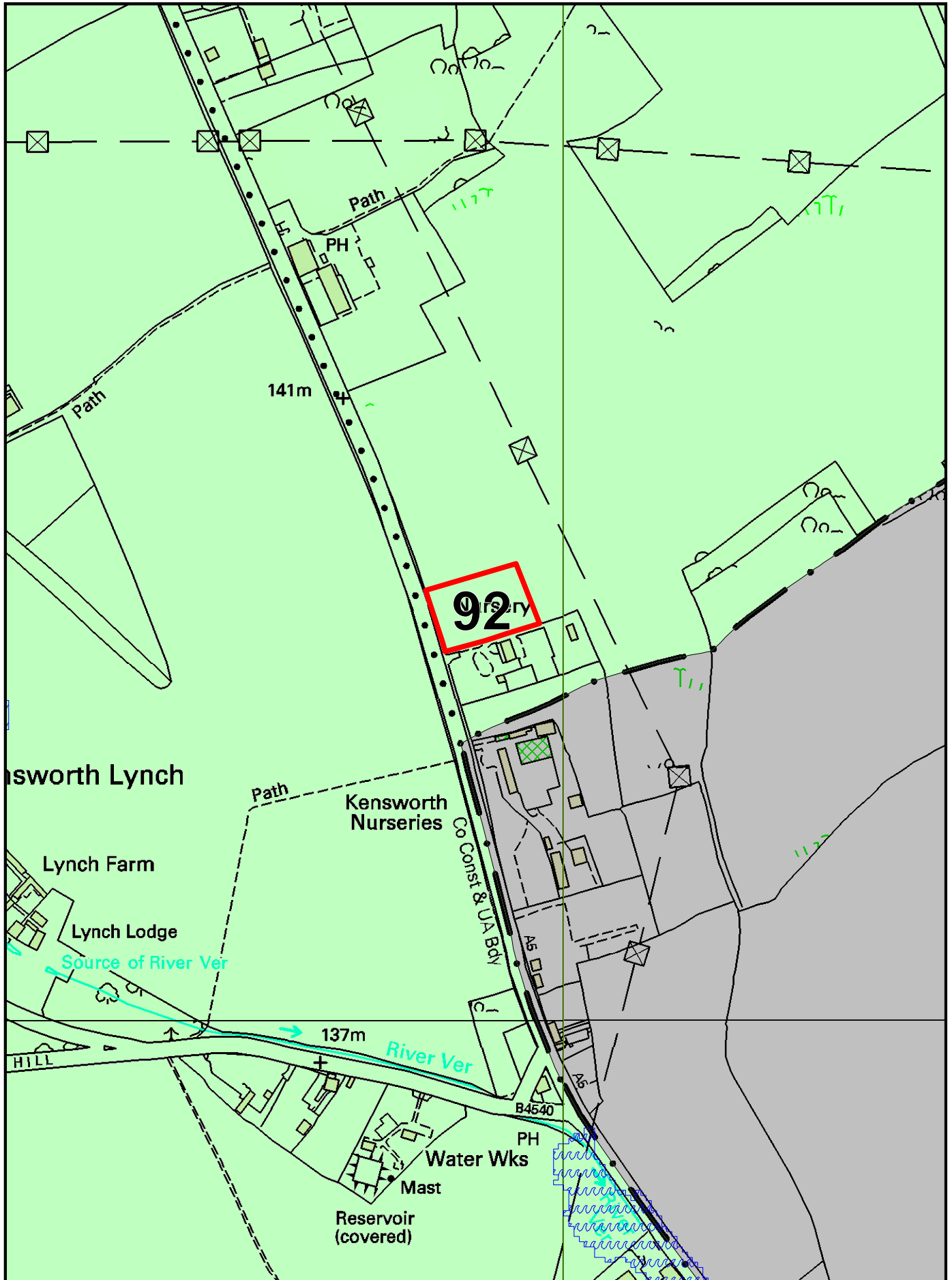
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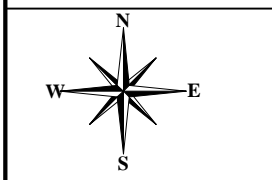
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**Site 92 - East of A5, Caddington**

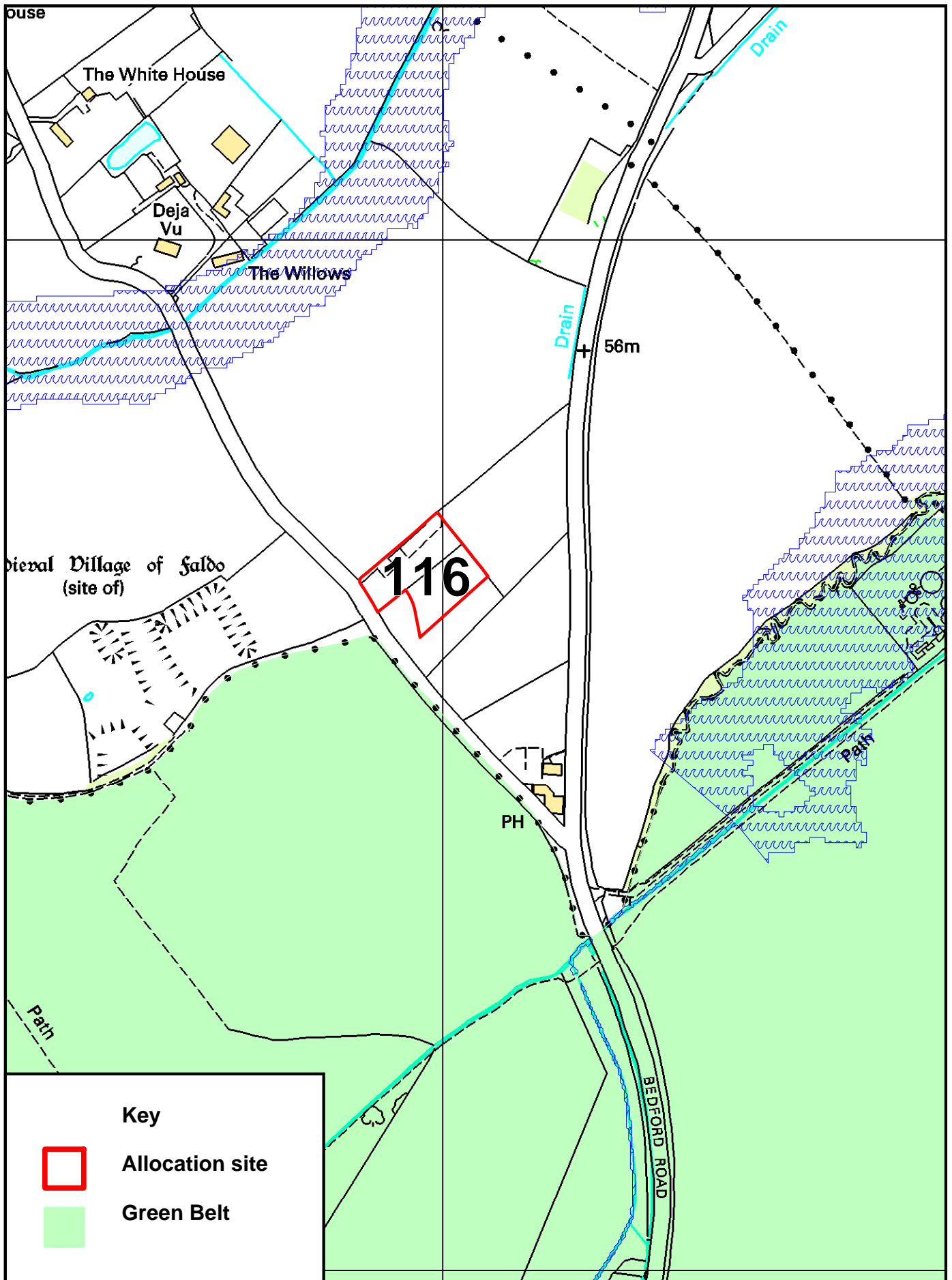


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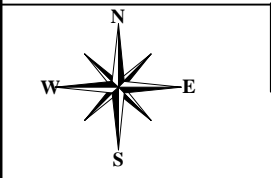




**Key**

- Allocation site
- Green Belt

**Site 116 - Old Acres, Silsoe**




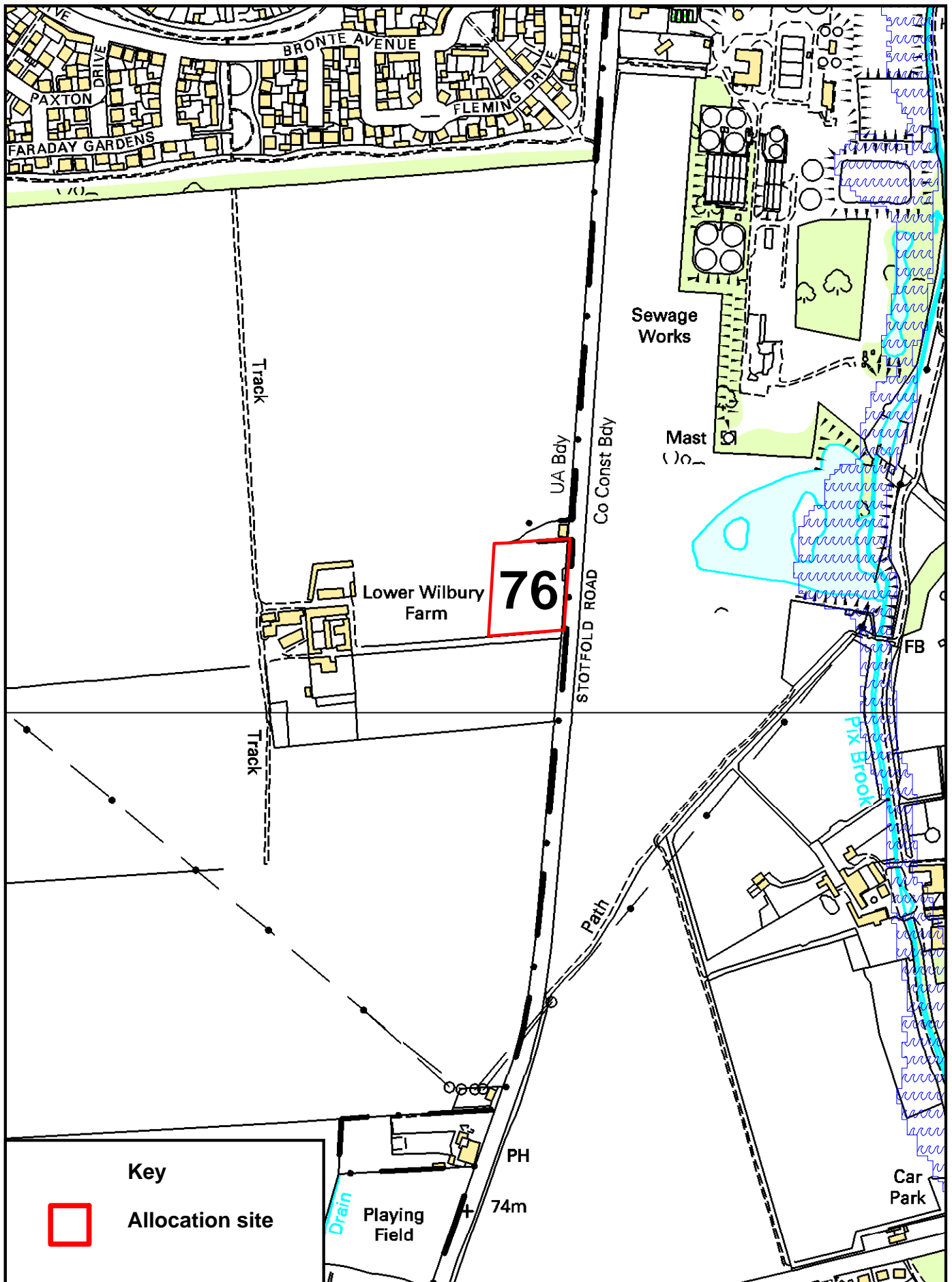
**Date:** 16 April 2013

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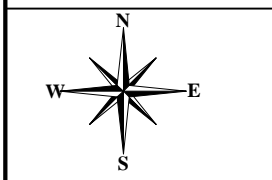
**Scale:** 1:5000

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**Site 76 - West of Stotfold Road, Stotfold**

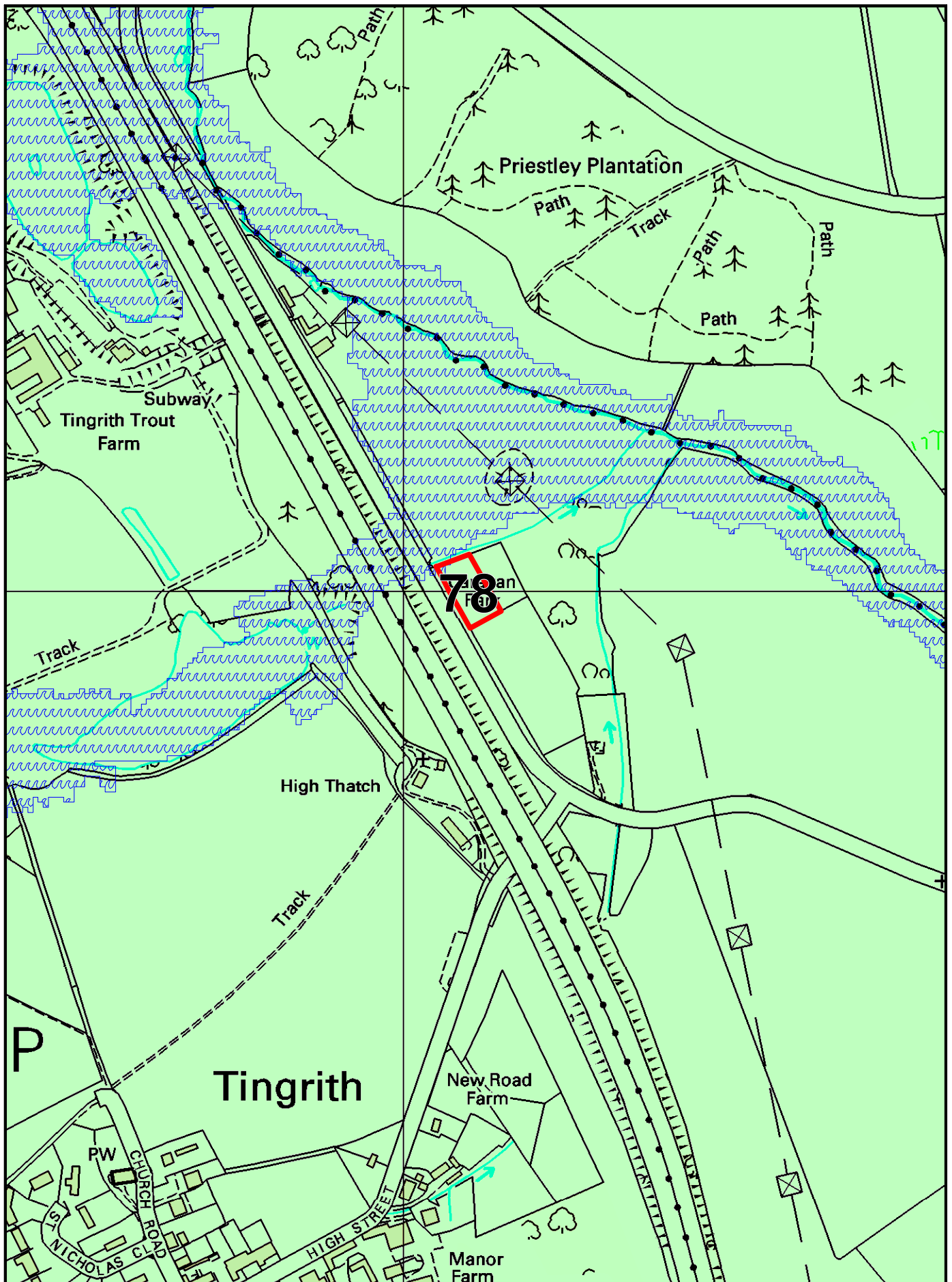


Date: 16 April 2013

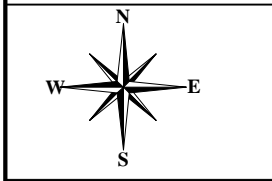
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**Site 78 - Chestnuts Caravan Park, East of M1, Tingrith**

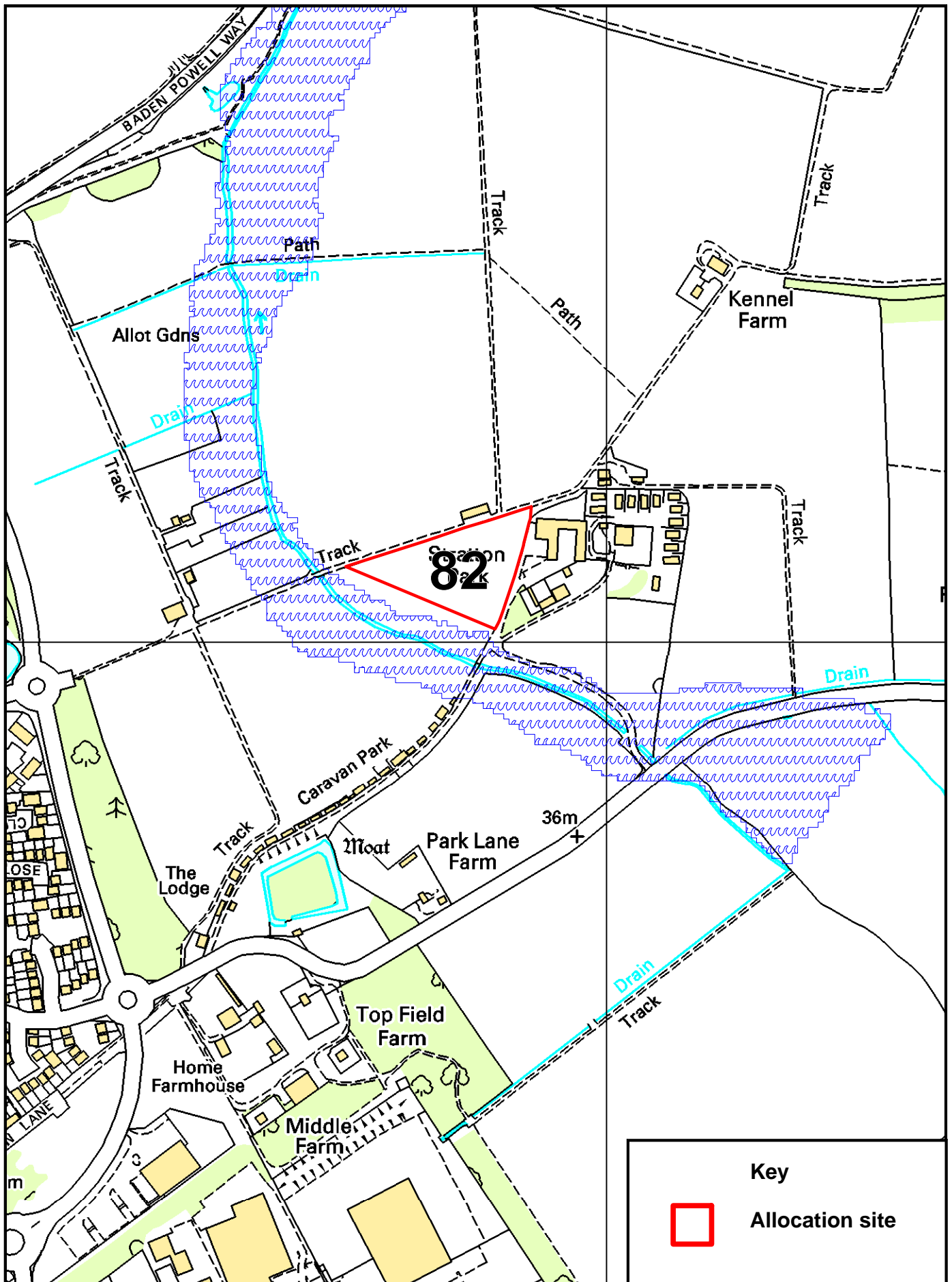


Date: 15 April 2013

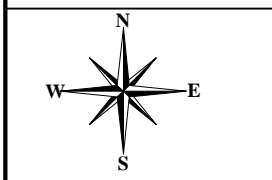
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**Site 82 - Kennel Farm, Dunton Lane, Biggleswade**



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