

Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation: Frequently Asked Questions

The Strategic Planning Team have produced this guide to answer some frequently asked questions surrounding the Gypsy and Traveller site allocation being proposed as part of the Copeland Local Plan 2021-2038. The questions are broken up into the following sections:

1. The need for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation
2. Site selection
3. Site constraints
4. Managing and running of the site
5. Public Engagement

It is hoped that this will help with peoples understanding of the purpose and use of the site and dispel any myths around the site selection process.

If you have any additional questions about the site or the process of allocating land for this use, please get in touch with the Strategic Planning team by email: localplanconsultation@copland.gov.uk or by ringing 01946 598300.

The need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

Why do we need a Gypsy and Traveller site in Copeland?

- The need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Copeland is underpinned by the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). This is a joint piece of work commissioned by all Local Authorities in Cumbria. The assessment identifies the need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in every Local Planning area. The GTAA has identified a requirement for 12 residential pitches in Copeland for households that meet the planning definition. No need was identified for transit pitches in Copeland. the GTAA can be found at: <https://www.copeland.gov.uk/attachments/cumbria-gtaa>

How is a 'pitch' defined?

- A pitch refers to each individual piece of land contained within the overall site, to meet the needs of individual households. The proposed land allocation provides adequate space for each pitch to provide a static home, a mobile caravan and parking to meet the needs of the residents.

How are the terms 'Gypsy and Traveller' defined, and what process is carried out to confirm if people meet this criteria?

- The PPTS (2015) defines 'Gypsies and Travellers' as: *Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.*
- The GTAA outlines that for the purpose of planning policy, consideration must be given to the following:
 - a) Whether they previously led a nomadic habit of life.
 - b) The reasons for ceasing their nomadic habit of life.
 - c) Whether there is an intention of living a nomadic habit of life in the future, and if so, how soon and in what circumstances.
- A household interview was carried out on all identified Gypsies and Travellers both on lawful and unlawful encampments, and those living in bricks and mortar as part of the GTAA. This determined the status of each household against the PPTS definition. Only those who met the planning definition were included within the need outlined in the GTAA.

Site Selection

There is a lot of undeveloped land in Copeland. Why have so few sites been considered for this use?

- CBC put out a call for sites at each consultation stage for the Local Plan, as well as a specific request in 2021 asking for landowners to put forward pieces of land for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. No sites were submitted during this time, meaning that the Council was required to use their own landholdings for the purpose. The sites considered through the Gypsy and Traveller potential site assessment are those which were available for this purpose.

Why are none of the considered sites located south of Egremont?

- CBC's Property team carried out an initial sift to determine which Council owned sites could be made available for use as Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. None of the sites available for this use are located in the south of the borough.

Why have no sites been identified within the Lake District National Park?

- Planning in the Lake District National Park is under the remit of the Lake District National Park Authority, and therefore Copeland Borough Council has no control over planning in the areas of Copeland within the National Park. The Lake District National Park was assessed separately to the other Local Authorities through the GTAA to identify need in the area, although it was concluded that there was no requirement for pitches to be provided within the National Park.

Why can't the site be located in another neighbouring authority?

- The GTAA was carried out jointly between all Cumbrian Planning Authorities. This means that all authorities have their own identified need that should be met within their own authority area.
- Following Local Government Reorganisation, it is currently unclear what approach will be taken to allocating sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. At present, Carlisle has a total of 26 sites accommodating 159 pitches, and an identified need for an additional 33 residential pitches. Allerdale has a current total of 9 sites to accommodate for 25 pitches (these figures include provision for Travelling Showpeople). Therefore it is important for adequate land to be identified in Copeland to ensure that the requirement can be met in all authority areas prior to LGR.

Why can't the site be allocated in a more rural location?

- It is important that all Local Plan allocations, including the Gypsy and Traveller allocation, are well connected to existing settlements and services. This will help to ensure sustainable development, and help to achieve other Local Plan objectives. For example, locating a site away from existing services will result in increased car use, which will be contrary to policies such as DS2, and the Cumbria wide target for net zero carbon by 2037. Locating the site in close proximity to the existing community will also help to ensure that occupiers of the site have safe and easy access to services and encourage social cohesion.

Why can't one of the identified housing allocations be used for this purpose?

- The emerging Local Plan identifies the requirement for a minimum of 2,482 additional dwellings to be provided in Copeland between 2021 and 2038. The identified housing allocations provide a sufficient amount of land towards achieving this target. By losing allocated housing land, we would run the risk of being unable to meet our housing target. In addition to this, the majority of the housing allocations are owned by private landowners, who have made their land available for this particular purpose and therefore CBC would be unable to allocate it for an alternative use.

Site Constraints

I don't think this site is suitable for development. What assessments have CBC carried out to ensure the site is deliverable?

- All sites considered for use as Gypsy and Traveller accommodation are required to undergo rigorous site assessments, using the same methods as sites for traditional residential use. This includes Habitats Regulations Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.
- All sites have also undergone a Heritage Impact Assessment, Landscape Assessment, Ecology Assessments and Site Access Assessments to ensure deliverability. All sites have been assessed by Cumbria County Council in their capacity as Highways Authority and Lead Local Flood Authority. Key statutory consultees, including utility providers, Historic England, National Highways and Natural England, among others, have also been consulted on the preferred sites, which would flag up any potential concerns in these areas which would need to be addressed. No comments were received from statutory consultees that indicated that the site was unsuitable for this use. A full list of statutory consultees can be seen in our Statement of Community Involvement.

How will any identified constraints be managed and mitigated against?

- Any additional land constraints will be considered through a planning application. For example, where there are drainage concerns, this will be considered through the Development Management process and appropriate mitigation will be put into place before any development can commence. There will be an opportunity for members of the public to comment on any planning application, should one be submitted, which will include specific details regarding design, layout etc.

I am concerned that development of the site will impact on the views from my house

- The right to a view is not something which is protected through the planning system as it would place significant restrictions on development. However, sites have been assessed through the Landscape Character Assessment, which highlights where any potential impacts on the character of the settlement may occur. The Landscape Assessment has recommended that landscaping is provided between the site and existing uses.

A number of sites have been ruled out based on their size. What are the size requirements for a site of this type?

- A size threshold of 0.5ha has been used when identifying sites, which has been proposed by the consultants who carried out the GTAA, taking the Government's 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide' into account.
- It is anticipated that this will be adequate space for the 12 required pitches, each of which will include a static home, a mobile caravan and adequate parking. It also ensures space for all ancillary development, for example shared facilities such as shower and toilet blocks, as well as access requirements and landscape buffering.

Will a Gypsy and Traveller site put additional strain on key services? How will this be addressed?

- It is not considered likely that development of this scale will have a significant impact on key local services, as the majority of need comes from people already residing in Copeland. The impact will be considered through an update to the Copeland Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which accompanies the Local Plan.

Managing and running of the site

What happens once the land is allocated?

- A land allocation means that a piece of land is protected for a specific use, and in this case it confirms the use of the land as a Gypsy and Traveller site as suitable in principle. Once the land is allocated, it will be up to a developer to purchase the site and apply for planning permission to develop the site for the 12 pitches. If this happens the proposal will be subject to the full planning application process.

How will the site be managed?

- It is anticipated that any site, if developed, will be fully and correctly managed to ensure that the site is well maintained and that rules are followed, for example surrounding any occupancy conditions. This will be dealt with through and following the planning application process.

How will it be ensured that more than 12 pitches will not be put on the site?

- If a planning application came in on the site, an occupancy condition would be used to limit the number of residents or families who can live on the site. This will be monitored annually to ensure that additional caravans are not added without permission. If a planning application came in following development of the site, we may consider granting permission for additional pitches, providing the site could accommodate this and there was an identified need .

Do Gypsies and Travellers pay Council Tax, Rent and Charges?

- Authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites are charged Council Tax the same as other residential dwellings. Gypsies and Travellers who live on Council or privately owned sites are subject to Council Tax, rent, gas, electricity and other associated charges in the same way as other residents.

Public Engagement

Why have no public meetings been held to discuss the proposed allocations?

- CBC have had requests from members of the public to discuss the proposed allocations. However, upon reviewing the consultation responses being received at the time, it was felt that a public meeting would not be a suitable method of consulting. Many of the questions being asked related to non-strategic planning matters, for example, what a potential site would look like, or how it would be managed and ran. Many of these questions will be dealt with through a future planning application, and it is felt this will be a more appropriate time to address these concerns.

I find the structure of the consultation response form difficult to use. Why has it been set out in this way?

- This consultation forms part of the Local Plan Submission draft under regulation 19 of the Town and County Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012. At this stage of the Local Plan process it is important to ensure that the Local Plan is sound, legally compliant and that it complies with the duty to co-operate. Therefore, the response forms are set out in this way to ensure the correct format to be sent to the Planning Inspectorate, and any responses not in this format will only be considered at the Planning Inspector's discretion. We have produced a Guidance note to help respondents fill in the form, which can be found on our website.

How will my consultation response be used following the consultation?

- All consultation responses will be taken into consideration and will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the Local Plan submission. They will then use these, alongside all other Publication draft responses, to determine if they consider the Plan to be sound, or if it requires further modifications. If you have requested to speak at the public hearing sessions, you will be contacted when these have been scheduled. All comments made at the hearing sessions will be considered alongside the consultation responses when the Planning Inspector examines the Local Plan.