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Dear Sir/Madam

SA/SEA Scoping for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan DPD

This letter is seeking your view on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA)/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan Development Plan Document (DPD), referred to in this letter as 'the Gypsy and Traveller Plan', which is being produced by East Devon District Council. The Gypsy and Traveller Plan will identify suitable and appropriate land to allocate and will set out the proposed form and nature of future development to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers within East Devon. Comments are welcomed on this scoping letter and we would request that you refer to the specific paragraph number that you are commenting on, where appropriate.

1. In line with Government guidance, an integrated SA and SEA process is being undertaken in relation to the Gypsy and Traveller Plan. Therefore, throughout this letter the term 'SA' should be taken to mean 'SA incorporating the requirements of the SEA Directive'.

SA Scoping

2. Scoping is the first stage in the SA process, with the purpose of setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope of the SA. The tasks involved in the Scoping stage include:
 - Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes and sustainability objectives.
 - Collating baseline information.
 - Identifying sustainability issues and problems.
 - Developing the SA framework
 - Consulting on the scope of the SA.
3. Given the narrow scope of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan, plus the fact that a detailed SA Scoping consultation has already been undertaken for the East Devon Local Plan, instead of preparing a full Scoping Report we have set out the scope of the SA work for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan in the form of this Scoping letter for consultation with the statutory

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Chief Executive: Mark R Williams Deputy Chief Executive: Richard Cohen



environmental bodies. This letter seeks to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations¹ in relation to this DPD as efficiently as possible.

4. LUC is currently undertaking SA work for East Devon District Council in relation to its emerging Local Plan. That SA work is being drawn on as appropriate during the SA of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan, to avoid unnecessary duplication. The most recent iteration of the SA report for the Local Plan was produced in August 2015 and relates to the submitted Local Plan, also taking into account the changes that have been proposed since then. To ensure consistency with the Local Plan and other DPD (the Cranbrook and Villages Plans) processes, this letter and the subsequent assessment will follow the format used by LUC in that work.

Outline of the Plan and relevant policy context

5. The first stage of production of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan was to consult on the matters and subjects that it might contain and address. In August 2015, East Devon District Council consulted organisations and individuals on the Planning Policy database that may have an interest in future Gypsy and Traveller development, by outlining what the Gypsy and Traveller Plan may cover and seeking views on any alternative or additional issues that should be addressed. The consultation stated that the Gypsy and Traveller Plan might cover the topics listed below:
 - a) Consider how sites could be provided by the public and private sectors and the management arrangements to support their operation;
 - b) allocate specific sites and/or land areas for new development and set maximum pitch numbers or site areas;
 - c) include policies in respect of development of:
 - i. new residential pitches;
 - ii. employment/mixed residential provision;
 - iii. amenity, play areas and community facilities;
 - iv. other possible uses not detailed above.
 - d) establish principles of development and design standards to promote high quality development;
 - e) define mitigation which might be required to off-set potential adverse impacts that might otherwise arise as a consequence of development;
 - f) determine how to monitor the success and quality of what is being built; and
 - g) determine whether planning applications submitted to the Council should be granted planning permission and what conditions might apply.
6. Feedback received in response to the consultation was generally positive but sparse in respect of the above criteria (with the exception of point 2). Responses regarding point 2 were largely negative with many expressing the view that Gypsy and Traveller development should or should not take place in particular locations (Cranbrook was cited several times).
7. There are a wide range of relevant plans, policies and programmes that shape the policy context in which the Gypsy and Traveller Plan is being prepared. These have been reviewed in detail as part of the SA of the East Devon Local Plan, and the most relevant issues for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan specifically are summarised below.

¹ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/>

8. The Gypsy and Traveller Plan must be in line with national policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and National Planning Practice Guidance and will also need to be in conformity with the emerging East Devon Local Plan, which is now at a late stage in its preparation. In paragraph 16.31 the Local Plan identifies a need for 37 pitches and this is expanded upon in Policy H7- Sites for Gypsies and Travellers.
9. The Gypsy and Traveller Plan must also be in line with European SEA Regulations and Habitat Regulations⁴, and this SA/SEA Scoping letter forms the first stage in meeting the SEA requirements.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

10. The latest Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) work for the Local Plan is the August 2015 HRA Report, which has taken into account all of the proposed changes to the Local Plan as submitted in 2013, including the most recent proposed changes (August 2015). It concluded that, in light of the August 2015 proposed changes which reflect discussions between EDDC and Natural England, the Local Plan accords with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, and parent European Directives, i.e. the implementation of the Plan would not have likely significant effects on the integrity of any of the European sites in and around East Devon. As the Gypsy and Traveller Plan is not seeking to provide for residential development in excess of that provided for through Local Plan policy, it is considered unlikely to have additional significant effects, and mitigation measures included in the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy² (see below) should help to reduce the likelihood of significant effects occurring from implementation of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan. Should Gypsy and Traveller expand beyond the 37 new pitches proposed through the Local Plan, further HRA work could be required for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan.

Baseline Information

11. Baseline information provides the context for assessing the sustainability of proposals in the Gypsy and Traveller Plan and it provides the basis for identifying trends, predicting the likely effects of the plan and monitoring its outcomes. The requirements for baseline data vary widely, but it must be relevant to environmental, social and economic issues, be sensitive to change and should ideally relate to records which are sufficient to identify trends. Annex 1(f) of the SEA Directive requires data to be gathered on biodiversity, population, human health, flora, fauna, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the inter-relationship between the above factors.
12. Baseline information for the whole of East Devon District (which is the area to which the Gypsy and Traveller Plan will apply) has been collated and regularly updated throughout the SA of the East Devon Local Plan and has been consulted on as part of the SA process.
13. As the Gypsy and Traveller Plan will apply to the whole of the District it will cover the designated biodiversity sites in East Devon, however specific allocations will not be considered within very close proximity to them, in recognition that such sites are highly sensitive and the qualifying species and habitats that they are designated for are vulnerable to human pressures including recreation and general disturbance. In partnership with Natural England, the Council and its neighbouring authorities of Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District

² South-east Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy. Footprint Ecology. June 2014.

Council have determined that housing and tourist accommodation developments in their areas will in combination have a detrimental impact on the Exe Estuary SPA and East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC through impacts from recreational use. The impacts are highest from developments within 10 km of these European sites, and, depending on the sites to be allocated, Gypsy and Traveller sites may fall within 10 km of one or both. The three Councils have prepared the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy² which sets out a joint approach to mitigating the potential significant effects on the SAC and SPA including delivery of suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) sites to try to encourage dog walking and other recreation away from the sensitive European sites.

14. The Gypsy and Traveller Plan area covers the AONBs in East Devon, and sites may be allocated within them, although landscape impact will be an important consideration. The District is made up of a number of landscape character types, as identified in the East Devon Landscape Character Assessment, and the characteristics of each landscape type will be taken into account in allocating sites.³
15. The majority of the District lies outside of high flood risk zones, and in light of the particularly vulnerable nature of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, a precautionary approach will be taken to allocating sites in areas of flood risk.
16. The quality of agricultural land varies across the District and the highest quality land will be avoided as far as reasonably possible.
17. Registered Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas are spread throughout the District and the impact of any allocations will be assessed on an individual basis.
18. Noise and air quality are potential concerns, given that Gypsy and Traveller sites are traditionally close to main roads to facilitate the nomadic lifestyle. There is one Air Quality Management Area within East Devon, at Honiton, although this is tightly drawn and sites are unlikely to be available within it. One motorway and numerous 'A' roads pass through and two airports exist within the District, Exeter Airport and the much smaller Dunkeswell Airfield. If sites are allocated close to these roads or airports, noise and pollution could potentially be a concern, as well as other possible impacts associated with airport operation. Similarly concerns will exist for locations close to railways and Network Rail have advised on the issues they would wish to be taken into account if sites adjacent to railways or railway crossings are put forward for consideration.

Key Environmental and Sustainability Issues

19. Consideration of the policy context and baseline information enables the identification of key environmental and sustainability issues which will need to be taken into account in the SA of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan. These are largely similar to the key issues facing the wider District, although some are specific to Gypsy and Traveller and include:
 - The need to ensure that new sites (particularly where they are large scale, accommodating up to 15 pitches) are appropriately integrated into the landscape, respecting and enhancing local character where possible.
 - The need to ensure that new sites (particularly where they are large scale, accommodating up to 15 pitches) do not impact negatively on existing communities in the area due to their scale, visual impact or increased activity

³ East Devon and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and East Devon District Landscape Character Assessment and Management Guidelines (2008)

- The need to protect biodiversity (in particular the Exe Estuary SPA and East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC) from the impacts of residential development in the area
- The need to avoid areas subject to particular constraints on habitation eg high flood risk areas, noise, traffic etc.
- The need to conserve and enhance the setting of listed buildings and other heritage features.
- The need to avoid high levels of car use by allocating gypsy and traveller sites close to an appropriate range of employment opportunities, services and facilities.

20. The development of a set of SA objectives is a recognised way in which the likely environmental and sustainability effects of a plan can be described, analysed and compared, with each proposal in the plan being scored against each SA objective. It is considered appropriate to make use of the SA framework that is being used for the SA of the East Devon Local Plan as those objectives have been designed to address the key sustainability issues facing East Devon District, which are also relevant at the local level for Gypsy and Traveller sites. The SA framework, which has been consulted on throughout the SA of the Local Plan, is presented in Table 1, which also notes which of the SEA topics each objective addresses.

Assessment methodology for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan

21. All of the options for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan, including any reasonable alternative options, will need to be subject to SA. This will include specific site options and options that there may be for policies to be included in the Plan. The SA work for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan will be undertaken in the context of the SA work that has already been undertaken in relation to the allocated land, during the preparation of the emerging East Devon Local Plan.
22. Each policy and/or site option will be subject to SA using broadly the same methodology as LUC used for the SA of the Local Plan, i.e. setting out the assessment of each policy or site option in a matrix with a score and a brief justification for that score being given for each objective.

Table 1: SA Framework for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan

SA Objective	SEA Topic (s)
1. To ensure everybody has the opportunity to live in a decent home.	Population, human health, material assets.
2. To ensure that all groups of the population have access to community services.	Population, human health, material assets.
3. To provide for education, skills and lifelong learning	Population, material assets.
4. To improve the population's health	Population, human health.
5. To reduce crime and fear of crime.	Population, human health.
6. To reduce noise levels and minimise exposure of people to unacceptable levels of noise pollution.	Population, human health.
7. To maintain and improve cultural, social and leisure provision.	Population, material assets.
8. To maintain and enhance built and historic assets.	Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage.
9. To promote the conservation and wise use of	Soil, landscape.

SA Objective	SEA Topic (s)
land and protect and enhance the landscape character of East Devon.	
10. To maintain the local amenity, quality and character of the local environment.	Fauna, flora, soil, water, air, landscape.
11. To conserve and enhance the biodiversity of East Devon.	Biodiversity, fauna, flora.
12. To promote and encourage non-car based modes of transport and reduce journey lengths.	Human health, air.
13. To maintain and enhance the environment in terms of air, soil and water quality.	Soil, water, air.
14. To contribute towards a reduction in local emissions of greenhouse gases.	Air, climatic factors.
15. To ensure that there is no increase in the risk of flooding.	Water, human health, material assets.
16. To ensure energy consumption is as efficient as possible.	Climatic factors.
17. To promote wise use of waste resources whilst reducing waste production and disposal.	Material assets.
18. To maintain sustainable growth of employment for East Devon, to match levels of jobs with the economically active workforce.	Population, material assets.
19. To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Towns of East Devon.	Population, material assets.
20. To encourage and accommodate both indigenous and inward investment.	Population, material assets.

SA Report

23. Once the SA matrices are finalised the findings will be compiled into a draft SA report. This will be structured so as to meet all of the requirements of Annex 1 of the SEA Directive, and will include:

- a) An outline of the contents of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan and its relationship with other relevant plans, policies and programmes (including in particular its relationship with the emerging East Devon Local Plan).
- b) The environmental, social and economic characteristics of the District, with particular reference to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs, including problems and issues which could occur without the Gypsy and Traveller Plan.
- c) Key environmental, social and economic policy objectives set at the international, national and local level of relevance to the Gypsy and Traveller Plan.
- d) The SA framework being used for the SA of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan.

- e) The reasonable alternatives considered, including how they performed in sustainability terms and an outline of East Devon District Council's reasons for selecting particular options for inclusion in the Gypsy and Traveller Plan.
 - f) Any difficulties encountered during the SA process, e.g. data limitations.
 - g) The significant effects of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan on each of the SA objectives, taking into account mitigation (which may be provided by policies in the Gypsy and Traveller Plan and emerging Local Plan).
 - h) A proposed monitoring framework for monitoring the significant effects identified (this is likely to link closely with the monitoring framework for the emerging Local Plan).
 - i) A Non-Technical Summary which summarises all of the above.
24. The SA report will also include an appendix setting out the Scoping consultation comments received and noting how each one has been addressed in the full SA report (e.g. any resulting amendments made to the SA objectives or baseline information).

Consultation and Next Steps

25. The SEA Regulations require a local authority to consult the statutory environmental bodies (Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England) regarding the scope of an SA/SEA for a minimum of five weeks. East Devon District Council is now inviting comments on the scope of the SA as set out in this letter. In particular, the consultees are requested to consider:
- Whether there are any additional plans, policies or programmes that are particularly relevant to the SEA of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan.
 - Whether the baseline information provides a suitable baseline for the SEA of the emerging Gypsy and Traveller Plan.
 - Whether there are any additional key sustainability issues that should be included.
 - Whether the SA framework is appropriate and includes a suitable range of objectives (note that the framework has already been consulted on in relation to the SA/SEA of the Local Plan).
26. The responses from this consultation will be reviewed and taken into account during the assessment of the Gypsy and Traveller Plan against the SA objectives. The SA report will explain how any consultation responses have been addressed.

Please return your comments by 4th January 2016 to localplan@eastdevon.gov.uk or Planning Policy Section, East Devon District Council, Knowle, Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 8HL. Please mark all correspondence "SA/SEA Scoping for the Gypsy and Traveller Plan DPD". Where relevant please refer to paragraph numbers used in this letter as this will help with recording comments.

Yours faithfully

Claire Rodway

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