

# Places and Policies Local Plan - Submission Draft (Proposed Amendment)

## Preferred Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation

Local Plan

Positively Prepared.....

Justified.....

Effective.....

.....





## Contents

1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Why is a Gypsy and Traveller site required?	1-2
3.0 What is the need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches	2
4.0 How has the site been identified?	2-3
5.0 Next Steps	4
6.0 Preferred site allocation – supporting text and draft policy	5-8

## 1.0 Introduction

Folkestone & Hythe District Council (F&HDC) is committed to meeting the housing needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community within the District.

In order to meet this need, the Council has gone through a process to identify a suitable and available site to accommodate permanent gypsy and traveller pitches in a way that balances the housing needs of these groups with the existing settled community, whilst protecting the natural and built environment.

The purpose of this consultation document is to inform statutory consultees, relevant organisation and the public of the work that has been undertaken to date and to invite representations on the Council's intention to allocate its preferred site **Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Lydd Road, Old Romney** for permanent gypsy and traveller residential pitches.

The consultation period will run for six weeks between the **2<sup>nd</sup> September** and **17.00 on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019**.

## 2.0 Why is a Gypsy and Traveller site required?

Gypsy and Travellers can be classified as an ethnic group: 'a group who share the same history and cultural traditions', which falls under the protected characteristic of 'Race' as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

The Housing Act 2004 places an obligation on Local Planning Authorities to carry out an assessment of the housing needs of the gypsy and traveller community.

The requirement to provide sites for gypsy and travellers is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019).

Paragraph 59 of the Framework states:

*"To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay."*

Furthermore, Paragraph 61 continues:

*"The size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes)."*

The Government has also produced a specific planning policy document, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS, 2015), which should be read in conjunction with the NPPF. The aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for gypsies and travellers, in a way that facilitates their traditional and nomadic way of life while respecting the interests of the settled community.

The Places and Policies Local Plan (PPLP) is in the final stages of the plan-making process, the Examination in Public. During the public hearing sessions, which took place between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2019, the Inspector instructed the Council to identify a site (or sites) to meet the permanent pitch requirements identified by the Folkestone & Hythe District Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons Accommodation Assessment (GTAA, 2018).

### 3.0 What is the need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches?

A number of Kent Authorities commissioned consultants Arc<sup>4</sup> to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the gypsy and traveller accommodation needs across the County, looking at each local authority area separately before collating findings into a Kent-wide report. F&HDC was part of the first tranche of work with its GTAA completed in August 2018.

The F&HDC GTAA (2018) evidences an overall requirement to 2036/37 of:

- 5x additional gypsy and traveller residential pitches;
- 2x additional travelling showpersons pitches;
- 3-5x additional transit pitches.

The Planning Inspector has indicated to the Council that it needs to address the outstanding five gypsy and traveller residential pitches as part of the Places and Policies Local Plan. The GTAA (2018) found evidence for three residential pitches over the next five years (2017/18 to 2021/22) and a further two across the remainder of the period (2022/23 to 2036/37).

Since the GTAA (2018) was prepared, planning permission has been granted for an additional permanent gypsy and traveller pitch on an existing site at Brenzett.

As a consequence, this has the effect of reducing the permanent gypsy and traveller residential pitch requirements to a total of four, comprising two pitches over the next five-year period to 2021/22 and a further two pitches to 2036/7.

### 4.0 How has the site been identified?

Planning policy officers have undergone a thorough process of identifying suitable, available and deliverable site(s) where the required gypsy and traveller pitches could be accommodated.

To ensure that all reasonable alternatives for potential gypsy and traveller sites were considered, the officers compiled a 'long list' of sites through a comprehensive review of the following sources:

- A 'call for sites'
- Existing gypsy and traveller sites
- Other sites owned by Gypsy and Traveller Community
- Privately-owned caravan sites
- Public sector land ownership
- SHLAA database (a database of potential housing sites put forward to the Council by landowners)
- Church Commissioners for England

This exercise resulted in over forty potential sites, in locations across the district, being identified for assessment.

The site assessments followed the same principles of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) that was undertaken during the early stages of preparation of the PPLP. The assessment criteria was amended slightly to reflect national guidance set out in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and the characteristics that enable a successful gypsy and traveller site to be established. Further information about each of the sources of potential sites, the site assessment process and the conclusions are outlined in the F&HDC Gypsy and Traveller Site Identification Study (July 2019).

Following a thorough review of sites within the Folkestone & Hythe District, officers concluded that **Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Lydd Road, Old Romney** was the only site suitable for development (subject to an appropriate layout and mitigation in respect of landscaping, drainage and flood risk) and available for gypsy and traveller use.

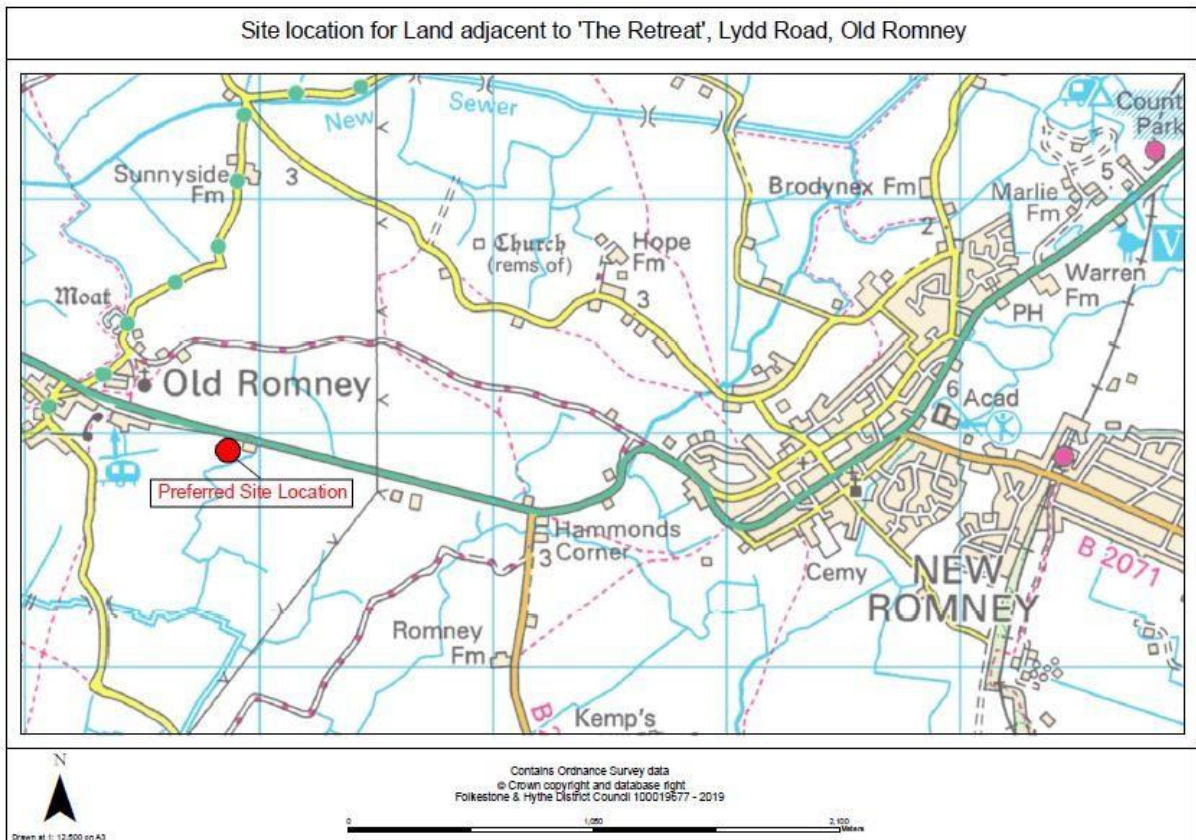


Figure1: Preferred site location

## 5.0 Next Steps

The consultation period for the preferred gypsy and traveller site allocation, supporting text and draft policy runs between the **2<sup>nd</sup> September** and **17.00 on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019**.

**Comments should be made on the accompanying representation form, using a separate form for each comment.**

All representations will be passed directly to the Planning Inspector overseeing the examination of the Places and Policies Local Plan for his consideration. If you indicate on the representation form that you wish to appear at a future public hearing to put your views across in person, the Inspector will consider this and decide whether a hearing is necessary. If a hearing is needed, the Council will notify people who want to take part of the date and arrangements for appearing, in due course.

The Planning Inspector will then advise on the timetable for the final stages of the Examination in Public and the issue of his final report. The Places and Policies Local Plan (with any modifications the Inspector considers necessary to make the plan 'sound') will then be taken to Cabinet and full Council for adoption. If Council adopts the plan, there is then a six-week period during which a legal challenge can be lodged. At the end of this process, the plan can then be used to determine planning applications.

## 6.0 Preferred site allocation – supporting text and draft policy

As outlined above, the need to identify a site for gypsy and traveller pitches has arisen through work on the Places and Policies Local Plan. The Places and Policies Local Plan is a plan that sets out where development for housing, employment, retail, leisure and other uses will take place within Folkestone & Hythe District.

Sites that have been identified for development are set out in Part One of the plan. These are grouped under three different character areas of the district: the Urban Area (Folkestone and Hythe), Romney Marsh Area and North Downs Area. Sites are covered by policies setting out what form development take. The boundary of each site is shown on the Policies Map accompanying the local plan, and is indicated by a red line.

The Places and Policies Local Plan also contains some general policies that will be used to judge planning applications throughout the district; these are set out in Part Two of the plan. The plan can be viewed on the Council's website<sup>1</sup>.

As the preferred gypsy and traveller site, **Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Lydd Road, Old Romney**, lies within the Romney Marsh area, it is proposed that the policy and supporting text are added to Chapter 6 of the plan, which deals with the Romney Marsh Character Area. The new supporting text and policy would follow on from the existing site allocations for the area.

- The proposed new supporting text would follow on from existing paragraph 6.125 of the plan and the new paragraphs would be numbered 6.126 to 6.133. These are set out below.
- The proposed new policy, which is intended to guide development on the site, would follow existing policies in Chapter 6 and would be numbered RM15. This policy is set out in the highlighted box below.
- As part of these changes, the Council would amend the Policies Map to show the boundary of the proposed site; this is shown by the red line on the plan below. A location plan is also provided to show where the site is in relation to nearby settlements.

---

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/3640/1-1-places-and-policies-local-plan-submission-draft-february-2018>

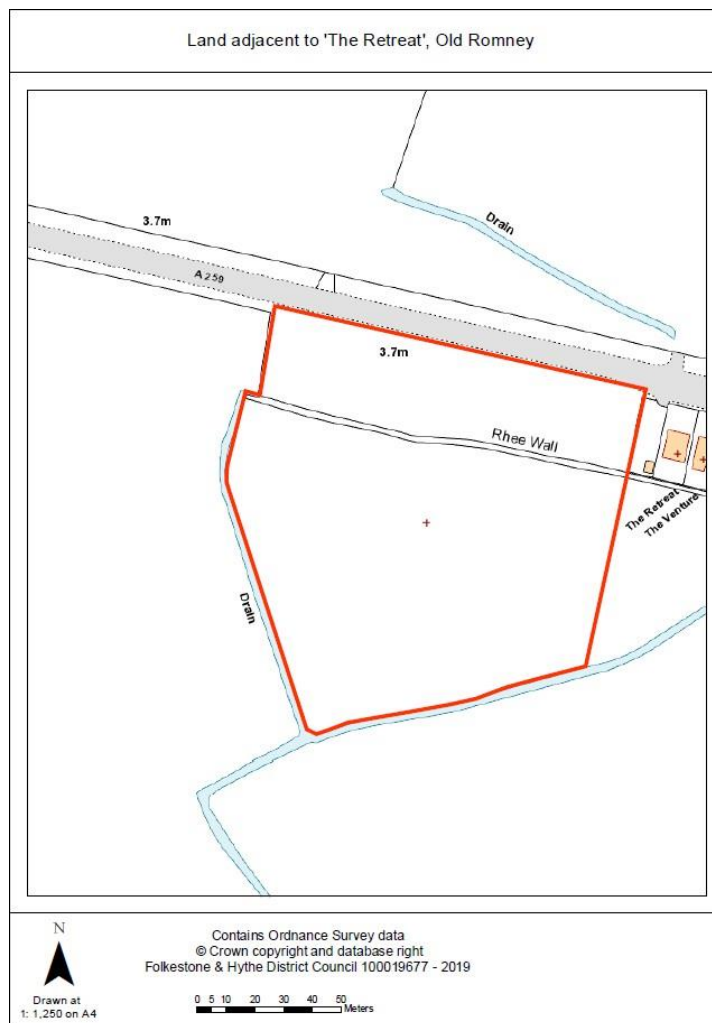


**Proposed new supporting text (paragraphs 6.126-6.133) and proposed new Policy RM15: Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Old Romney**

**Old Romney**

- 6.126 The village of Old Romney is situated in the Romney Marsh and is widely considered to be the forerunner to New Romney. It is unclear when these settlements began, but it is thought that both must have grown in size and importance around the eighth century AD when a long port was likely laid between the two along the banks of the former estuary of the River Rother.
- 6.127 Today, the village consists of a few scattered houses and a public house as a local service. However, it does benefit from good connections via the A259 to New Romney, which has a supermarket, doctor's surgery, a primary and secondary school; and a range of shops and restaurants.

**Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Lydd Road, Old Romney**



**Picture 6.17 Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Lydd Road, Old Romney**

- 6.128 The site is located between the settlements of New Romney to the east and Old Romney to the west. It is directly accessed from Lydd Road (A259).
- 6.129 The site covers an area of approximately 1.5ha and is predominately grassland that is overgrown and unmanaged. The Rhee Wall passes across the northern part of the site; this was a medieval watercourse that consisted of two parallel banks of earth, the ground between being raised above the marsh; moving south the site drops down approximately 1 metre to the marsh plateau. The south-east and south-west boundaries are edged by narrow drainage channels that join at the southernmost point of the site. Whilst situated in the open countryside, the site is reasonably well screened from the wider landscape with the site boundary punctuated with variety of mature trees and bushes; this in combination with the level change provide the site with a strong sense of enclosure.
- 6.130 The surrounding land is predominately arable farmland. There is a small cluster of three detached bungalows immediately adjoining the site to the east. The Oasis Café, Carwash and associated storage are a short distance to the west with the settlement of Old Romney just beyond.
- 6.131 The site is available for development as a gypsy and traveller site with capacity for four residential pitches, comprising amenity blocks, parking for static and touring caravans, visitor parking and storage.
- 6.132 The site does have some constraints that would need to be addressed in order for it to be developed appropriately. This primarily relates to a large part of the site being located within Flood Zones 2 & 3; though the higher northern part of the site along the Rhee Wall sits in Flood Zone 1. Therefore, it is considered that there is a large enough 'developable area' outside the area of flood risk, with safe access and egress along the A259, to accommodate a small number of permanent residential gypsy and traveller pitches. Non-residential development that cannot be located in Flood Zone 1 should incorporate flood resilient and/or flood resistant measures. Development should be informed by an assessment to identify features of ecological interest and seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the site. Of particular interest are the two drainage channels that define the southern boundaries of the site, which have potential to host protected species. Any application should be accompanied by a surface and foul drainage strategy that demonstrates that the integrity of these water bodies is not compromised and meets the requirements of the appropriate statutory authorities and organisations including the Environment Agency, Romney Marshes Area Internal Drainage Board; and Lead Local Flood Authority (Kent County Council).
- 6.133 With a suitable layout and design, it is considered that the site allocation is appropriate and able to meet the specific need for gypsy and traveller pitches as identified by the Folkestone & Hythe Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons Accommodation Assessment 2018.

**Policy RM15 – Land adjacent to ‘The Retreat’, Lydd Road, Old Romney**

Land adjacent to ‘The Retreat’, Old Romney is allocated for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation with capacity for 4 pitches comprising amenity blocks, parking for static and touring caravans, visitor parking and storage.

Development proposals will be supported where

1. Vehicular access is from Lydd Road (A259) and appropriate space for turning and manoeuvring is provided within the site;
2. Residential pitches are located in Flood Zone 1 and accompanied by a site specific flood risk assessment;
3. Any non-residential development that cannot be located in Flood Zone 1 should incorporate flood resilient and/or flood resistant measures;
4. A surface water and foul drainage strategy is prepared to the satisfaction of the statutory authorities;
5. A Phase 1 Habitat Survey is undertaken by a licensed ecologist to assess the presence of Protected Species on or near to the site. The drainage channels abutting the site should be assessed for their ecological importance and, if appropriate, mitigation measures introduced that maintain or improve water quality in accordance with CSD5 of the Core Strategy;
6. An appropriate easement of 4m should be maintained to the drainage channels for access and biodiversity;
7. Proposals (including any commercial activities) are compatible with, and would not have an adverse impact on, the amenity of neighbouring residents and conserve and enhance the natural environment in accordance with Policy NE2;
8. There is a landscaping scheme that retains the existing trees and hedgerows along the north, south and western boundaries and where appropriate enhances the eastern boundary through additional planting;
9. Additional boundary treatments are compatible with the rural setting and wider landscape;
10. The archaeological potential of the land is properly considered and appropriate archaeological mitigation measures are put in place; and
11. The development should be occupied by only those that fulfil the definition of a Gypsy or Traveller.