

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling
Showpeople: Site Identification Study

July 2019

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This study has been prepared by Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC) to evidence the identification of land to meet the accommodation needs highlighted by the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (2018) undertaken by Arc⁴.
- 1.2 The Study seeks to identify and assess potential sites and determine whether they are suitable, available and deliverable to meet the identified Gypsy and Traveller needs of the District. The conclusions of this study will inform the development of relevant policies and allocations through the Folkestone & Hythe District Council's Places and Policies Local Plan to guide the consideration of future planning applications for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson sites.

Notes

- 1.3 For ease of reference sites within this study are grouped under the three character areas of the district set out in the 2013 Core Strategy, Places and Policies Local Plan and Core Strategy Review. These are:
- Urban Area – including Folkestone and Hythe;
 - Romney Marsh Area; and
 - North Downs Area.
- 1.4 As set out later in this study, there is a relatively small pitch requirement for gypsy and traveller needs for the district as a whole to 2036/37; given this, it is not possible to divide this requirement into separate sub-totals for each of the character areas. Sites have therefore been assessed on a district-wide basis to serve the whole district, using common criteria, with no specific focus on any particular sub-area(s).
- 1.5 It should be noted that the local planning authority changed its name on 1 April 2018 from Shepway District Council to Folkestone & Hythe District Council. References to "Shepway" are kept in this study where they appear in titles or quoted text from documents produced before 1 April 2018.

2.0 Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 In July 2018, the Government published an update of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF was further revised in February 2019 and references to the 2019 version are provided below.
- 2.2 NPPF (Paragraph 59) sets out the “Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes” including “meeting the needs of groups with specific housing requirements.”
- 2.3 Furthermore, NPPF (Paragraph 61) states in relation to delivering a sufficient supply of homes:

“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).”

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

- 2.4 In 2012, the government published the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS). This was subsequently updated in August 2015. The document sets out the government’s planning policies and requirements for gypsy and traveller sites and must be taken into consideration in preparing local plans and taking planning decisions.
- 2.5 The 2012 document defined “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 or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of Travelling Showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.”

- 2.6 This was subsequently updated by the 2015 PPTS, which removed those who have ceased to travel permanently from the definition. The revised definition is:

“Persons of nomadic habitat 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.”

- 2.7 In addition, the PPTS (2015) states:

“For the purposes of this planning policy, “pitch” means a pitch on a “gypsy and traveller” site and “plot” means 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

may/will need to incorporate space or to be split to allow for the storage of equipment.”¹

2.8 Paragraph 4 requires that local planning authorities assess the need for gypsy and traveller sites and to develop fair and effective strategies to meet the likely need for permanent and transit pitches through the identification of sites. Planning authorities should plan over a reasonable timescale, promoting private sites but recognising that not all travellers can afford to provide their own sites. Plan-making and decision-taking should protect local amenity and the environment and aim to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and make enforcement more effective.

2.9 At Paragraph 13 some general considerations for site selection are set out to ensure that *“planning policies:*

- a) promote peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community*
- b) promote, in collaboration with commissioners of health services, access to appropriate health services*
- c) ensure that children can attend school on a regular basis*
- d) provide a settled base that reduces both the need for long-distance travelling and possible environmental damage caused by unauthorised encampment*
- e) provide for proper consideration of the effect of local environmental quality (such as noise and air quality) on the health and well-being of any travellers that may locate there or on others as a result of new development*
- f) avoid placing undue pressure on local infrastructure and services*
- g) do not locate sites in areas at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplains, given the particular vulnerability of caravans*
- h) reflect the extent to which traditional lifestyles (whereby some travellers live and work from the same location thereby omitting many travel to work journeys) can contribute to sustainability.”*

2.10 Paragraph 25 also places strong emphasis against development in open countryside, stating *“local planning authorities should very strictly limit new traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside areas allocated in the development plan.”* However, there is no outright exclusion on the development of sites in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), such as the Kent Downs AONB within Folkestone & Hythe district, but the impact of a site on the landscape is one of the criteria that would have to be considered, as would the aims of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.²

2.11 More detailed guidance was published as ‘Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide’ (CLG, 2008); although officially withdrawn, it is still available to view among the government’s archived documents and provides general design advice and some site design examples.³

¹ DCLG *Planning policy for traveller sites* August 2015 Annex 1, para 5

² Available to view at: <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/explore-kent-bucket/uploads/sites/7/2018/04/18113849/KDAONB-Management-Plan.pdf>

³ Available to view at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11439/designinggypsiesites.pdf

Shepway Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)

2.12 The Shepway Core Strategy Local Plan (CSLP) does not make specific provision for meeting the needs of Gypsy and Travellers in Folkestone & Hythe District.

2.13 Policy CSD2 of the CSLP considers the district's residential needs and states that:

“Residential development and new accommodation should be designed and located in line with the Spatial Strategy’s approach to managing demographic and labour market changes in Shepway and meeting the specific requirements of vulnerable or excluded groups existing with the district.”

2.14 Furthermore, it provides a commitment that:

“The accommodation needs of specific groups will be addressed based on evidence of local need, including appropriate provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Policies will be included in Local Plans [Places and Policies Local Plan] to provide criteria and make allocations for Traveller sites in line with national policy.”

Places and Policies Local Plan (Submission Draft)

2.15 Should the outcome of the Gypsy and Traveller Site Identification Study result in the identification of a specific site(s) for gypsy and traveller pitches these will form part of the housing site allocations included within the Places and Policies Local Plan (PPLP).

2.16 At present, in the absence of site-specific allocations or where proposals are bought forward on non-allocated land, emerging Policy HB14 of the PPLP provides a criteria-based policy for development of traveller sites. This policy focuses on the practical aspects of accessibility and public services, landscape quality and residential amenity. As such it forms a straightforward set of criteria to assess applications and makes explicit the consideration of individual merits.

Policy HB14: Accommodation of Gypsies and Travellers

Planning permission will be granted for gypsy and traveller accommodation which will contribute to meeting the needs of those households conforming to the definition set out in 'Planning policy for traveller sites', subject to the following:

1. The development safeguards the health of occupiers and provides a satisfactory level of amenity for them, by reference to factors including but not limited to: the space available for each family; noise; odour; land contamination; other pollution or nuisance; flood risk; and the disposal of refuse and foul water;
2. The site is in a sustainable location, well related to a settlement with a range of services and facilities and is, or can be made, safely accessible on foot, by cycle or public transport;
3. Adequate vehicular access, sight lines and space for turning and manoeuvring can be provided;
4. The development will not give rise to an unacceptable impact on amenity for residents in the vicinity of the development, or, in the case of nearby commercial users, result in the imposition of new constraints on the way in which such users can operate their businesses;
5. If the proposal involves the development of land originally identified in this Local Plan for another purpose, the loss of such land is justified by the desirability of providing additional gypsy and traveller accommodation; and
6. There is no adverse effect on the landscape, environmental or other essential qualities of countryside, including the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Natura 2000 sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, national or local nature reserves or heritage assets.

The exception to the above criteria relate to applications for the expansion of existing permitted gypsy and traveller sites, in which case only criteria 1 and 4 will apply. However, it must be demonstrated that those households still conform to the gypsy and traveller definition, and that expansion will result in additional gypsy and traveller pitches.

3.0 Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (2018)

Arc⁴

- 3.1 The Government's aim in respect of gypsy and traveller sites is that local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning.
- 3.2 Folkestone & Hythe District Council has been working with a consortium of Kent local planning authorities, as part of the duty-to-cooperate, to produce a new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) for the county. The Kent authorities have commissioned consultancy Arc⁴ to undertake this work to a standard methodology, reflecting the updated definition of travellers in national planning policy.⁴
- 3.3 Arc⁴ is producing separate reports for each authority, taking account of movements between each local authority area, and is undertaking the work in several phases. On completion, the new GTAA will supersede the previous East Kent Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (University of Salford, April 2014).
- 3.4 Folkestone & Hythe is one of the authorities in the first phase of this work. The report for the district has been finalised and is published alongside this study.
- 3.5 The research provides information about the current and future accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpersons, as well as providing information about their additional support needs.

Identified Gypsy and Travelling Showperson Need

- 3.6 The GTAA (2018) evidences an overall requirement for the Folkestone & Hythe Core Strategy Review period to 2036/37 of:
 - Five additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches;
 - Two additional Travelling Showpersons pitches; and necessarily
 - Three to Five additional Transit pitches.

Meeting the Permanent Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Requirement

- 3.7 There are currently two authorised permanent pitches on two separate private sites within the Folkestone & Hythe District. The GTAA (2018) has evidenced a need for three additional pitches within the district over the five-year period to 2021/22 and a further two pitches over the remainder of the plan period to 2036/37.
- 3.8 Since the GTAA was prepared, planning permission (Y18/0303/SH) has been granted for an additional permanent gypsy and traveller pitch on an existing site at Fishers Paddock, Ashford Road, Benzett.

⁴ Arc⁴ is a consultancy specialising in housing market analysis, including gypsy and traveller needs, and has completed more than 50 gypsy and traveller accommodation assessments across the country.

- 3.9 As a consequence, this has the effect of reducing the permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements to a total of four, comprising an additional two pitches over the five-year period to 2021/22 and a further two pitches to 2036/7.

Meeting the Travelling Showpersons' Plot Requirement

- 3.10 There is currently one Travelling Showperson household living on an authorised plot in the District. The GTAA (2018) has not evidenced a need for additional plots during the next five years but it has identified a need for two additional plots over the remainder of the plan period to 2036/37.

- 3.11 It is anticipated that this need could potentially be met through an intensification of the existing yard at The Sandpit, Swan Lane, Sellindge.

Meeting the Transit Site Pitch Requirements

- 3.12 The GTAA (2018) recommends that the Council considers the development of a transit site of between three and five pitches over the plan period to 2037, to address the short-term accommodation needs of households travelling through the District.

- 3.13 It is suggested that once Arc⁴ have completed their GTAA for each of the Kent local planning authorities and has completed an over-arching GTAA, which draws the finding into a single document, this could lead to a Kent-wide response of creating a sustainable and relevant network of transit sites across the County.

4.0 Site Identification and Assessment of Options

4.1 Selecting the right site for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation is a key factor in supporting good community relations and maximising the success of the site. The methodology for site selection is set out in the sections that follow. This has involved gathering together a wide range of sources of potential sites and assessing these against selection criteria through a number of stages. This is set out diagrammatically in Figure 1 below.

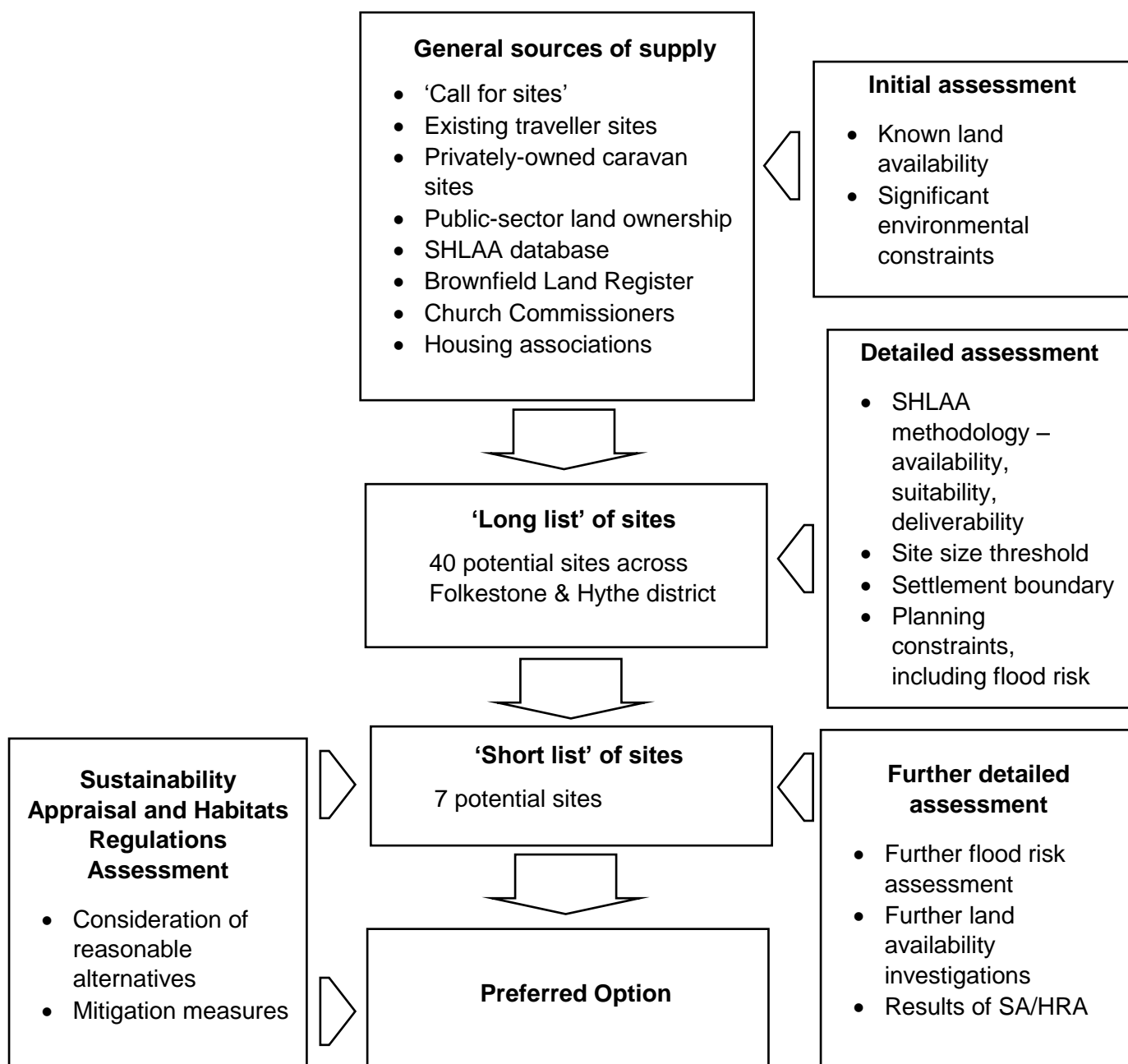


Figure 1: Site Selection Methodology

District Wide Assessment

- 4.2 For the purpose of this assessment the Folkestone & Hythe District boundary is the limit of the assessment (as outlined in paragraph 1.4 above this has not been divided further into sub-areas). The main focus for traveller site development will be on sites which are reasonably located to the settlement hierarchy as defined in the CSLP. The settlement hierarchy aims to direct development to existing settlements, not only to protect the district's open countryside but also to shape distinctive and coherent places.

Identifying Potential Sites – The Long List

- 4.3 To ensure that all reasonable alternatives for potential gypsy and traveller sites had been considered, a long list of sites was compiled through a comprehensive review of the following sources:
- A 'call for sites'
 - Existing Gypsy and Traveller sites
 - Privately owned caravan sites
 - Public sector land ownership
 - SHLAA database
 - Church Commissioners for England

Call for Sites

- 4.4 A 'call for sites' was undertaken from 29th March to 18th May 2018, as part of the Regulation 18 consultation on the Core Strategy Review. The 'call for sites' included an invitation for landowners to submit land for a range of development options including for Gypsy and Traveller pitches.
- 4.5 In total, nine sites were submitted for uses including housing and employment; however, none were put forward for Gypsy and Traveller development.

Existing Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Privately Owned Caravan Parks

Existing Gypsy and Traveller Sites

- 4.6 The Council has investigated the potential to intensify and expand existing Gypsy and Traveller sites across the District.
- 4.7 Table 1 shows that there are currently two authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites and one Travelling Showperson's Yard within the District. In addition, one Gypsy and Traveller household was identified on a residential caravan park in Lydd.

Site	Type	Pitches / Plots
Fishers Paddock, Ashford Road, Brenzett, Romney Marsh	Gypsy and Traveller Site	1
Paddock View, Land adjoining Poplar Farm, Brenzett Green, Romney Marsh	Gypsy and Traveller Site	1

The Sandpit, Swan Lane, Sellindge, Ashford	Travelling Showperson Yard	1
Lydd Caravan Park, Jurys Gap Road, Lydd, Romney Marsh	Residential Caravan Park	1

Table 1: Existing Gypsy and Traveller sites & number of pitches

3.1 As part of the preparation of the GTAA, members of the gypsy and traveller community were asked to complete a household survey. This asked respondents if there was opportunity to expand (extended to cover a larger area) or intensify (to accommodate additional pitches) existing sites. Respondents did not consider that this was possible on the existing sites within the District. However, since the household surveys were undertaken planning permission has been granted for an additional permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitch on the existing site at Fishers Paddock, Ashford Road, Benzett (Ref: Y18/0303/SH).

4.8 In this respect, Arc⁴ were commissioned to undertake further work with the established traveller communities in the District to discuss their precise needs for accommodating any expansion of their community over the next five years. Their work centred around answering the following additional householder survey questions:

- *Whether they would be willing to create additional pitches on their site*
- *If so, would you be willing to share their site with other members of the travelling community if they weren't part of their family?*
- *Do they own any land which they would be willing to place more traveller pitches*

4.9 Discussion with residents did not glean any more meaningful data over and above the responses received from the survey fieldwork carried out as part of the GTAA 2018. For those residents who were willing to speak directly about their own individual needs, it was suggested that additional sites were needed to accommodate the needs of families who were increasing in size.

4.10 Experience suggests that discussing housing needs and demand directly with local residents is far more productive if a specific site or local area can be identified as the source of the potential provision.

Privately Owned Caravan Parks

4.11 A full schedule of privately-owned caravan parks within the District was collated through the Council's licensing department.

4.12 It was decided that given the Council was searching for permanent residential pitches that only those sites which operated under an 'all year' rather than seasonal licenses and subject to planning restrictions to prevent residential uses would be looked at in further detail.

4.13 Table 2 shows all the privately-owned caravan parks identified by the Council's licensing department that operate an 'all year' licence.

Site	Type	Season	Pitches S / T
Folkestone and Hythe			

Prince of Wales Residential Park, Hythe	Residential	All Year	31 / 0
Willow Tree Farm Mobile Home Park, Hythe	Residential	All Year	63 / 0
Romney Marsh			
Hérons Park	Residential	All Year	36 / 30
Lydd Caravan Park	Residential	All Year	30 / 0
Bridge Home Park, Lydd	Residential	All Year	10 / 0
Orchard Caravan Park, Burmarsh	Residential / Touring	All Year	52 / 24
Harvey land Farm	Touring	All Year	0 / 5
North Downs			
Highview Residential Park	Residential	All Year	14 / 0
Black Horse Farm Caravan Club Site	Touring	All Year	0 / 70
The Chequers Caravan Site	Touring	All Year	2 / 24
Little North Leigh Farm	Touring	All Year	0 / 5
Paddlesworth Court Farm	Touring	All Year	0 / 5
Page Farm	Touring	All Year	0 / 5
Additional site			
Bellfield Farm	Touring	All Year	0 / 5

Table 2: Privately owned caravan parks that operate an 'all year' licence

- 4.14 A quick desk-based review of the private caravan parks showed that Bridge Home Park, Lydd had no spare capacity within their site to accommodate additional pitches; as such it was decided that this site would not be taken forward for further assessment.
- 4.15 Bellfield Farm was identified as a historic licensed site on the border with Folkestone & Hythe District, within Ashford Borough.

Public Sector Landowners

- 4.16 The council has reviewed its own corporate assets in order to help meet the identified gypsy and traveller pitch requirements.
- 4.17 A comprehensive list of the Council's corporate assets was obtained from e-PIMS – a software management tool that requires public sector organisations to record all their land and property assets. Officers reviewed the corporate assets register for both Folkestone & Hythe District Council as well as Kent County Council. Land was discounted from further consideration that fell within one of the following categories.
- Public buildings (including schools, leisure facilities, community services)
 - Employment sites
 - Public open space and children's play areas
 - Public realm
 - Nature reserves
 - Landscaping
 - Highways (including footpaths, car parks, grass verges)
 - Churchyards and cemeteries (including land safeguarded for their expansion)
 - Coastal infrastructure
 - Utilities
 - Private buildings (leased)
 - Land with planning consent

- An Irregular shape (such that an additional pitch could not be accommodated within the site boundary)

4.18 Table 3 identifies land in the ownership of FHDC and KCC that has been considered as part of this study for its potential for Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

Site	Ownership	Size (ha)
Folkestone and Hythe		
Land off Lower Sandgate Road, Folkestone	FHDC	0.1
Land at North Street, Folkestone	FHDC	0.1
Land north of East Street, Folkestone	FHDC	
Land at Botolphs Bridge, West Hythe	FHDC	0.5
Romney Marsh		
Land North of Langport Road (1), New Romney	FHDC	6.2
Land North of Langport Road (2), New Romney	FHDC	4.2
Land North of Kitewell Lane, Lydd	FHDC	0.2
Land South of Kitewell Lane, Lydd	FHDC	0.3
East Ripe (1), Lydd	FHDC	3.5
East Ripe (2), Lydd	FHDC	0.6
East Ripe (3), Lydd	FHDC	7.5
Highways Depot, Running Waters Corner, New Romney	Unknown (historic use by KCC)	0.2
North Downs		
Land at Otterpool*	FHDC	120

Table 3: Developable land in F&HDC and KCC ownership

4.19 Land at Otterpool forms part of a proposed new garden settlement near Hythe. It is promoted by joint landowners Folkestone & Hythe District Council and Cozumel Estates and supported by the Government's 'Garden Towns' programme. The proposed garden settlement is an allocation in the Council's Core Strategy Review, which has recently been through its Regulation 19 consultation and is expected to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination shortly. An outline planning application for up to 8,500 homes has been submitted (Y19/0257/FH) and is currently being considered by the Council.

4.20 Much of the preparation of the Core Strategy Review and Otterpool Park Masterplan preceded the findings of the GTAA (2018) study, which identified a need for a small number of deliverable Gypsy and Traveller pitches within the next five years. Given that proposals for the garden settlement have advanced significantly, it is considered that the Council's land ownership at Otterpool, as well as other private landownerships that fall within the Masterplan boundaries (and that were previously assessed as part of the SHLAA), are not currently available for reassessment or further consideration; nor are they deliverable in the short-term given the strategic nature of the proposed development.

Review of SHLAA

- 4.21 Officers carried out a review of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) database. Sites that have not been allocated as part of the Places and Policies Local Plan (and not subject to a planning application) and were assessed as being either 'green' or 'amber' were considered for their suitability to accommodate a small number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches.
- 4.22 Table 4 identifies SHLAA sites that had been assessed as either green or amber as part of their initial assessment for suitability for housing.

SHLAA	Size (Ha)	Original SHLAA Category
Folkestone and Hythe		
SHLAA/602: Land between Valebrook Close & Valestone Close, Folkestone	2.98	Green
SHLAA/405: Land at Coolinge Lane, Sandgate	4.54	Green
SHLAA/158: Vale Farm (The Piggeries), Horn Street, Hythe	4.6	Green
SHLAA/155: Rectory Field, Eversley Way, Seabrook, Hythe	1.75	Green
SHLAA/615: Land north-west of Blackhouse Hill, Hythe	17.6	Amber
SHLAA/640: Land adjacent 43 Horn Street, Hythe	1.2	Amber
Romney Marsh		
SHLAA/373: Land west of Cockreed Lane, New Romney	4.7	Amber
SHLAA/1014: Craythorne Farm, New Romney	0.17	Amber
SHLAA/1015: Brickyard Poultry Farm, New Romney	1.4	Amber
SHLAA PO21: Dymchurch Parish Council Car Park	0.4	
SHLAA PO26: Station Approach, New Romney	1	
SHLAA PO27: Land at Dymchurch, Recreation Field	1.5	
SHLAA PO28: St Andrews Road, New Romney	3.4	
North Downs		
SHLAA/388: Land west of Canterbury Road, Hawkinge	1	Green
SHLAA/686: Land at Duck Street, Elham	0.3	Green
SHLAA/627: Land rear of Brook Lane Cottages, Brook Lane, Sellindge	0.45	Amber
SHLAA/613: Land rear of Barnstormers, Stone Street, Stanford	1	Amber
SHLAA/423b: Land east of former railway, Teddars Leas Road, Etchinghill	1.9	Amber
SHLAA PO5: Red House Lane, Lyminge	0.8	

Table 4: SHLAA sites assessed as either 'green' or 'amber' but not allocated

- 4.23 A small number of sites identified in Table 4 were allocated for housing in the Places and Policies Local Plan - Preferred Options document. However, during consultation on the document in October 2016, a number of objections were raised against the following sites that led to the Council deleting them as site allocations from later drafts of the plan. These sites included: SHLAA/405 (loss of playing field); SHLAA/686 (localised flooding

and access); SHLAA/686 (access and flooding); and SHLAA/613 (access). SHLAA/155 was also excluded as it was known that the site is no longer available.

- 4.24 Each of the remaining sites have been reassessed for their potential to deliver the small number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches required.

Church of England

- 4.25 In February 2019, the General Synod voted that, regarding sites for Gypsies and Travellers, the Church of England should “encourage the local and national Church to make land available for new sites managed by Housing Associations.”⁵ In March, officers contacting the Church Commissioners for England regarding the availability of land owned by the Church of England in the Folkestone & Hythe District. Following an initial acknowledgement, a further follow-up e-mail was sent in May. An additional letter was sent by the Council Leader in June. At present, no formal response has been received although officers continue to press the Church Commissioners for their cooperation. This avenue of search would appear premature for this particular assessment of sites but officers will monitor the situation and consider as part of a future review of the Places and Policies Local Plan.

Assessment of Site Options

- 4.26 This site identification exercise resulted in forty potential sites being identified for assessment.
- 4.27 Officers considered that as a site was being sought for permanent pitches for members of the Gypsy and Traveller community that any future allocation would essentially adopt a residential use class. Therefore, it was decided that the approach to site assessment should follow the same principles applied for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).
- 4.28 The approach to identifying an appropriate set of site selection criteria was to build upon the guidance set out in NPPF (Paragraph 67) that account should be taken of a site’s suitability, availability and deliverability.
- 4.29 Stage 1 of the SHLAA form that was used to screen the suitability of sites for housing for the Places and Policies Local Plan was amended to reflect some of the site specific requirements and considerations assumed necessary to achieve a successful Gypsy and Traveller site. The alterations related to the setting of a minimum site threshold; a maximum distance from the nearest settlement boundary; and specific site constraints such as flood risk. A further minor amendment was made to Stage 2 of the SHLAA form which took account of the potential relationship and impact on both future occupants of the site and the settled community.
- 4.30 Further detail is provided on the changes to the assessment criteria in the following paragraphs.

Site Size Threshold

⁵ See paper GS2123, ‘*Centuries of Marginalisation: Visions of Hope, Mission and Ministry among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities*’: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/GS%202123.pdf>

4.31 There are no definitive parameters for a Gypsy and Traveller site or the individual pitches. For practical reasons, such as the maneuverability of caravans, often a greater amount of land is required per household compared to that for smaller houses.

4.32 Despite now being withdrawn, Paragraph 4.4 of the DCLG's Good Practice Guidance on Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites (2008) suggests that

"Gypsy and Traveller sites are designed to provide land per household which is suitable for a mobile home, touring caravan and a utility building, together with space for parking."

4.33 To inform a site threshold, officers undertook a review of best practice where Gypsy and Traveller pitches have been developed elsewhere which found that it could be reasonably expected that a permanent site of one pitch with the necessary amenity block, parking and infrastructure to be around 500sqm; whilst an appraisal looking at the District's two existing permanent gypsy and traveller sites ascertained that each site allowed approximately 1,500m per pitch. Sites were sought where a minimum of two pitches could be accommodated to enable the children of a Gypsy and Traveller family to move into their own caravan in the transition to adulthood. As such a minimum land requirement of 0.1ha was applied to all sites.

Settlement Boundary

4.34 The Government is keen to promote a peaceful and integrated co-existence between a Gypsy and Traveller site and the local settled community. Paragraph 3.7 of the Good Practice Guidance on Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites states that:

"where possible, sites should be developed near to housing for the settled community as part of mainstream residential developments".

In response, officers included an additional site screening criterion which only allowed the consideration of sites in locations of no more than 500m from the nearest settlement boundary with a focus on the most sustainable towns and villages. This generally reflects the requirement that traveller sites should be located in locations accessible to education, health, shops, and community and service facilities. Moreover, a little relative distance (where possible) between the prospective Gypsy and Traveller community and the existing settled community is considered to help address and respect the privacy of both sets of residents, enable opportunities for a live/work set up on site; and limit opportunities for tensions to arise with the settled community.

Planning Policy Designations

4.35 National guidance is clear that potential Gypsy and Traveller sites should not be located in areas at high risk of flooding. Paragraph 13 of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites states that local planning authorities should not:

"locate sites in areas at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplains, given the particular vulnerability of caravans"

4.36 Permanent caravan sites are classed as "highly vulnerable development" in the national Planning Practice Guidance. The initial screening criteria were amended to ensure that areas of 'significant' in addition to areas of 'extreme' flood hazard (as shown on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Mapping 2115) would not proceed to the more detailed

assessment of suitability. Furthermore, sites were screened out owing to their proximity to various planning designations such as International and European wildlife sites.

4.37 An example of the SHLAA form can be found in Appendix 1

Stage 1: Initial Screening Assessment

4.38 Stage 1 of the site assessment process involved an initial screening of sites. This was a preliminary sieving process to eliminate any sites that had any overriding constraints that would rule the site out as a Gypsy and Traveller site using the three key criteria discussed above: 1) Site size threshold: 2) Settlement Boundary: 3) Planning policy designations.

5.1 Twenty of the initial forty sites failed to pass all three of the initial screening criteria.

- Four of the sites exceeded the maximum 500m threshold of a settlement boundary.
- Eleven had policy constraints relating to matters such as flood risk, ecology and landscape; and
- Five exceeded both the maximum 500m threshold of a settlement boundary and had policy constraints relating to matters of flood risk, ecology and landscape

4.39 A summary of the sites that were screened out during Stage 1 can be found in the site assessment matrix in Section 6.0 of this document.

Stage 2: Detail Assessment

4.40 The remaining twenty sites that passed the initial screening criteria progressed to Stage 2 of the site assessment process and underwent a more detailed assessment of suitability looking at matters such as access and highways capacity, connection to services and infrastructure, proximity to local facilities, landscape and townscape impact, wildlife and nature conservation, listed buildings and archaeology; and residential amenity. This stage identified any constraints to development and whether there were any opportunities for mitigation.

4.41 Seven of the twenty sites were considered to be relatively free of constraints and therefore progressed to the next stage of the study. The seven sites that formed part of a 'short list' included:

- Station Approach, New Romney
- Running Waters Corner, New Romney,
- Brickyard Poultry Farm, Cockreed Lane, New Romney
- Land west of Cockreed Lane, New Romney
- Craythorn Farm, New Romney
- Kitewell Lane (North), Lydd
- Kitewell Lane (South), Lydd

4.42 Two caravan sites, Highview Residential Park near Capel-le-Ferne and Black Horse Farm Caravan Club site were also considered to be relatively free of constraints. Since

neither of these sites had previously been submitted to the Council as being available for development officers wrote to the site owners and/or manager to ascertain their stance on making part of their site available to the Gypsy and Traveller community. No positive responses were received. Therefore, it was assumed that these sites were not available and did not form part of the short-list of sites.

- 4.43 Given the highly vulnerable nature of caravan development, informal comments on the risk of flooding affecting the short-listed sites were also sought from the Environment Agency.

A summary of the performance of each site during Stage 2 of the site assessment process can also be found in the site assessment matrix in Appendix 1.

Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 4.44 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Sustainability Appraisal is a mandatory part of the process for preparing land use plans, including the Places and Policies Local Plan. For these documents, it is also necessary to conduct an environmental assessment following the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.
- 4.45 Under the Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats Directive) plans such as the Places and Policies Local Plan are also subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The purpose of HRA is to assess the impacts of the plan against the conservation objectives of European sites protected for their habitat value and to assess whether the impacts would adversely affect the integrity of any site.
- 4.46 These assessments have been undertaken throughout the process of preparing the Places and Policies Local Plan by the Council's consultants LUC. Following on from their earlier work, LUC were also instructed to assess the short-listed gypsy and traveller sites and their report will be published when completed.
- 4.47 As shown in Figure 1 above, SA/SEA and HRA form a parallel process alongside the Council's site identification work, and also provide an independent check on this work. They also serve to highlight any mitigation measures that may need to be introduced into the proposed site allocation policy.

Appropriateness of Sites for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

- 4.48 Having established the 'short-list' of sites identified from a variety of sources and assessed on a number of detail criteria, consultants Arc⁴ were commissioned to review the appropriateness of these sites for the Gypsy and Traveller community and the potential impact on the wider community.
- 4.49 It was concluded that the appropriateness of these sites for Gypsy and Travellers has been assessed in the context of recommended practice of Government. A number of the sites are considered to be rural in nature and primarily unwanted farming land. These sites are remote from established communities, quite large areas themselves and a distance from any shops or local schools, doctors etc. The essence of traveller sites is

not to exclude them from existing conurbations by placing them in remote areas but to ensure that they are able to integrate into local communities with sensitive design and locations. In this regards there are three sites of the ones identified that have the potential for establishing a small-scale traveller community with opportunities to expand.

- 4.50 In no particular order these were: Kitewell Lane (North) and Kitewell Lane (South), Lydd; and Station Approach, New Romney. A further site, land at Running Waters Corner was considered to be potentially suitable for short-stay accommodation.

Stage 3: Availability of Sites

- 4.51 The four sites identified by Arc⁴ as having the potential for establishing a small-scale traveller community progressed to Stage 3 of the site assessment process and a review of their availability for Gypsy and Traveller development.
- 4.52 Officers considered that a site in public-sector ownership is more likely to be made available for traveller use, where there are no alternative plans for its development or disposal, than a site in private-ownership being promoted for housing development.
- 4.53 Therefore, officers proceeded to conduct inquiries as to the availability of the sites at Kitewell Lane which are in the ownership of FHDC; and Running Waters Corner which was assumed to be in the control of Kent County Council.
- 4.54 FHDC has indicated that at this stage the two sites at Kitewell Lane are not currently available with both already allocated for housing in the Places and Policies Local Plan. In addition, KCC have also informed the Council that whilst their road surfacing team uses the land at Running Waters Corner on an ad-hoc basis, it is actually Highways England that holds the titles to the site. It is therefore not within KCC's gift to release the land for alternative uses. While it may be possible to work with KCC and Highways England to secure ownership of the Running Waters Corner site in the future, it would need the provision of alternative facilities in the vicinity to compensate KCC for the release of the depot land. It is therefore considered that the site is not deliverable within the timeframe needed for the completion of this work.
- 4.55 The site at Station Approach, New Romney is in private ownership and has been actively pursued for housing through the SHLAA. From officers' knowledge of these sites, it is considered unlikely that they will be made available for Gypsy and Traveller residential pitches.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The GTAA (2018) established a need for five additional Gypsy and Traveller sites in the District.
- 5.2 Since the GTAA was prepared, planning permission has been granted for an additional permanent gypsy and traveller pitch on an existing site. This has had the effect of reducing the permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements to a total of four for the plan period to 2037.
- 5.3 Drawing from a variety of different sources officers identified forty potential sites for assessment. An initial screening following by a detailed assessment of sites revealed a 'short-list' of seven sites as having potential to accommodate a small scale Gypsy and Traveller site.
- 5.4 These seven sites were passed to Arc⁴ for review as to their appropriateness for Gypsy and Travellers site, considered against the context of recommended practice of Government. Four were considered to have potential for establishing a small scale traveller community with opportunities to expand.
- 5.5 Officers proceeded to conduct inquiries as to the availability of the sites; it was concluded that none were currently available for development as a Gypsy and Traveller site.
- 5.6 Therefore, having gone through a thorough process of identifying and assessing potential sites, officers have been left to conclude that there are no suitable and available sites in Folkestone & Hythe District that could accommodate the required number of four residential Gypsy and Traveller pitches that has been identified in the GTAA (2018).

6.0 Additional Site Consideration and Preferred Site Allocation

- 6.1 Following the conclusion of this site identification study, officers' attention has been drawn to an established Romany Gypsy family living and working in the Romney Marsh area who have acquired a parcel of land with the aspiration of developing it as a Gypsy and Traveller site. Officers contacted the family and identified the 1.5ha site as 'land adjacent to The Retreat, Lydd Road, Old Romney'. A site location map is provided in Appendix 2.
- 6.2 Officers have subsequently considered the site using the assessment methodology outlined earlier in Section 4.0 of this document.
- 6.3 The site does not strictly meet the Stage 1 screening criteria that would automatically take it forward for a more detailed assessment. However, it is considered that in this case a reasonable level of planning judgment can be exercised given the outstanding Gypsy and Traveller need to be addressed; the absence of reasonable alternatives; and the availability of the site, to allow it to progress to Stage 2 of the site assessment process.
- 6.4 In regards to the initial screening criteria, the site is further than the 500m threshold from the nearest settlement boundary. It is though within 500m of Old Romney with direct access onto the A259 and New Romney; as such it is considered that the site would not exclude Gypsy and traveller families and that opportunities would still exist for them to be able to integrate with both of the neighbouring local communities. Settlement boundaries are not defined for the smaller villages in the district in an effort to steer new development towards the more sustainable towns and villages in the settlement hierarchy. Additionally, a small proportion of the site along the southern extent of the site is identified as being of significant flood risk. The remainder of the site is classified as being of Nil to Moderate in terms of the risk of flooding with safe access and egress from the site during a significant flooding event. As such, it is officers' opinion that there is a large enough 'developable area' at Nil risk of flooding to accommodate a small number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches.
- 6.5 A Stage 2 detailed assessment of the site suggests that it is largely free of constraints. There are some limitations, principally these relate to the potential ecological value of the site due to its location in the countryside; as well as future residents' ability to access services in New Romney without use of a private vehicle. However, matters such as drainage, ecology, landscape and archaeological are all considered to be manageable with appropriate mitigation.
- 6.6 The site assessment process identifies at Stage 3 that the site is available for development by virtue of being in the ownership of a Gypsy and Traveller family who have purchased the site with the intention of creating two to four residential pitches in order to meet the housing requirements of their immediate family.
- 6.7 On balance of material considerations, officers' consider that 'land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Old Romney, where supported by an appropriate policy is both a suitable and available site that is capable of delivering a small-scale Gypsy and Traveller site of two to four pitches.
- 6.1 A summary of the detailed site assessment can be found in the site assessment Matrix for Gypsy and Traveller Pitches in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Site Assessment Matrix for Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

Appendix 2: Gypsy and Traveller Site Assessment Form

Gypsy and Traveller Site Assessment Form

<i>SHLAA Ref:</i>		<i>FHDC Ward:</i>	
<i>Site Name/Address:</i>		<i>Source:</i>	
<i>Current Use:</i>		<i>Area (ha):</i>	
		<i>Site Visit:</i>	

Stage 1: Initial Assessment on suitability

A	Is the size of the site greater than 0.1 ha.	
B	Is the site within 500m of a settlement boundary?	
C	Is the site within or does it contain any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAC • SSSI • National Nature Reserve • Ramsar • SPA • Ancient Woodland • A Significant or Extreme Flood Hazard (as defined in the SFRA for the year 2115) • Scheduled Monument • Registered Parks and Gardens 	

Proceed to Stage 2?	
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Stage 2: Detailed Assessment on suitability

A	Relationship to the settlement hierarchy?	
B	Physical or Infrastructure Constraints:	
	i) Can a suitable access to the highway network be created?	
	ii) Is there adequate highway capacity?	
	iii) Is there water supply?	
	iv) Is there sewerage?	
	v) Is there electricity supply?	
	vi) Are there electricity pylons on site?	
	vii) Is there contamination?	
	viii) Are there adverse ground conditions?	
	ix) Is there any hazardous risk?	
	x) Is there difficult topography?	
	xi) Is there a river near or on the site?	
	xii) Is it in flood zone 2?	
xiii) Is it in flood zone 3?		
	If yes hazard rating 2115 with climate change - Nil/Low/Moderate/Significant	
C	Could the development potentially have a detrimental impact on any of the following?	
	i) Townscape	
	ii) Landscape	
	iii) AONB and its immediate setting	
	iv) Kent BAP sites	
	v) Tree Preservation Orders	
	vi) Heritage Assets	
	vii) Historic Park/Garden or Square	
	viii) Local Wildlife Site	

	ix) Protected Open Space	
D	Has the site been identified to be retained in the Employment Land Review?	
E	Is the site safeguarded (including minerals)?	
F	Sustainable Location. How does the site perform against the following criteria?	
	• Within 800m of a bus stop or railway station	
	• Within 800m of a primary school	
	• Within 800m of a convenience store	
	• Within 1km of a GP surgery	
G	External Environmental Factors	
	Would the amenity of residents be adversely affected by any external environmental factors? Is a buffer area required?	
H	Attractiveness to the Gypsy and Traveller Community. Assessment by Arc⁴	
Proceed to Stage 3?		

Stage 3: Deliverability

A	Do any of the following factors affect the availability of the site?	
	i) Multiple Ownership/Ransom Strip	
	ii) Existing Tenancy/Lease Agreement	
	iii) Willingness of the Owner(s) to Sell	
	iv) Willingness of the Developer to Develop	
	v) Occupied by Use unlikely to Cease	

Proceed to Stage 4?	
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Stage 4: Achievability

A	Market Interests	
	i) Compatible with Adjacent Uses	
	ii) Land Values compared with Existing and Alternative Uses	
	iii) Attractiveness of Locality	
	iv) Demand	
B	Cost	
	i) site preparation	
	ii) abnormal costs;	
	iii) planning policy	
	iv) infrastructure	
C	i) Type of G & T site	
	ii) Quantity of pitches/ plots	
D	Delivery and Phasing	
	Is the site 'deliverable' (1 - 5 years)?	
	Is the site 'developable' (6 – 15 years)?	

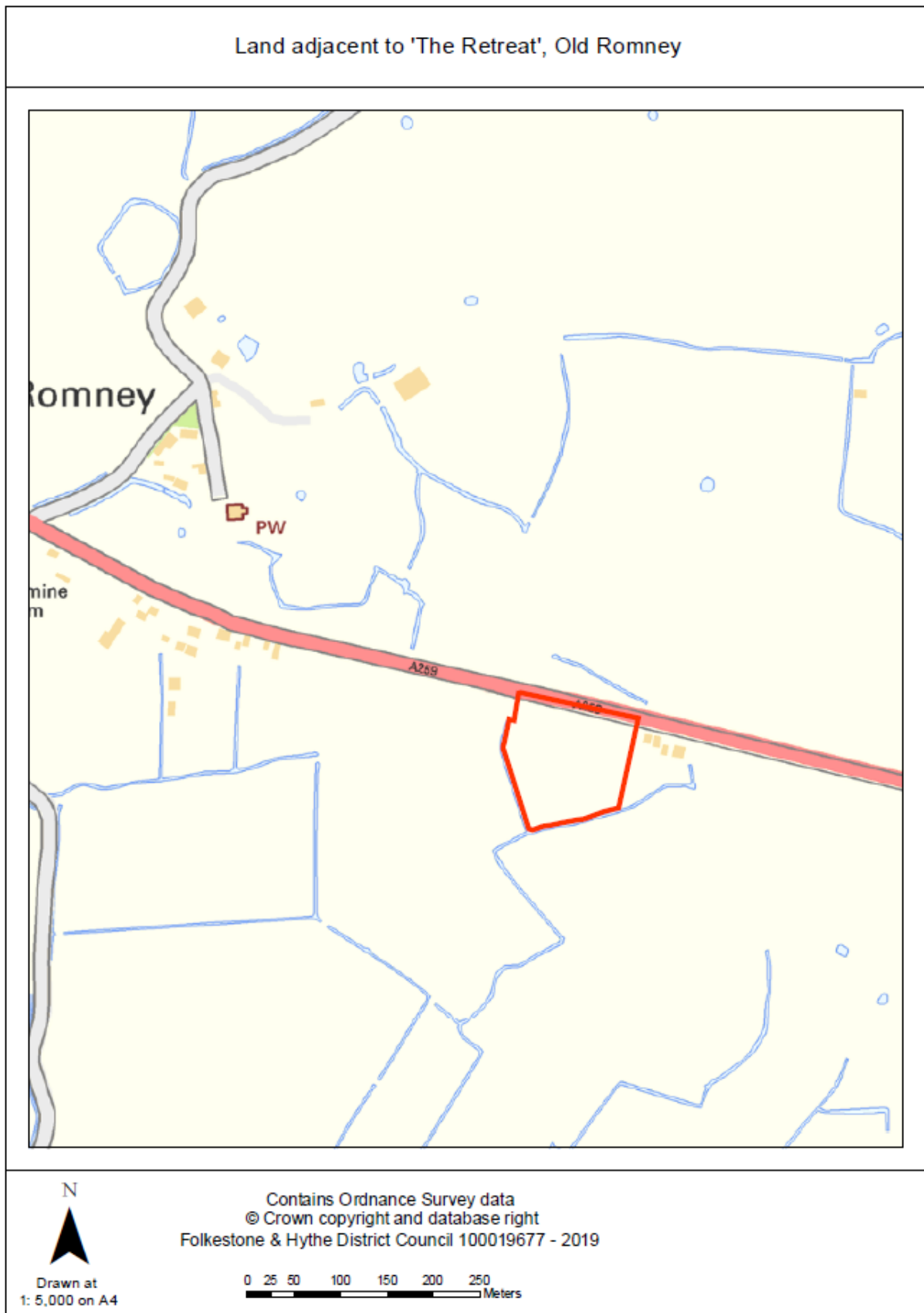
Stage 5: Comments from other organisations as appropriate

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDC Internal – Property/Housing/Environmental Health • KCC Highways

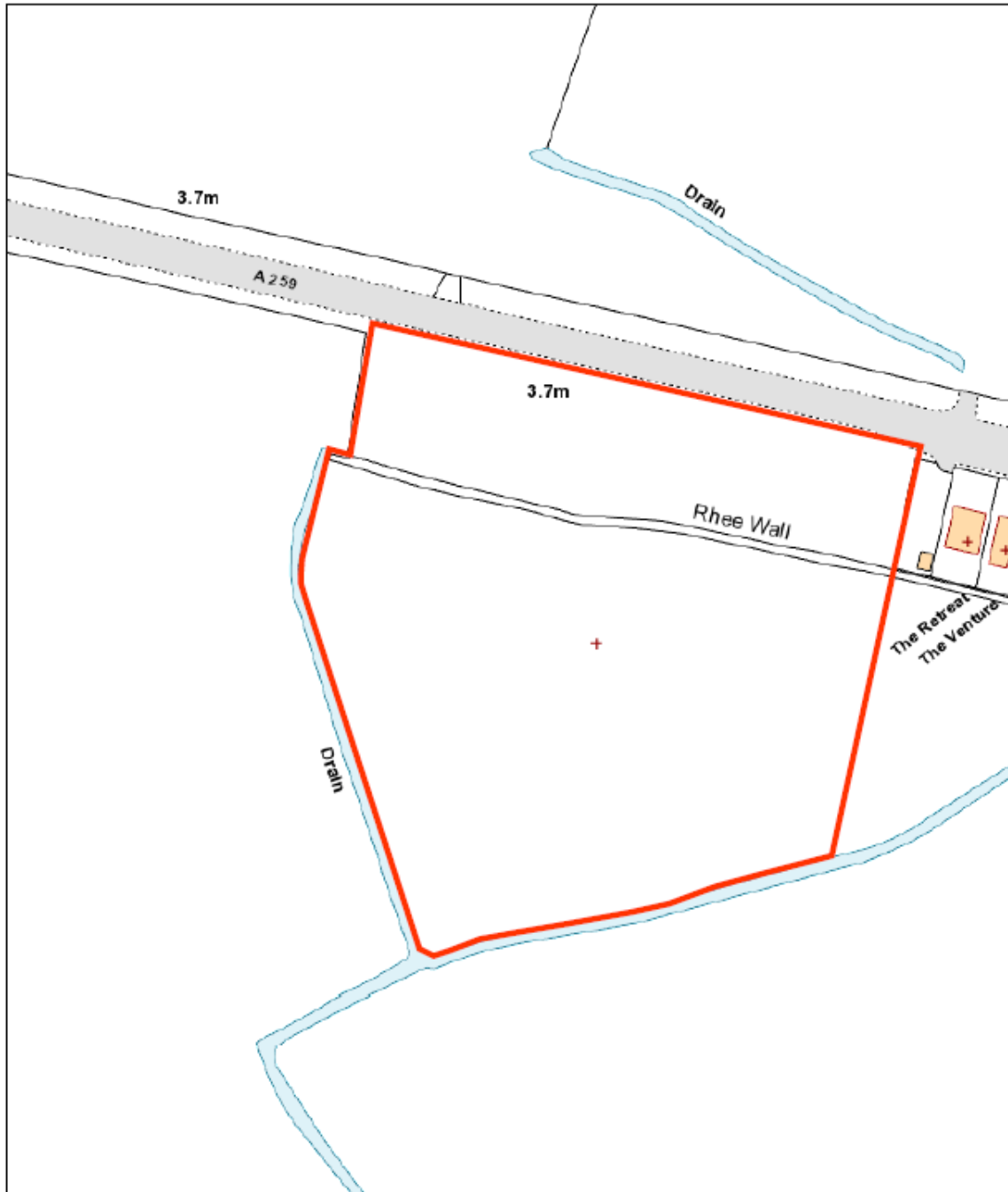
- **Highways Agency**
- **Environment Agency**
- **Natural England**
- **Kent Wildlife Trust**

CONCLUSIONS

Appendix 2: Site Map: Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Lydd Road, Old Romney

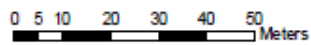


Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Old Romney



N
Drawn at
1: 1,250 on A4

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Appendix 3: Case Study – Carrswood View, Bath

- Built: August 2015
- Managed: Elim Housing
- Accommodation: Eight permanent and five transit pitches
- Rent: Weekly Rent of £105. Residents are responsible for utility costs and Council Tax.
- Site facilities:
 - Hard standing for a caravan
 - Electric and water supply
 - Space to park a car or second caravan
 - Utility block (bathing facilities, kitchen and lounge area)
 - Shed for storage
 - Bin storage
 - Visitor parking.

