

Sustainability Appraisal of the North West Regional Spatial Strategy Partial Review **SA Report – Non-Technical Summary**

Final Report for Submission
July 2009



Prepared for



Revision Schedule

Final Sustainability Appraisal Report – Non-Technical Summary July 2009

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Introduction

The Non-Technical Summary for the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report should, according to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and transposing Regulations provide:

a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.

- (a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;
- (b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;
- (c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;
- (d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;
- (e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;
- (f) the likely significant effects (1) on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;
- (g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;
- (h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of knowhow) encountered in compiling the required information; and
- (i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10. SEA Directive Annex I

This Non-Technical Summary is for the Stage C SA Report for the Partial Review and is structured around the following requirements for clarity and ease of reference:

Section 1 – Background to the North West RSS Partial Review and the Interim SA Report

Section 2 – SEA/SA and Evidence Base

Section 3 – Appraisal Findings and Proposed Mitigation

Section 4 – Monitoring

Section 5 – Conclusions

Section 6 – Next Steps

Background to the North West RSS Partial Review and this Report

Scott Wilson was commissioned by 4NW (previously the North West Regional Assembly) to carry out the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Partial Review of the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (the RSS). The process has also integrated a range of assessments including:

- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA);
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA);
- Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA); and
- Rural Proofing.

It was considered unnecessary to include these in separate reports given the minimal impacts that the draft policies will have on international sites (in the case of the HRA) and the high degree of overlap with the SA assessment (in the case of HIA, EqIA and Rural Proofing).

In particular, a separate HRA report was not considered necessary due to the fact that, from Issues and Options stage in May 2008, it was clear that there were unlikely to be significant adverse effects upon international sites from the policies on Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and Car Parking Standards. Care was still taken to scrutinise the policies and associated supporting text at each redrafting, but only very minor comments were made and the impact on international sites was still minimal.

Natural England have been consulted upon the inclusion of HRA within this SA Report and have agreed in writing that it is an appropriate method of reporting the HRA in this instance.

The North West Plan and the Partial Review

The NWRA prepared a Draft RSS – ‘the North West Plan’ - during 2004 – 06. It covers a broad range of issues including housing, retail and the environment and includes a Regional Transport Strategy. The plan was published by the Secretary of State (SoS) in September 2008 and forms part of the statutory development plan. During the preparation of the Submitted Draft Plan and in line with legislation a SA was undertaken (by Entec on behalf of NWRA) to appraise the Plan’s sustainability performance. The SA Report produced was submitted alongside the Plan prior to the Examination in Public (EiP).

At the time of the submission of the Draft RSS, the Assembly identified a number of policy topics which would need to be addressed in a future review of the RSS. The Panel Report¹ has endorsed this approach. On inception, the Partial Review originally addressed six topics following recommendations made in the Report of the Panel:

1. Strategic Renewable locations;
2. Location of Waste facilities;
3. Housing allocation (including rural);
4. Gypsies and Travellers;
5. Travelling Showpeople; and
6. Car parking standards.

However, there has been a change in the scope of the Partial Review primarily due to the Sub-national Review (and the Government's response) and the subsequent draft legislation; Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. Essentially these documents outline a new direction for regional planning which includes the production on a Regional Strategy (RS) which will replace the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

In the North West of England, the RS will be a new and clear strategic investment framework for the region. The strategy builds on the learning gained in the process of developing the **Regional Economic Strategy 2006**² the **Regional Spatial Strategy** and **RSS Partial Review** and the **Regional Housing Strategy**. The Northwest Regional Development Agency and 4NW have agreed that they should quickly move to produce a Northwest Regional Strategy (RS2010) over the next 18-24 months. The process involved in developing the RS2010 will need to ensure it encompasses the relevant steps outlined in the emerging legislation and guidance.

As a result of the change in planning direction, 4NW has taken the view that topics 1-3 should be taken out of the Partial Review process and instead included in the RS2010 process³. The remaining topics (4-6) (Gypsies & Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and update of Regional Parking Standards) will follow the Partial Review process set out in the Project Plan.

This SA Report has been prepared to inform the formal public consultation and provide appraisal information on the three draft policies in the Review.

¹ North West Draft Regional Spatial Strategy: Examination in Public - Report of the Panel, March 2007. Available at: http://www.gos.gov.uk/497468/docs/457370/2007_Panel_Report_Chapters.pdf

² Further Information is available at the following website address: <http://www.nwregionalstrategy.com/files/RES06v2.pdf>

³ See Item 4 of the Regional Leaders Forum on 15th Sept 2008

SEA/SA and Evidence Base

SEA and SA provide data about environmental, social and economic conditions in a region, identify the impacts of a strategy on those conditions, and propose ways of minimising any negative impacts and enhancing positive ones. RSSs are subject to strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal under two different regulations.

Strategic environmental assessment of RSSs is required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Sustainability appraisal of RSSs is required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Many of the requirements of SA and SEA overlap, so they are typically carried out jointly.

A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) – incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – was carried out by Entec during the preparation of the Draft North West Plan and a SA Report was published alongside the Submitted Draft Plan in January 2006. In light of the Panel Report, the GONW undertook to revise the Plan. Scott Wilson carried out a SA of the Draft Proposed Changes in December 2007 – January 2008 and prepared the Consolidated SA Report to accompany the published RSS.

Stages required in SA



This SA process is continuing through the Partial Review and this NTS and the SA Report document **Stage C** of the process.

Scott Wilson is following the Guidance for the assessment of RSSs as published by the department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)⁴. The SA process is set out in the Figure above.

Evidence Base

Stage A provided the evidence base for the SA of the RSS Partial Review. Additional information was published since the Scoping Report was finalised (7th February 2005) and as a result the Baseline and Context review have been updated..

Summaries of the updates are set out in sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the main draft SA Report. Full information is included in the Scoping Report and Scoping Report Addendum available from 4NW.

Key Issues

The key sustainability issues for the SA of the RSS Partial Review that became apparent following the update of information were:

- Flood Risk;
- Deprivation;
- Climate Change;
- Water Resources;
- Vulnerable Groups;
- Cumulative Effects;
- Equality;
- Air Pollution;
- Housing Affordability and Equality Groups;
- Social Inclusion and Deprivation;
- Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation and Access to Services.

⁴ See: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/sustainabilityappraisal>

The SA Framework

The Scoping Report (2005) proposed a framework of 26 Objectives with sub-criteria. This framework was used for the assessment of the Proposed Changes and it is proposed to use the same framework for the Partial Review, with a few additional recommended changes developed through the consultation process.

It is not proposed to change any of the overarching Objectives but rather to include additional sub- objectives on the following themes:

- Climate change;
- Microgeneration;
- Flooding;
- Water consumption;
- European sites (Natura 2000);
- Air pollution; and
- Deprivation.

The table below sets out the sustainability framework used for the appraisal of the draft policies.

The SA Framework

SA Objective	Decision making question
1. To reduce the disparities of sub-regional economic assemblies	1a. Will it provide job opportunities in areas with residents most at need
	1b. Will it reduce economic disparities within the region and with other UK regions?
2. To exploit the growth potential of business sectors	2a. Will it increase employment opportunities within the region?
	2b. Will it help to diversify the regions economy?
	2c. Will it promote growth in key sectors of the regional economy?
	2d. Will it help to develop the regions knowledge base?
	2e. Will it increase the economic benefit derived from the regions natural environment?
3. To develop and market the region's image	3a. Will it support the preservation and/or enhancement
	3b. Will it promote the area as a destination for short and long term visitors, for residents and investors.

SA Objective	Decision making question
4. To deliver urban renaissance	4a. Will it improve economic, social and environmental conditions in the most deprived areas and most deprived groups?
	4b. Will it improve quality of the built and historic environment
	4c. Will it improve the quality of public open space?
5. To deliver rural renaissance	5a. Will it support rural diversification?
	5b. Will it support and encourage the growth of rural businesses?
	5c. Will it retain and promote the economic growth of market towns?
	5d. Will it retain and promote access to village services?
6. To secure economic inclusion	6a. Will it meet the employment needs of local people?
	6b. Will it improve physical accessibility to jobs with the location of sites and/ or public transport links being closer to areas of high unemployment?
	6c. Will it encourage business start-up especially from women and BME groups?
7. To develop and maintain a healthy labour market	7a. Will it address the skills gap and enable skills progression?
	7b. Will it increase the levels of participation and attainment in education?
	7c. Will it provide a broad range of jobs and employment opportunities?
8. To reduce social exclusion	8a. Will it reduce poverty and social exclusion in those areas and communities most affected? (particularly BME people, LGBT, Faith Groups and Rural Communities).
9. To reduce the need to travel improve choice of use and use of sustainable transport modes	9a. Will it reduce car and lorry traffic?
	9b. Will it encourage walking, cycling and equal access to and use of public transport?
	9c. Will it reduce freight movement?
	9d. Will it improve equal access to and encourage the use of ICT?
10. To improve health and mental health and reduce health inequalities	10a. Will it reduce deaths in key vulnerable groups?
	10b. Will it promote healthier lifestyles?

SA Objective	Decision making question
	10c. Will it reduce health inequalities among different groups in the community?
	10d. Will it reduce isolation for vulnerable people?
11. Improve access to good quality affordable and resource efficient housing	11a. Will it provide an appropriate mix of housing to meet all residents needs including affordable?
	11b. Will it reduce the number of unfit and empty homes?
	11c. Will it support the development and operation of resource efficient housing?
	11d. Will it meet the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers, in line with Race Equalities requirements?
12. To reduce crime, disorder and the fear of crime inequalities	12a. Will it reduce actual levels of crime (including hate crime)?
	12b. Will it reduce the fear of crime?
	12c. Will it reduce prejudice (racial, homophobic, gender or age related)?
13. To enable groups and communities to contribute to decision making	13a. Will it identify and engage with hard to reach stakeholders?
	13b. Will it encourage wider community involvement in design, or the provision of services?
	13c. Will it enable the community to contribute to and have influence in decision-making and be involved in implementation?
14. To develop strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds and communities?	14a. Will it create a sense of belonging and well-being for all members of the community?
	14b. Will it support community development?
	14c. Will it improve relations between all groups and religions (including between gypsies and travellers and settled communities)?
	14d. (12c.) Will it reduce prejudice (racial or homophobic)? (moved)
15. To improve access to basic goods, services and amenities for all groups	15a. Will it improve equal access to cultural, sporting and leisure facilities including natural green spaces?
	15b. Will it improve equal access to essential services and facilities, including for gypsies and travellers?
	15c. Will it improve the range and quality of cultural, sporting and leisure facilities and equal access to them?

SA Objective	Decision making question
	15d. Will it improve equal access to basic goods, promoting the use of those that are locally sourced?
16. To protect, enhance and manage the Region's rich diversity of cultural and built environmental and archaeological assets / To protect places, landscape and buildings of historic, cultural and archaeological value.	16a. Will it protect and enhance the character and appearance of archaeological sites, historic buildings, townscape, landscape, parks and gardens and their settings? 16b. Will it improve access to buildings of historic/cultural value?
17. To protect and enhance the biodiversity, local character and accessibility of the landscape across the region	17a. Will it protect and enhance the character and appearance of the regions townscape and countryside maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place? 17b. Will it protect and enhance the biodiversity of the regions landscapes? 17c. Will it protect and enhance the accessibility of the landscape across the region?
	17d. Will it protect and enhance the tranquillity of the region's landscapes?
18. To protect and improve local environmental quality	18a. Will it reduce light and noise pollution and graffiti? 18b. Will it redress environmental inequalities within region's urban and/or rural areas?
19. To protect and enhance the viability of endangered species, habitats and sites of geological importance/ to protect and enhance biodiversity.	19a. Will it protect and enhance existing designated European, national and regional wildlife and geological sites and species populations? 19b. Will it protect and enhance habitats and species, provide opportunities for new habitat creation and reverse the fragmentation of wildlife corridors?
20. To protect and improve the quality of inland and coastal waters	20a. Will it reduce or manage flooding? 20b. Will it maintain and enhance ground and surface water quality? 20c. Will it improve the quality of costal waters?
21. To protect and improve air quality	21a. Will it maintain and improve air quality? 21b. Will it address the causal factors of poor air quality in AQMAs?
22. To restore and protect land and soil	22a. Will it reduce the amount of derelict, contaminated, degraded and vacant/ underused land?

SA Objective	Decision making question
	22b. Will it encourage the development of brownfield land in preference to Greenfield?
	22c. Will it reduce the loss of good soils to development?
	22d. Will it maintain and enhance soil quality?
23. To mitigate and adapt to climate change	23a. Will it reduce or minimise greenhouse gas emissions?
	23b. Will maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity?
	23c. Will it contribute to the ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change?
	23d. Will it expose the region to increased flood risk
	23e. Will it reduce the economic impact of the future effects of climate change?
24. To ensure the prudent use of natural resources and the sustainable management of existing resources	24a. Will it alter the demand for raw materials and natural resources?
	24b. Will it support the repair and re-use of existing buildings?
	24c. Will it reduce minerals extracted and imported?
	24d. Will it promote the use of recycled and secondary materials?
25. To minimise the requirement for energy use, promote efficient use and increase the use of energy from renewable resources	25a. Will it minimise the need for energy?
	25b. Will it maximise the production and/ or use of renewable energy?
	25c. Will it increase energy efficiency in buildings, transport modes etc?
	25d. Will it minimise the use of fossil fuels?
26. To manage waste sustainably, minimise waste, its production and increase reuse, recycling and recovery rates/ to minimise waste production and increase re-use, recycling and recovery	26a. Will it minimise the production of waste?
	26b. Will it increase waste recycling and reuse?
	26c. Will it reduce the amount of residual waste to landfill?

Appraisal Findings and Proposed Mitigation

Methodology

The appraisal of the options consisted of a matrix approach derived from that used for the Draft Submission RSS (2006) and later for the assessment of the proposed changes to RSS (2008). Traditionally, the assessment matrices are carried out to compare the relative sustainability merits of the options proposed to address the issues identified in the area, in this case the North West Region. These are filled in using expert judgement and consensus from not only the consultants point of view but also incorporating local knowledge from the planning authority.

This appraisal was supplemented through the use of an 'Appraisal Group'. The Appraisal Group were made up of key stakeholders in the development of the RSS. The aim of the group was to undertake to verify and supplement the appraisals findings at key stages in order to reach a consensus. The Appraisal Group met as an informal workshop with an open floor to enable discussion on a multitude of issues, and the meeting was documented and outcomes made available as part of the consultation process.

Appraisal Findings

The Issues and Options were developed during Spring 2008. The options were subject to a comparative SA in May 2008. The options assessed and brief descriptions are provided in the table below.

Issues and Options

Issue	Options
Car parking standards	Option A) Adopt the revised standards
	Option B) Keep existing parking standards as detailed in RPG13 and Draft RSS
Gypsies and Travellers	Option A) Use the results from the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) studies to distribute new provision
	Option B) Modify (A) to ensure a minimum level of pitch provision in every district
	Option C) Work to agree a more balanced share of meeting need across districts
Travelling Showpeople	Option A) Use the results from the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) studies, which also incorporated assessments of the accommodation needs for Travelling Showpeople, to distribute new provision
	Option B) Modify (A) to ensure a minimum level of pitch provision in every district
	Option C) Work to agree a more balanced share of meeting need across districts

Interim Draft Policies and Submission Draft Policies were prepared following the assessment of the above options. The Interim Draft Policies were assessed in a previous iteration of the SA process, whilst the Submission Draft Policies assessment is set out in the SA Report (July 2009). The summary of the findings of the assessment of the Submission Draft Policies is set out below. The full matrices can be found in Appendix 1 of the full SA Report.

Gypsies and Travellers

The options assessment considered three alternative policy approaches to allocating Gypsy and Traveller pitches:

- Option A) Use the results from the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) studies to distribute new provision
- Option B) Modify option (A) to ensure a minimum level of pitch provision in every district
- Option C) Work to agree a more balanced share of meeting need across districts

The assessment found that there were pros and cons to the different options, but that there was some suggestion that Option C – working to achieve a more balanced distribution across districts – would be most likely to achieve significant net benefits. Option C has been taken forward as the basis for developing the preferred policy.

The policy sets out a series of statements and requirements that should enable gypsy and traveller communities to benefit from increased access to a range of facilities, although in some cases this could be made more explicit. It also identifies the need for transit pitches and is flexible in identifying future provision.

While much of the impact of this policy will be determined through the precise location of sites, which will be determined at a local authority level, it is clear that the policy has a positive effect and sets clear guidance for local authorities in identifying sites. In addition, given the relatively small scale, size and number of sites being discussed, in the wider context of development in the region, any effect caused by such sites will be minimal, especially on the region as a whole. Any effects of such sites are generally felt at a local level, if at all, and collectively will have a minimal impact.

One issue that has the potential to cause negative effects on sustainability is the ability given to local authorities to allow exception sites for Gypsies & Travellers in the Green Belt. Given the types of locations many Gypsies & Travellers like their sites to be in and the controversy that can

be caused by placing sites in urban areas, there may be pressure on local authorities to utilise this ability. Placing sites in the Green Belt (i.e. in more isolated areas) will reduce access to services for Gypsies & Travellers and mean that traffic to and from the sites will have to travel further. Such sites will not be sustainable.

It would seem nonetheless that there are adequate provisions in the policy to ensure that the sites are selected appropriately and sustainably. If the policy is implemented correctly by local authorities, the policy only allows exception sites where evidence has been provided to demonstrate that there are no other suitable sites in the authority's area. Therefore, there should be very few exception sites allocated across the region.

The policy should, provided the needs assessment is accurate, provide a suitable level of provision during the lifetime of this plan and beyond. On some of the more qualitative SA objectives it is difficult to ascertain precisely what the impact will be, specifically objective 12 and 14, although the intention of the policy is clearly to have a positive effect on these objectives.

Whilst the policy sets out to promote co-existence this is not by any means guaranteed and the policy could make further attempts to encourage, if not require, action to promote coexistence and engage with communities. This ties in neatly with some of the problems identified in SA objective 13. The promotion of coexistence may be facilitated by a greater level of consultation and communication by LPAs in determining the location of the sites.

Travelling Showpeople

The options assessment considered three alternative policy approaches to allocating Travelling Showpeople plots:

- Option A) Use the results from the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) studies, which also incorporated assessments of the accommodation needs for Travelling Showpeople, to distribute new provision
- Option B) Modify option (A) to ensure a minimum level of pitch provision in every district
- Option C) Work to agree a more balanced share of meeting need across districts

The assessment found that there were pros and cons to the different options, but that there was some suggestion that Option C – working to achieve a more balanced distribution across districts – would be most likely to achieve significant net benefits. Option C has been taken forward as the basis for developing the preferred policy.

The general performance of the policy is in line with that for the Gypsies and Travellers policy, including regarding issues relating to the Green Belt exception policy. However, there are some additional issues.

Firstly, the yards or plots of Travelling Showpeople sites are not only used for habitation but also for storage. As the policy points out this presents some planning problems. Essentially the sites will need to accommodate living areas that are suitable when in close proximity to heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and other mechanical plant. This provides some risk to the health of the occupants and thus any policy should ensure the safety and health of the occupants by having stringent design measures to separate these different uses.

Secondly, but again related to HGVs and plant, there is potential for these sites to cause disturbance in terms of noise, air pollution and visual impacts. There is a potential need for additional guidance on the locational criteria for these sites. Finally, this use of the sites may create a more difficult situation in regard to promoting co-existence in the area.

Car Parking Standards

The options assessment considered two alternative approaches to car parking standards. The assessment found clear evidence to suggest that Option A – adopting revised standards – would lead to significantly greater benefits in terms of a range of sustainability objectives than the alternative Option B, which was to keep with the existing standards. Option A has been taken forward as the basis for developing the preferred policy.

It is technically quite difficult at this level to provide a detailed assessment of the implications of the new standards as they are decided on a case-by-case basis. However, bearing this in mind, this policy generally performs better than the previous one, essentially due to the fact that there is more 'granularity' in the standards.

With more accuracy comes greater certainty for developers and assumes an overall reduction in car parking space provision. It could also be assumed that a greater accuracy in allocations could reduce the amount of car parking facilities actually needed and car usage itself (combined with improved public transport provision).

Finally, there is a good emphasis on provision for cyclists and other forms of active transport and an emphasis on access for the disabled. It should also be noted that these standards provide one aspect of a multifaceted policy and that it should be seen holistically rather than stand alone.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) aims to ensure that the integrity of sites of international nature conservation importance⁵ is not negatively affected by plans such as the North West RSS Partial Review.

A HRA for the Draft North West Plan was prepared in December 2007. The findings of the HRA of the Draft North West Plan informed the HRA of the Partial Review. In particular, the HRA of the Draft Plan identified a range of conditions needed to maintain the integrity of sites of international nature conservation importance. Understanding of these conditions facilitated assessment and direction of the emerging policies that formed part of the Partial Review of the North West Plan.

Initially, the Partial Review planned to address six topics (following recommendations made in the Report of the Panel):

1. Strategic renewable locations;
2. Location of waste facilities;
3. Housing allocation (including rural);
4. Gypsies and Travellers;
5. Travelling Showpeople; and
6. Car Parking Standards.

Once topics 1-3 were excluded from the Partial Review process and instead included in the RS2010 process, much of the planned HRA work became no longer directly relevant to the Partial Review process. The HRA work undertaken up to that point was therefore summarised in a 'Handover Report' which presented the information in a suitable format to inform the (separately commissioned) HRA of the RS2010⁶.

Meanwhile, the emerging policies associated with the remaining topics (4-6) were subject to HRA screening.

Comments were provided at the following stages:

- Issues and Options (May 2008)
- 1st Draft of pitch distribution for Gypsy and Traveller Pitch provision and Travelling Showpeople Pitch provision (November 2008)
- Interim Draft Policies (January 2009)

⁵ Special Protection Areas, Special Areas for Conservation, Ramsar sites and European marine sites

⁶ Scott Wilson - *Habitats Regulations Assessment of the North West Regional Spatial Strategy Partial Review: Closure Report*, prepared for 4NW, January 2009

- Submitted Draft Policies (May 2009)

Although care was taken to scrutinise the policies and associated supporting text at each redrafting, only very minor comments were made. Effectively, from Issues and Options stage in May 2008, it was clear that there were unlikely to be significant adverse effects upon international sites from the policies on Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and Car Parking Standards.

Tables 7.2 (Scale and Distribution of Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Provision) and 7.3 (Scale and Distribution of Travelling Showpeople Plot Provision) show small numbers of plots per district. The higher numbers of pitches, and these are still relatively small compared with overall residential figures in the North West Plan, generally lie in districts with few or no international sites.

The scale of pitch provision and the flexibility associated with the provision of such small numbers of pitches enables us to conclude that significant effects upon international sites of nature conservation importance can be avoided.

Thus, no changes to Policies L6, L7 and RT2 were recommended as a consequence of Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

Potential effects on health and well being and on health inequalities were considered as part of the early stages of the NW RSS partial review. The assessments were informed by stakeholder workshops along with evidence reviews. Key findings from the assessment of health and well being have informed the SA Report (see Section 4.3 of the Final Sustainability Appraisal Report).

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Impacts on equality have been considered as part of the Sustainability Appraisal due to the fact that specific objectives within the SA framework are directly related to issues of equality. As such a separate EqIA is not necessary. Key findings from the assessment of equality have therefore directly informed the SA Report (see Section 4.4 of the Final Sustainability Appraisal Report).

Proposed Mitigation

With regards to Policy L6 (Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers), there are several recommendations:

- Explicit mention of coexistence should be made for all locations.
- Further clarification on the need for engagement and communication with Gypsy and Traveller communities is required within the policy or, at least, the supporting text.
- The explicit requirement of employment access to be considered when locating sites.

With regards Policy L7 (Accommodation for Travelling Showpeople), there are also several key recommendations:

- The need for further guidance on the locational criteria of Traveller and Showpeople sites should be explored, specifically those that will use HGVs, heavy plant or other noisy / polluting equipment
- Requirements for site design should be clearly set out to ensure health and wellbeing of permanent occupants.
- Explicit mention of coexistence should be made for all locations.
- Greater emphasis on community engagement and consultation.

No mitigation or recommendations are proposed for the car parking standards.

The table below lists further recommendations for the Partial Review in relation to Gypsies & Travellers and Travelling Showpeople:

To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home

- Some guidance for local authorities on the time period for which sites are granted planning permission may be required. There are benefits for the Gypsy and Traveller population from long term permissions, but local authorities may seek guarantees that sites can be subject to further development in the future.
- Local Authorities should consider not only CLG's Draft Guidance on the Design of Sites for Gypsies and Travellers: a consultation paper, (May 2007) when designing new sites but also follow the principles set out in other guidance on sustainable design and construction to allow for the highest standards to be met.
- Travelling Showpeople sites must be subject to the same level of requirement in terms of good design and construction.

To reduce the risk of flooding and resulting determinant to public well-being, the economy and the environment

- As part of the design of sites water saving initiatives such as sustainable urban drainage systems and grey water recycling facilities should be installed especially in areas where there is a water deficit.
- In addition, given that sites allocated on Greenfield land often become permanent, site allocations should be 'future proofed' i.e. allocated based on an understanding of likely future changes in flood risk.

To improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health

- Existing sites should be improved to meet health and safety standards, size standards, facilities for the disabled, access to health care where they may require expansion to meet pitch requirements.
- Local authorities should be directed to consider ways of providing for the specific needs of Gypsies & Travellers and Travelling Showpeople as part of developing their strategic policies on health in partnership with PCTs and other health consultees.
- When promoting health measures such as healthy eating, exercise and other measures for good health Local Authorities should target communities suffering the worst conditions, such as the Gypsy and Traveller community.

To reduce poverty and social exclusion and close the gap between the most deprived areas in the North West and the rest of the region

- In partnership with social services and other relevant consultees and local authorities, there should be a proactive approach to improving the conditions for the Gypsy and Traveller community and the Travelling Showpeople community. Options that tackle the causes of social exclusion and poverty, such as barriers to education, health services and adequate site infrastructure should be addressed.

To raise educational achievement across the region and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work

- When creating new sites Local Authorities should aim to include requirements for accessibility to educational facilities, including libraries and adult education facilities.

To reduce crime and the fear of crime

- Prior to the opening of new sites Local Authorities could be advised to undertake education and awareness workshops to improve relations between the settled and travelling communities and reduce the fear of crime.

To create and sustain vibrant communities

- When allocating, planning for and designing sites, recognition of the distinctions between the sub groups within different Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople communities (i.e. Romany, Irish and English) will assist in supporting vibrancy. This would also be in keeping with the principles set out in the Race Relations Act, and the Human Rights Act.
- This may include consideration of the size of pitches, improving buffering around existing pitches, and the provision of high quality communal facilities.
- Public sites should also be adequately buffered from the settled community with planting for example to allow for privacy for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople families.
- LPAs are likely to need place tailored initiatives to support the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities especially in areas already experiencing high levels of deprivation.

To improve accessibility to all services and facilities

- Policy could be supported by guidance to ensure sites are located in proximity to educational, health facilities, public transport, and other essential facilities in line with CLG guidance.
- Guidance for LPA's should also consider requirements for on-site facilities and infrastructure, including water supply, toilet and washing facilities, drainage and waste facilities and services.
- When developing options for the allocation of Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites, Local Authorities should host meetings with health, education and other service providers to discuss what

measures can be put in place to improve access to these essential facilities.

- In order to facilitate accessible services Local Authorities should be encouraged to carry out some additional research on specific barriers which inhibit the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities in order to overcome these. This could help to overcome such barriers.
- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople transit sites should be subject to the same level of facilities, infrastructure and accessibility as permanent sites.

To encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the community in the North West

- Further research on Gypsy and Traveller cultures and sub-cultures and traditions by Local Authority cultural services may be beneficial.
- When developing policies on promoting engagement in culture Local Authorities should consider options on how they promote increased awareness and respect for the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople cultures and traditions, as well as improving access for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople to wider cultural activities in the North West.
- Measures to promote the positive cultural traditions of Gypsies and Travellers should be considered, which could lead to further requirements for the provision of facilities on sites.

To improve efficiency in land use through the re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings, including re-use of materials from buildings and encourage urban renaissance

- Although a sequential approach should be applied, policy should avoid limiting the search for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites to brownfield land. The planning process will determine at the local level the most appropriate and efficient use of land given the pressures for settled accommodation and the complex needs of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities.

To conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity

- The allocation of sites should be in accordance with PPS9 and other national, regional, and local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- Ability to provide for appropriate grazing areas should be considered when allocating sites.

To protect, enhance and make accessible for enjoyment, the region's countryside and historic environment

- It will be important that sites are allocated in accordance with PPG16 (Archaeology), PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) and other relevant guidance
- It is likely that one of the main concerns regarding Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites will be their visual intrusion on the surrounding countryside. Measures such as natural screening and landscaping of sites could mitigate these concerns.

To reduce waste generation and disposal and achieve the sustainable management of waste

- When designing Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites, Local Authorities should work in partnership with the local waste services to include the most appropriate waste recycling and composting facilities to assist in meeting local targets.
- Any local promotional campaigns to encourage recycling and composting should also be targeted towards the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities to increase the levels of recycling and composting.

To ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region

- Local authorities, when developing education, training, skills, employment and other related policies, should work with education providers to help improve access to those least likely to access skills training, such as the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Monitoring

The monitoring framework in the consolidated SA report of the North West RSS comprises four tiers of indicators to assess progress towards the RSS vision. It should be noted that the RSS is also subject to monitoring. Proposals for implementing and monitoring the sustainability effects of the North West Plan are set out in its Implementation and Monitoring framework.

The following indicators are drawn from the Monitoring Framework and are applicable to measuring the performance of the policies set out in the Partial Review:

Relevant Monitoring Indicators from the North West RSS Sustainability Appraisal

(Table in Monitoring Framework)

Indicator	Target	Source
Journey to work by mode	By 2010, increase bus use by 10%, rail by 50% (passenger kms), DFT Ten Year Transport Plan	Department for Transport
Percentage of people who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together	Increase	National Indicator 1 (NI1), CLG
Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling	Increase	National Indicator 175 (NI 175), CLG

In addition, the document “*Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Framework: Core Output Indicators – Update 2/2008*” (CLG) identifies a further indicator of great relevance to the Partial Review. This is simply the “**Net additional pitches (Gypsy and Traveller)**” count which can be sourced from CLG or Local Authorities. This indicator can be directly compared against the targets set in the Partial Review.

In addition to this 4NW still collect the recently removed Core Output Indicator 3a 'Percentage of new non residential development (minimum gross floorspace 1,000 sq.m) complying with regional car parking standards set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy'.

Conclusions

In the SA of the options for the Partial Review it was concluded that, in terms of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, the issues are complex and there is a need to make tough decisions that will require substantial trade-offs between sustainability objectives. In terms of Car Parking Standards, it is very clear that a more sophisticated approach is supportive of wider efforts to reduce dependency on the car as well as bringing about a range of other social benefits.

The preferred options taken forward were all found to be generally sustainable, although specific issues regarding the policies for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople were raised. These can be rectified through the wording of policy or inclusion of guidance for Local Authorities on particular issues.

In relation to cumulative effects, no significant effects have been identified. The selection of Option C in both the Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople policies mean that sites should be spread throughout the region, reducing the possibility of cumulative impact of several sites in one area. It also limits the likelihood of cumulative impacts with other uses, although the cumulative effect of how Local Authorities apply regional policy will need careful consideration to ensure that, in any given location, a cumulative effect is not created together with other uses.

Next Steps

The Partial Review of the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (the RSS) will be submitted in July to the Secretary of State as a draft document for consultation. The next steps for the plan are, in summary:

- a 12 week formal public consultation in Summer 2009;
- an Examination in Public (EiP) to debate the draft policies, expected to take place in March 2010; and
- formal public consultation on any Secretary of State's Proposed Changes (which will be published after the publication of the Examination in Public Panel report).

Once all the stages noted above have concluded, the policies in the Partial Review will then be published as part of a revised Regional Spatial Strategy.

This SA Report will be consulted upon alongside the Partial Review document itself and made available for consultation with the public, stakeholders and statutory consultees.