Specific Criteria

3.1.5 At the second tier of search criteria, these criteria mostly related to opportunities and needs. Examples of specific criteria implemented are:

- Sites should be located within an appropriate reasonable distance of existing services and community facilities, *for example: Shops; education, a primary school; doctors/health facilities. Despite the fact that Gypsies and Travellers are relatively mobile by culture, access to public transport would still be a desirable site attribute, which may help prioritise sites that are selected.*
- Safe access shall be available to the primary/major road network
- The size of the site should be sufficient *to allow for the planned number of caravans, parking, turning service, separate space for commercial vehicles, play area for children, access roads, including access for emergency services and construction of amenity blocks.*
- Public transport access is reasonable and safe: *in terms of road safety.*
- There should be the potential for a site to be effectively landscaped and therefore, sympathetic to the surrounding character, whilst not detracting from visual amenity. *Good planning or landscaping can positively enhance previously developed land, untidy or derelict sites*
- Buffer between sites and existing housing (i.e. vegetation, built structure, topography; to avoid noise and visual effects for example)
- Avoid undue burden on local infrastructure

3.1.6 Typically broadly identified areas were assessed against specific criteria whilst conducting site visits.

Sequential Approach

3.1.7 A sequential approach was followed, for example, land in urban areas, previously developed land and non-Green Belt land was considered ahead of Green Belt, Area of Natural Beauty and countryside land. However, constraints, as discussed in the following section, and delivery difficulties resulted in the non-Green Belt land being discounted. A site's distance to the edge of the Green Belt was considered, refer to Appendix Two for maps of this.

3.2 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping

3.2.1 Parallel to creating the site criteria the study area was mapped using GIS as a tool to aid the site selection criteria. The criteria were mapped in terms of opportunities and constraints, that is positive and negative attributes to potential gypsy site locations.

Assembly of the Datasets

3.2.2 The opportunity and constraints model was created using the ESRI GIS software including ArcView 9.1 and the extension Spatial Analyst. Scott Wilson also utilises other GIS and CAD packages and can supply final datasets and projects in a format agreed by the Client.

3.2.3 Partner Authorities were to provide relevant datasets representing planning policy, environmental, social and economic factors. A list of required datasets, including published development plans was sent by Scott Wilson to each of the Partner Authorities. The County Council's Information Management Unit was also contacted for County-wide datasets. In addition, Scott Wilson downloaded a number of other useful datasets publicly available through the government funded MAGIC website (www.magic.gov.uk).

3.2.4 Each dataset was examined in detail and assessed for factors such as scale, accuracy, completeness and relevance to the project criteria. After assessing the suitability of existing data, gaps that existed in the data set were identified and additional requests were made to the Authorities for suitable datasets.

3.2.5 The datasets were collated into a common digital format for integration within the GIS and overlaid onto OS base mapping, which was provided by the Client with a 3rd Party licence agreement. The datasets provided were not consistent across the Partner Authorities and some datasets were used as information layers providing additional background information during the site visits. The Local Development Plan for each Authority are included as a layer in the GIS for potential sites to be overlaid on, these can be viewed in Appendix Three.

The Opportunity/Constraints Model

3.2.6 GIS was used to produce an 'Opportunity Model' which would help identify both unsuitable and suitable areas for Gypsy and Traveller sites based on the project criteria both at a broad scale and individual site level.

3.2.7 The datasets collated from the partner authorities and the MAGIC website were added to the GIS as individual layers. The various project criteria determined for each dataset, buffers or categories indicating suitability/opportunities for Gypsy and Traveller sites, were then applied. The constraints and opportunities that were identified, along with any proximity buffers used, are listed in the table as follows:

Constraints Table

DATASET	COVERAGE
Countryside Stewardship	All
Employment Area	All
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	All
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	All
Ancient Woodland	All
Common Land	All
TPO Area	All
Rights of Way plus 10m buffer	All
Airfields	All
Historic Parks & Gardens	All
Environmental	All
Landfill Applications	All
Local Nature Reserve	All
Special Area Conservation	All
Scheduled Ancient Monuments plus 100m buffer	All
Woodland Trust	All
Existing Urban Areas	All
Out of Town Retail Areas	Dacorum
Conversion of employment land	Dacorum
Major Development in the Green Belt	Dacorum
Small Village in the Green Belt	Dacorum
National Trust	Dacorum
Reserviors	Dacorum, Hertsmere
Town Centres	Dacorum, Watford, Hertsmere
Proposed Rights of Way	Hertsmere
Hospital Redevelopment	Hertsmere
Sites of Important Nature Conservation	Hertsmere
South Mimms Special Protected Area	Hertsmere
Regionally Important Geological Sites	Hertsmere, Dacorum
Flood Risk	St Albans, Dacorum, Watford, Hertsmere
Residential & Housing Areas	Three Rivers, Dacorum, Watford, Hertsmere
Allotments	Three Rivers, St Albans
Croxley Rail safeguard	Watford
Watford Civic Core	Watford
Watford Redevelopment	Watford
Wildlife Corridor	Watford
Wildlife Sites	Dacorum, Watford
Open Spaces	Watford, Three Rivers, Dacorum, Hertsmere

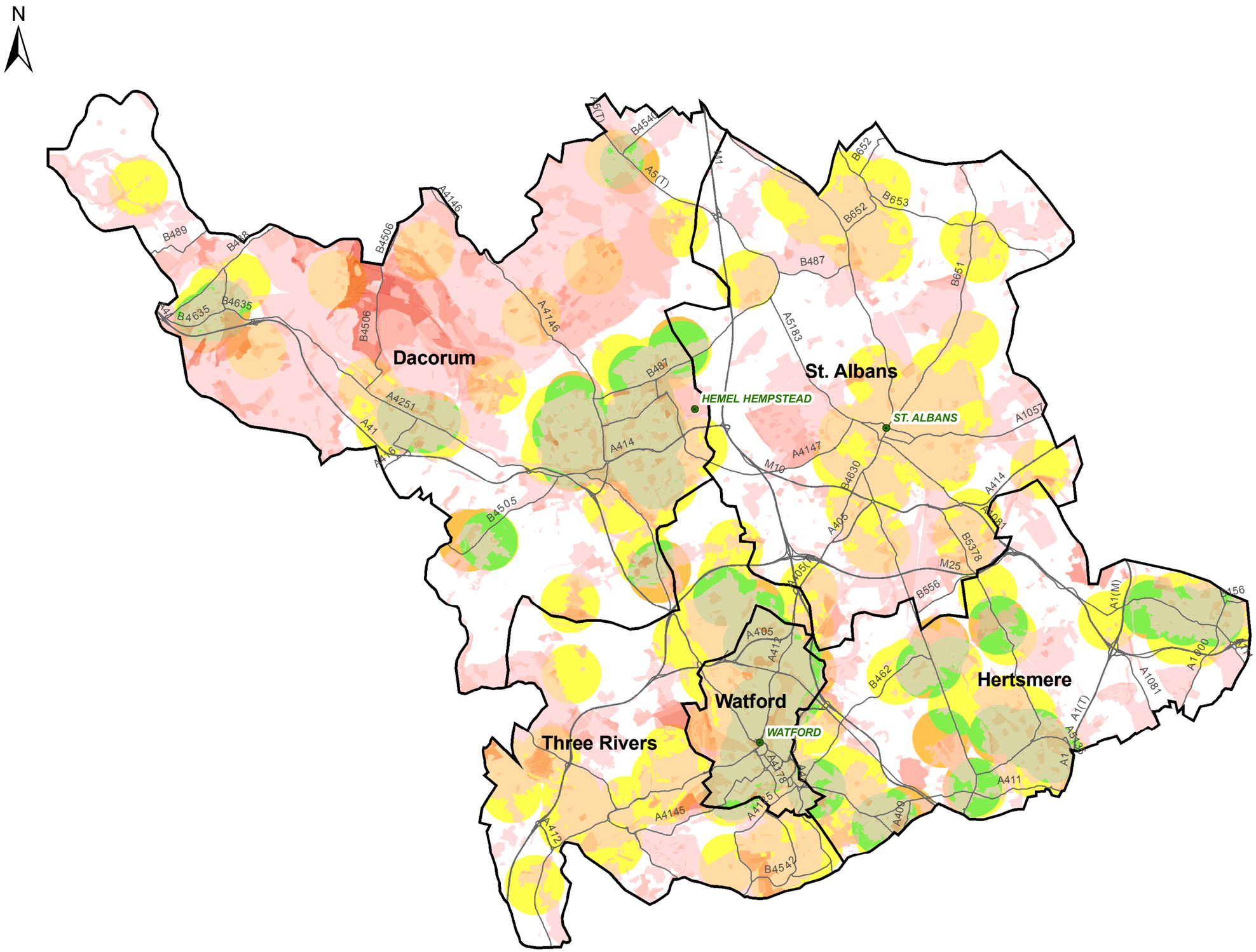
Opportunities Table

DATASET	COVERAGE
Primary School plus 1km buffer	All
Doctors plus 1km buffer	Dacorum, Watford, Hertsmere

3.2.8 The data layers identified were then converted from vector data layers into data grids. Data grids allow every pixel within the study area to be assigned a score for every opportunity and constraint layer. The grids were then summed to provide overall constraint and opportunity layers as shown in Figure 3.

SOUTH & WEST HERTS GYPSY & TRAVELLER STRATEGY

CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES



Districts
Major Towns
Major Roads

Opportunities

- High
- Medium/High
- Medium

Constraints

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

Increasing Number of Constraints

Figure: 3

Drawn By: KH
Checked By: RE
Date:16/03/2006

File Ref: K:\D110418_Gypsy_Siteselection\Figures\Figure 3 - Model

3.2.9 The constraint indicators range from 0 = no constraints to 8 = most constrained, and indicate the number of constraints affecting any particular location within the study area.

3.2.10 The opportunity maps indicate areas in terms of preference, which relates to service accessibility. This is not a scoring system. Areas were coloured as follows:

- Areas both within more than 1 primary school buffer and/or more than 1 doctors buffer as green = high opportunity
- Areas within 1 primary school buffer and/or 1 or more doctors buffer as yellow = high/medium opportunity
- Areas within the buffer of 1 doctors buffer but no primary school buffer as orange = medium opportunity

Deliverables

3.2.11 The potential sites identified during the site visits have been added as a layer to the GIS and have been hyperlinked to site photographs and site visit reports that contain information relating to potential sites to enable the user to access all the relevant information. Figures 4-8 show the sites identified for each local authorities area.

3.3 Appraisal, Site Visits and Ground Truthing

3.3.1 GIS mapping identified broad areas of potential in which to carry out site visits. These broad areas were sent to the Partner representatives for final comments relating to any 'undiscovered' constraints not identified from the data sets.

3.3.2 Once the short list had been identified through examining site selection criteria and the constraints mapping process, site visits were undertaken to assess the suitability of those sites.

3.3.3 Where access could not be gained to identified areas these areas were deleted from consideration. Access could not be gained to some identified areas due to there being no public roads, infrastructure blocking access (railway lines, motorway, pipelines), substantial vegetation, rivers and so forth. Sites were also avoided where they were in close proximity to existing sites to avoid any burden on existing infrastructure or carrying capacity of the closest village/town.

3.3.4 Similarly where an unexpected use was found these areas were deleted from consideration. A few unexpected uses were discovered during the site visits; hence the necessity for ground truthing. Site visits revealed uses not readily identified from the maps included golf courses, new residential developments, playing fields, play grounds and even existing caravan sites.

3.3.5 Extension to existing sites was considered, however this was not viewed as a suitable option as the CURS needs assessment stated that small sites with not more than about 15 plots worked best (paragraph S.20 of CURS Executive Summary). Existing sites would exceed this plot threshold if they were to be extended. However, extension to existing sites could be a small potential that may come forward in the future.

3.3.6 On site, potential areas were assessed for suitability against the devised criteria. If a site was then viewed as acceptable because it generally met the criteria, comments were made relating to the site under the following headings:

- **Site Name/Code/Score** – Sites are given a name related to their location and a code to link to the maps. Sites have been allocated a preference score of '1', '2' or '3', this is based on a technical judgment, '1' being the most preferable. Scores relate to several factors detailed in section 3. Factors that have influenced scoring include the following: the necessity for earthworks to create a level building platform; requirement for additional screening; potential impact on visual amenity for existing residents; requirement for the creation or modification of site access; location within the Green Belt; and general compliance with other site selection criteria.
- **Existing Use** – Typically this entails 'grass field' or 'horticulture' but occasionally there are examples of uses such as 'disused airfield'. Any existing built structures are also generally outlined (shed, fence, power lines).
- **Distance Buffer to Green Belt Boundary** – Buffers from the Green Belt boundary were mapped at 100 metre intervals (refer to Appendix Two). The buffer the site falls into is recorded.
- **Area (S, M, L)** – This is intended as a general guideline relating to the potential, maximum size of a site at each location. Specific site boundaries have not been determined, as this will require consultation with the respective landowners. It is noted that the '*An Assessment of the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in South and West Hertfordshire',* produced by the CURS, determined a site size allowing for not more than 15 plots works best (paragraph S.20 of CURS Executive Summary). County Council's Gypsy Section suggests that a 15 plot site requires approximately 1 hectare. The ODPM Circular does not recommend a particular site size. Considering this the following categories were created: **'Small'** - typically constrained by topography or surrounding land uses and would only allow for less than 15 plots/1 hectare. **'Medium'** - would allow for a site of 15 plots/1 hectare. Medium sized sites would accommodate a size typical of the existing sites observed during site visits. **'Large'** - reflects site size is generally unconstrained, for example a site may be surrounded by extensive countryside. A suggested site may be described as large, however, following landowner negotiations only a small site may be made available.
- **Topography** –It is important for a site to be relatively level; however sites where minor earthworks may be required are considered and this is detailed under this heading.

- **Surrounding Land Uses** – Abutting, adjacent and nearby land-uses are detailed where relevant.
- **Existing Buffers/Vegetation** – Existing vegetation, built structures and topography are described where these could constitute visual buffers between properties/landuses, provide structure and privacy, and help a site blend in with the surroundings. If additional buffers are viewed as necessary for a site to be acceptable this is explained.
- **Access** – Specific site access, existing or the potential for, is described. Additionally, access to the general road network and public transport is outlined.
- **GIS Opportunity Rank** – Sites were selected in areas coloured green, yellow or orange on the GIS maps as described in paragraph 2.2.10. The colour that the site is located in is noted along with the corresponding level of opportunity, for example 'high'.

3.3.7 Comments relating to the sites have been produced as tables. These are provided in the following section.

3.3.8 Included in Appendix Three are development plan maps with recommended sites overlaid.

3.3.9 Potential sites are also mapped and photographed to record the specific location and the matters outlined in paragraph 2.3.5.