

# Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

April 2018

**Evidence base under pinning the Local Plan  
for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston**



# **Contents**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Methodology**
- 3. Assessment Outcomes**

# **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirement plus an additional buffer of 5 per cent to ensure choice and competition within the market. The NPPF goes on to suggest that, where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, the buffer percentage should be increased to 20 per cent.
- 1.2 The NPPF defines 'deliverable' as sites that are available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and are achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on site within 5 years; and in particular the development is viable. It goes on to state that sites with extant planning permission should be considered deliverable until the permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that the scheme will not be implemented within 5 years.
- 1.3 As well as seeking a five year supply of deliverable sites, the NPPF also suggests that local planning authorities should identify a supply of specific developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6 – 10 and, where possible, for years 11–15.
- 1.4 Sites are defined as being 'developable' if they are in a suitable location for housing development and there is a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed during the point in time envisaged.
- 1.5 During March 2014 the Government published the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) that supplemented the NPPF with further detail on certain topic areas. For the purpose of this document the relevant topic area of the NPPG is the 'Housing and economic land availability assessment'. The housing and economic land availability assessment section of the NPPG outlines up to date guidance for local planning authorities wishing to undertake a review of their housing and economic land availability. For the purposes of this document, the guidance will be

used to review and update the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment only. The guidance suggests that an overall assessment should:

- Identify sites and broad locations with potential for development;
- Assess their development potential; and
- Assess their suitability for development and the likelihood of development coming forward.

1.6 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment forms a key component of the evidence base that underpins the Local Plan, specifically its policies for housing and the delivery of land to meet identified requirements. The Council will make every effort to ensure that the assessment follows national guidance, however if it does consider it appropriate to diverge from the published guidance, the Council will justify its reasoning for doing so.

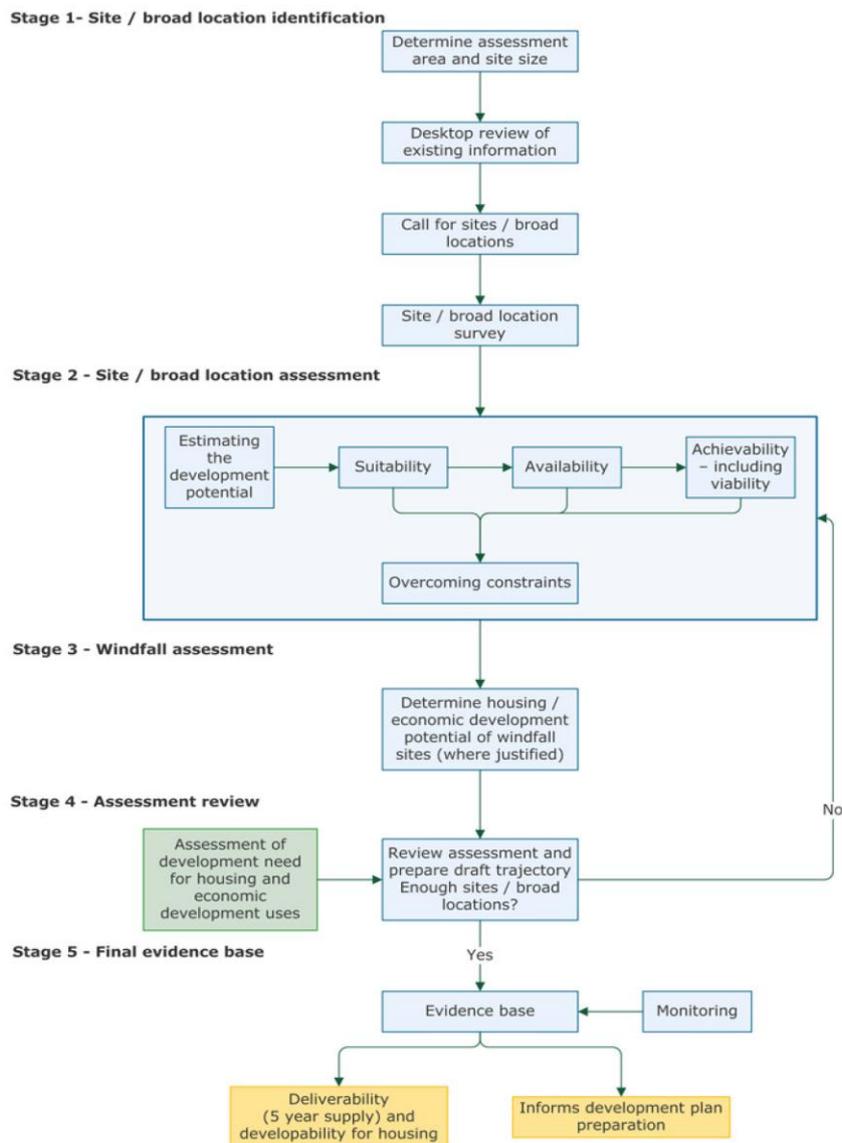
1.7 It is important to note that this document does not allocate land or sites for development. It is a piece of evidence base that will inform the development plan making process, in particular the Local Plan. This assessment will also feed into the Housing Implementation Strategy.

1.8 On completion of this assessment and other relevant documentation the Council will be able to;

- Demonstrate a rolling 5 year supply of deliverable housing land;
- Identify a supply of developable sites for the next 6 – 10 year period; and
- Identify broad locations for growth beyond the next 10 year period.

## 2 Methodology

- 2.1 The methodology used within the assessment follows the guidance contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance, particularly the 'housing and economic land availability assessment' section.
- 2.2 The following flow chart has been taken from the NPPG and it highlights the recommended stages that an overall land availability assessment should take. For the purposes of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment only relevant parts of the flow chart will be utilised.



## **Determining an assessment area, site size and site sources**

- 2.3 The NPPG suggests that an assessment area should cover a housing market area and functional economic area. It goes on to say that this area could be a local planning authority area or a different area such as two or more local authority areas. For the purposes of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment the **Borough boundary will be the extent to the assessment area**, however the below explains how the Borough fits with the wider housing market area. The Borough boundary is chosen as the assessment area as it is the extent of which the Council has administrative control of; and, its use has previously been found robust through Development Plan Document examinations.
- 2.4 Leicester and Leicestershire planning authorities have historically worked closely with one another and produced many evidence base documents and studies. A number of the studies, for example the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment identify the Leicester and Leicestershire housing market area, consisting of all nine local planning authorities within Leicestershire and Leicester City.
- 2.5 From 2009 to 2014 the Leicester and Leicestershire housing market area has produced individual local planning authority Strategic Housing land Availability Assessments in accordance with the agreed joint Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology (which had been found robust through a number of Development Plan Document examinations).
- 2.6 The publication of the NPPG in 2014 prompted a review of the existing joint Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment methodology by the relevant local planning authorities. The review was completed, and its use agreed by local planning authorities within the Leicester and Leicestershire housing market area. This ensures that all local authorities assessment are consistent with the NPPG, in particular the housing and economic land availability assessment guidance.

- 2.7 In terms of a site size threshold, national guidance suggests that plan makers need to assess a range of different sizes from small scale sites to large scale development opportunities. The guidance suggests that assessments should consider all sites and broad locations for growth capable of delivering five or more dwellings, however that where appropriate plan makers may wish to consider alternative site size thresholds. The government (Building More Homes on Brownfield Land) also suggests that smaller sites make a valuable contribution to meeting overall housing land supply.
- 2.8 The Council's previous Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments had a site size threshold of one dwelling and above rather than the five and above, as suggested in national guidance. The reason for this lower threshold is due to the Borough's relatively small size and its predominately urban nature. Historically the Borough has seen a relatively high number of small sites coming forward for development. The Council is seeking to differ from national guidance and **continue with the one dwelling and more site size threshold** for the same reasons set out above. To put the size of the Borough into context, when looking at extent of the realm measurements in hectares, (on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013) the Office for National Statistics suggests that out of the 406 UK Local Authority Districts, the Borough of Oadby and Wigston is the 11<sup>th</sup> smallest; however when discounting the eight London Borough's within the eleven it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> smallest behind the Isles of Scilly and Watford.
- 2.9 When identifying sites for the assessment, government guidance suggests that plan makers should be proactive in identifying sites and should use a wide variety of sources. It suggests that plan makers should not simply rely on sites that are submitted or promoted; they should actively identify sites to ensure development needs of the area are met.
- 2.10 Guidance states that plan makers should consider all available sources of information and data when identifying sites. The following list is not conclusive, however illustrates typical sources of information that are useful for identifying potential sites. It must be noted that this assessment will not take account of sites

with extant planning permission or which are allocated for development within the Local Plan.

- Existing identified housing and economic development opportunities, as well as development briefs that have yet to be granted planning permission;
- Planning application records. For example sites that have lapsed permissions or have been withdrawn or refused;
- Land in local authority ownership;
- Sites submitted through a call for sites process;
- Vacant and derelict land and buildings. For example disused agricultural buildings, potential permitted development changes and redundant factory buildings;
- Underused land and facilities. For example under used garage blocks;
- Active engagement with the development sector; and,
- Site surveys, desktop surveys and officer knowledge of the area.

#### 2.11 Key points to take from the above information

- The assessment area will be the extent of the Borough boundary.
- The site size threshold will be 1 dwelling and above.
- The Council should actively identify sites using a wide variety of sources.

## **Estimating the development potential of each site/broad location**

2.12 When estimating the development potential of sites and broad locations within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment various factors should be taken into account.

### **Characteristics of a site**

2.13 When assessing an identified site, guidance suggests that the following characteristics of a site should be recorded. The characteristics of a site could in certain circumstances affect its deliverability and developability.

- Site size, boundary and location;
- The current land use of the site and its character;
- The character of the surrounding area including land uses;
- Physical constraints, if any, for example access and location of infrastructure;
- Environmental constraints, if any, for example flooding, natural features and contamination; and,
- Location of site in comparison to existing services and facilities.

### **Density of a site**

2.14 Guidance set out within the NPPF says that local planning authorities should set their own approach to housing density in order to reflect local circumstances. The Council's Core Strategy (in policy 1) suggests that within the Leicester Principal Urban Area, new development will make good use of previously developed land and buildings and housing development of 0.3 hectares and above should, where viable and appropriate, achieve an average density of 40 dwellings or more. The Council's Submission Local Plan suggests split density targets (for sites of 0.3 hectares and above) of 50 dwellings or more, 40 dwellings or more, and 30 dwellings or more depending on a sites location. Previous Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments have included a standardised 40 dwelling per hectare across all sites when calculating site capacity. For the purposes of this assessment (bearing in

mind the 1 dwelling and above threshold) the following site densities are to be used when calculating site capacity (unless more definitive development yields are known).

- For sites located within the town centre of Wigston or the District centres of Oadby or South Wigston, a dwelling per hectare figure of 50 will be applied within site capacity calculations.
- For sites located within the Leicester Principal Urban Area but outside of the Borough's three main centres, a dwelling per hectare figure of 40 will be applied within site capacity calculations.
- For sites located outside of the Leicester Principal Urban Area, a dwelling per hectare figure of 30 will be applied within site capacity calculations.

2.15 The above approach is to ensure that higher density housing developments are concentrated within the built up urban areas of the Borough. The use of a standard figure (40) across all areas was appraised, however it was felt that having higher density housing developments in the more rural areas, such as Kilby Bridge could have a negative impact on the locale, therefore a split approach as set out above is to be adopted.

### **Development ratio of a site**

2.16 In addition to site density, the development ratio of a site is also a key consideration when assessing a site's capacity. Essentially, using site ratios within a site capacity calculation allows for other relevant forms of development required for residential development, for example, access and services infrastructure, open space provision and community facilities. In general, the larger the site, the greater the need will be for other forms of required development.

2.17 Previous Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (as well as other local planning authority Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments within the Leicester and Leicestershire housing market area) have used the following site size ratios. The following site ratios have been taken from the joint, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment methodology.

- For sites up to 0.4 hectares in size, 100% of a sites total area will be used within site capacity calculations.
- For sites between 0.4 hectares and 2 hectares, 82.5% of a sites total area will be used within site capacity calculations.
- For sites between 2 hectares and 35 hectares, 62.5% of a sites total area will be used within site capacity calculations.
- For sites of 35 hectares and more, only 50% of a sites total area will be used within site capacity calculations.

2.18 For the purposes of this report the above ratios will be used.

### **Potential constraints on a site**

2.19 Constraints on a site can be put into two categories; constraints that cannot be mitigated or mitigation costs would be so high that it would render a site undevelopable (for the purpose of this document known as Red Constraints); and, constraints that through appropriate mitigation works and management would allow for development (for the purposes of this document known as Lesser Constraints).

2.20 The use of red constraints within assessments has historically been promoted through the joint Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment methodology, with the majority of (if not all) local planning authorities applying the approach within their individual Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments. The red constraint approach is intrinsically associated with the suitability of a site, therefore its use within ongoing assessments will continue.

2.21 Red constraints relevant to this assessment are listed below.

- The functional flood plain (zone 3b) as defined by the Environment Agency.
- Scheduled Monuments (nationally important archaeological sites) as listed by Historic England.

- Internationally and Nationally Designated Sites of Biodiversity and Geological Interest (SSSI's, SPA's), as designated by Natural England and/or the European Commission.\*
- Major Hazardous Facilities, as defined by the Health and Safety Executive.

\* where a site of biodiversity or geodiversity interest has a specific catchment area, the red constraint will not apply to the whole catchment; only the site of biodiversity or geodiversity interest.

Sites will only be excluded where the entire site is affected by the red constraint.

2.22 An example list of lesser constraints is illustrated below.

- Flood Zone 2 and 3a
- Contaminated land
- Heritage and/or archaeological potential
- Environmental
- Topographical
- Access
- Ownership

## **Suitability**

2.23 To be considered deliverable or developable, government guidance and the joint methodology suggest that a site should offer a suitable location for development. Guidance also suggests a number of considerations that need taking account of when assessing a sites suitability for development.

2.24 Evidence gathered for each individual site, for example, potential constraints, will feed into the assessment of suitability, as well as factors such as market attractiveness and a sites potential contribution to priority areas.

## **Achievability**

2.25 According to government guidance 'a site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site at a particular point in time'. It is also suggested that a judgment regarding a sites economic viability will be needed when considering its achievability.

## **Availability**

2.26 Government guidance suggests that 'a site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems' and there is or has been an expression to sell or develop the site.

2.27 The assessment of a sites suitability, achievability and availability will influence its deliverability and developability and ultimately its timescale for development.

2.28 For a site to be considered deliverable, government guidance states – 'sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that the development is viable'. (NPPF Para 47- Footnote 1)

2.29 For a site to be considered developable, government guidance states – 'sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point in time envisaged'. (NPPF Para 47- Footnote 2)

## **Timescales**

2.30 In terms of development timescale, as set out in government guidance and the joint methodology, there are three categories; 0 – 5 year sites, 6 – 10 year sites and 10 year and beyond sites. For a site to be categorised as a 0 – 5 year site it will

need to be deemed deliverable. Sites that are deemed developable will be placed within either the 6 – 10 year or 10 year and beyond category. Sites put forward that are deemed undevelopable will not be placed within any of the above categories.

2.31 Although the assessment of the sites is policy off, relevant planning policy is taken into account when assigning a timescale category to a site. For example, in general, sites located within the countryside or within a designated green wedge area will have much longer timescales than those located within the urban area on sustainable sites.

### **Reviewing the assessment**

2.32 The Council will endeavour to review the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment on an annual basis illustrating the position as of the 1<sup>st</sup> April each year. The outcomes of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment will feed into other land supply and annual monitoring reports, such as the Housing Implementation Strategy. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment will also provide robust evidence to support the delivery of the Council's Local Plan.

### **3 Assessment Outcomes**

3.1 A number of sites were assessed through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2018. Of these sites assessed:

- 6 were characterised as sites believed to be deliverable within the next 5 year period.
- There were no areas identified as possible broad locations for growth.

3.2 All of the sites that have been characterised as deliverable are illustrated within the relevant table below. For this year's assessment no sites have been characterised as developable within 6 – 10 years. All are either within 0 – 5 years. This is due to the Borough's urban nature. It should be noted that a number of the SHLAA sites comprising last year's table of deliverable sites have been proposed for small scale allocation's in the Council's Submission Local Plan. Of the small scale sites proposed for allocation, 103 of the units now have extant planning permission, 137 units remain without granted planning permission, and 10 units comprise part of the 34 illustrated below (Bennett Way (8) and Blunts Lane (2)).

3.3 Each of the sites within the assessment has been given a potential number of dwelling figure (also shown in the relevant below table). The total potential number of dwellings (171) for the 0 -5 year timescale is:

- 34 units on sites characterised as 0 – 5 year.
- 137 units as proposed within the Council's Submission Local Plan as 0 – 5 year.

3.4 The Council's Submission Local Plan proposes 3 Direction for Growth Area allocations up to 2031. The proposed areas comprise the Broad Locations from previous year's SHLAA. Due to the Submission Local Plan identifying growth up to 2031, the SHLAA 2018 does not identify Broad Locations for Growth.

Deliverable and Developable within 5 Years

Settlement	Site	Area (hectares)	Number of Net Dwellings
Wigston	No. 29a Central Avenue		4
Wigston	No. 66 Blunts Lane	0.023	2
Wigston	Land rear of 46 Moat Street		1
South Wigston	Alpha House, Countesthorpe Road	0.150	14
South Wigston	Land at Bennett Way	0.130	8
South Wigston	No. 29-31, Canal Street	0.021	5
Total		0.324	34