

Test Valley Borough Council

**Neighbourhood Development Plans
Undertaking site selection (Questionnaire method)**

December 2016

1 Introduction

This note will provide you with one method for identifying and assessing sites to allocate for development within a Neighbourhood Plan. See also the guide to the alternative traffic light method.

2 Benefits of identifying and assessing sites

Neighbourhood plans can identify and allocate land for new development, such as housing, employment, leisure and community facilities. This can be a controversial process but can bring many benefits to your local community, including additional housing, new infrastructure and services.

By using a clear and straight-forward approach to site identification and assessment, you can feel confident that the sites chosen at the end of the process:

- are the most appropriate;
- conform to the Revised Local Plan;
- are in the most sustainable location; and
- have a good chance of being developed.

This process will allow you to clearly demonstrate why a site is considered suitable or why it is not, by collecting evidence to help to demonstrate to the community, landowners and developers the basis on why sites were chosen or discounted.

More importantly, it will explain to the planning inspector who examines your neighbourhood plan the basis on which your decision was reached.

However, whilst you may identify and assess a site as ideal for development, it does not automatically mean the site will be given planning permission and any development must still go through the planning application process.

3 Before you start

Before you start the site identification process, you will need to identify a small sub-group of your neighbourhood plan steering group.

The purpose of this sub-group allows for consistency across the site identification and assessment process. It is important that the process is as open and transparent as possible, therefore members of the sub-group who may have an interest in a particular site (for example if you live next to it) should avoid assessing that particular site.

4 How to identify sites

The first step in the process is to identify a list of potential sites within the neighbourhood plan area.

Site size can vary according to the size of the settlement, and may be 'infill' development (between existing development) or 'back-land' (behind the main street frontage/existing development). These sites can prevent development occurring outside of the settlement boundaries but may cause the loss of 'breathing space' in a village, and may not respond to the character of the area (particularly in Conservation Areas).

You will need to use as many sources as possible to identify potential sites. This will ensure that the end result is the most appropriate sites have been allocated, and will provide a larger, more robust, evidence base upon which your chosen site can depend. This will be useful if, say, a developer or landowner challenges a particular site allocation at the neighbourhood plan examination stage.

Potential site sources:

In addition to any sites you may already be aware of, the following sources can identify potential sites:

- Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan DPD;
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment;
- Call for sites exercise.

Revised Local Plan DPD

Policies included in your neighbourhood plan, including site allocations, are required to be in conformity with the Revised Local Plan.

There are a number of allocated sites within the Revised Local Plan for housing and employment/economic uses¹. You will need to establish whether any of these allocated sites are located within your neighbourhood area. If a site is already allocated within the RLP, you will not need to re-allocate it in a neighbourhood plan, however you may wish to identify it on any maps that you produce for information purposes.

¹ Whitenap, Romsey; Hoe Lane, North Baddesley; Park Farm, Stoneham; Picket Piece, Andover; Picket Twenty, Andover; University of Southampton Science Park; South of Benham Campus, University of Southampton Science Park; Land south of Brownhill Way, Nursling; Land at Bargain Farm, Nursling; Land at Adanac Park, Nursling; Nursling Estate; Extension to Walworth Business Park; Andover Airfield Business Park; George Yard/Black Swan Yard; Ganger Farm, Romsey.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

Another method identifying sites within your neighbourhood plan area is the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which is an assessment of all potential sites for housing, including sites that have been submitted by landowners and developers, and gives a conclusion on the site's development potential.

The SHLAA only considers sites that are capable of delivering 5 dwellings or more. As neighbourhood plans are able to allocate sites for fewer than 5 dwellings you will need to look at other ways of identifying potential sites.

Call for Sites

In order to collect sites for the SHLAA, the Council undertakes a Call for Sites exercise, inviting residents, landowners, developers and agents to submit one, or multiple, sites for inclusion in the SHLAA. You can initiate your own call for sites exercise if you wish to collect additional sites, particularly sites accommodating fewer than 5 dwellings.

A call for sites exercise is a useful way of engaging with landowners at an early stage in the plan-making process. This can help to prevent and overcome possible conflicts at a later stage.

The Council uses a submission form to collect site information (Appendix 1), but you can create and use your own form if preferred. It is recommended that the submission form used should request the following information:

- Site name;
- Site address;
- Site plan (showing a red line boundary around the site);
- Site ownership (this can be found on the Land Registry website for a small fee);
- Site area (hectares);
- Expected site capacity/number of dwellings;
- Timescales for development;
- Barriers to delivery.

You will need to make it clear to any site promoters that any sites submitted through this process will be made publically available.

Following your call for sites, if there are any new sites that could accommodate 5 or more dwellings and which is not currently listed in the Council's SHLAA, please feel free to submit them to the Council for inclusion in the next version of the SHLAA.

5 Site Assessment

Once a list of potential sites has been compiled, each site will need to be comprehensively assessed to establish its development potential.

In order to demonstrate that there is a good prospect the site can, and will be, delivered, you will need to have evidence that it is:

- Suitable;
- Available; and
- Achievable².

Where you identify constraints to a site's suitability, availability and achievability, your assessment should consider what would be required to overcome them, along with how and when this could take place, and how likely it is the site would be delivered.

How to assess whether a site is suitable, available and achievable is set out in the following sections.

Suitable

A site is considered to be suitable if there are no insurmountable physical or environmental factors which would restrict development.

Factors which should be considered when assessing suitability:

- Does the site conform with policies in the Revised Local Plan?
 - Sites allocated within the Local Plan, or with planning permission, are generally considered to be suitable although it may be necessary to assess whether circumstances have changed which would prevent their suitability.
- Are there any physical constraints?
 - Constraints can include access problems, lack of infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazard risks, pollution or contamination etc.
- Is the site within close proximity to facilities and services?
 - Including public transport, shops, schools, and health services? Development should be in as sustainable a location as possible.
- What are the potential impacts upon the landscape?
 - Landscape includes landscape features, nature and heritage conservation.

² As set out in paragraph 159 of the National Planning Policy Framework

- If development were to cause harm to the environment or a nearby heritage asset, the site would not be suitable.
- Will there be any environmental or amenity impacts upon potential occupants of the site and neighbouring residents?
 - For example, noise issues or light restriction, etc.

The below table identifies potential constraints and the relevant information sources regarding each constraint. The information in this table is used by the Council when assessing site suitability for the SHLAA.

Factors to be considered	Constraints and sources of information
1. Physical limitations	Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning history ● SHLAA submissions Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Electricity pylons (Scottish and Southern Electric, Council records) ● Highways/Local Road network (Highways Officer & Highways Agency) Ground Water Protection Zone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environment Agency Flood risk – river and tidal based flooding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environment Agency Land contamination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SHLAA submissions
2. Potential impacts	Tree Preservation Orders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Council records Conservation Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Council records Listed Buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Historic England Landscape/townscape impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landscape officer Separation of settlement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revised Local Plan policy Character of the area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landscape officer Potential of Archaeological Interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hampshire County Council ● SHLAA submissions Historic parks and gardens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Historic England

	Protected species <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England • SHLAA submissions Agricultural land quality (Grade 1 to 3a) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council land records Mineral Consultation areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hampshire County Council
3. Appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed	
4. Contribution to regeneration priority areas	There are no identified regeneration priority areas within the Borough
5. Environmental/amenity impacts experienced by would be occupiers and neighbouring residents	Railway line <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordnance survey map Rights of way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hampshire County Council Neighbouring uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council records

Available

A site is considered available for development when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. This will often mean that the land is controlled by a developer or landowner who has expressed an intention to develop, or the landowner has expressed an intention to sell.

Factors which should be considered when assessing availability:

- Where you have identified constraints to suitability, how will you overcome these and how long will this take?
- Does the site have a history of unimplemented planning permissions?
 - This will give you an idea of the delivery record of the landowner/developer who has put the site forward
- Do you know the ownership of the site?
 - If you do not know the ownership of a particular site, this information can be found, for a small fee, via the Land Registry website.

Sites submitted through a Call for Sites exercise are considered available, as are sites allocated in the RLP and those assessed as available in the SHLAA and SHLAA Addendum.

Achievability

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.

This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period.

Factors to consider when assessing achievability:

- Have you engaged with the landowner/developer/site promoter to request evidence of viability?
- Would the site require new or additional infrastructure?
- Are there likely to be any major financial costs associated with making the site suitable for development?
- How long would it take to deliver development on the site?

6 Site Assessment Form

Use the Site Assessment Form in Appendix 2 to record information about potential sites.

Points to consider before completing the assessment form:

- Use a separate form for each site.
- Try and include as much information as possible, using local knowledge supplemented with information from other sources. The more information you have, the better informed you will be when making an overall assessment.
- Where a site has been included within the Council's SHLAA, this document will make a useful starting point for your information sourcing, and should assist with making a final assessment.
- Make sure to keep a record of all of the sites that you assess, regardless of whether they are deemed suitable, available and achievable. Justification as to why you allocated a particular site may be required when the neighbourhood plan is at examination stage.
- Please remember that views of a site will vary seasonally, for example during summer a site may be well screened, but in winter may be exposed.

- Please respect landowners and do not enter a site without seeking prior permission. Where you are assessing the views into and out of a site, views taken from the boundary of the site will be suitable.

How to complete the form:

The form is split into five sections:

- Section 1: General site information
- Section 2: Suitability
- Section 3: Availability
- Section 4: Achievability
- Section 5: Overall assessment summary

Sections 1, 2, 3 and 5 should be completed for every site. If you judge a site to be suitable and available, or potentially so, please also complete section 4. For those sites which are deemed neither suitable nor available, skip section 4 and continue onto section 5.

Please respect a landowner's privacy and do not enter a site without seeking prior permission. Where you are assessing the views into and out of a site, views taken from the boundary of the site will be suitable.

Appendix 1: Test Valley Borough Council Call for Sites submission form

The Council uses the below submission form when inviting landowners/developers/agents/residents to submit sites for consideration for inclusion within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

The form below can be replicated when undertaking a call for sites; however, please note some parts of the form will need to be altered to reflect the different plan-making body – amendments have been identified below.

Don't forget to change words like 'Council' or 'SHLAA'. These have been underlined in red as a reminder.

SHLAA Call for Sites Submission Form

- Please use a separate form for each site
- Please provide a location map (OS map base) clearly identifying the extent of the site boundary marked in red
- Where there is more than one landowner, the landownership boundaries must be clearly defined and confirmation that each landowner is agreeing to the consideration of the land for possible development
- Please provide your name and email address/postal address so that we can contact you to clarify site information if needed
- The information contained in this form will be used by the Council to inform future potential Local Plan allocations and on-going monitoring within the Borough. Please note that any promoted sites will be publicly available. Individual personal details and landownership details will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Neighbourhood plans can allocate sites of fewer than 5 dwellings

The Council will accept sites for a net gain of 5 or more dwellings. Please note that whilst the Council will consider land promoted, this does not mean that the Council would necessarily grant planning permission for the site or be allocated for development.

The closing date for submission of new sites is **4:30pm Friday 26th June 2015**. Please return the SHLAA Call for Sites Submission Form to:

planningpolicy@testvalley.gov.uk

or

Planning Policy Team

Test Valley Borough Council

Beech Hurst

Andover

Hampshire

SP10 3AJ

Remember to change the response date and time

Remember to change contact details

Reference (Internal use only)	
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Site Details	
Site name	
Site address	
Current use	
Site area	
Ownership – For Internal Use Only	
Is the site in single ownership?	
<i>If the site is in multiple ownership</i> is there agreement by all parties that the land could be promoted for development?	
Name of owner(s)	
Are there other interests in the land (e.g. tenancies)? Please specify	
Availability	
Does the landowner intend to sell the site for development? Or;	
Is the site controlled by a developer who intends to develop it? Or;	
Is the site currently being marketed?	
Has there been any recent planning history for the site? (please include relevant planning application numbers)	
Suitability	
Is access required over land not controlled by owner?	
Are there any restrictions on when the site may be available (e.g. due to tenancy arrangements?) Please give details.	

Are you aware of any other constraints that may prevent development or affect the developable area of the site? Please give details (e.g. current use need to be relocated, flood risk, ecology, landscape, historic features, public rights of way cross or adjoin the site):

Achievability and Viability

Do you consider that development of the site is viable having regard to current policies and market conditions? If no, please give reasons and explain how and when these may be overcome:

Deliverability

Sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and will be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable.

Developability

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 envisaged.

Delivery –phasing trajectory

Please indicate the approximate timescales for delivery
Each year runs from 1st April to 31st March.

Years	Estimated housing units the site could accommodate
0 - 5 years	
5 - 10 years	
10 -15 years	
Beyond 15 years	

Contact Details – For Internal Use Only

Name	
Company / agent if applicable	
Address	
Email	

Please provide a site location plan with precise site boundary marked in red

Appendix 2: Site Assessment Form

Section 1: General Site Information

This section should be completed for ALL sites.

General Site Information	
Site reference (this can be your own reference for the site)	
Site name	
Site Address	
Size of site (hectares)	
Is the site on previously developed land? (see glossary for definition)	
Existing use (e.g. agricultural, vacant, mixed use, open space etc.)	
If vacant, what was the previous use of the land (if known?)	
What are the surrounding land uses (e.g. agricultural, vacant, mixed-use, open space etc.)	
Site planning history (previous or current planning permissions, applications, refusals) ³	
Is the site within the SHLAA? ⁴ If yes, what is the site reference and site capacity?	

³ Current and historical planning applications are available on the Council's website: <http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/resident/planningandbuildingcontrol/viewplanningapplicationsonline/view-planning-applications-online/>

⁴ The current SHLAA (2014) and Addendum (2015) are available on the Council's website: <http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/resident/planningandbuildingcontrol/planningpolicy/local-development-framework/shlaa/>

Section 2: Suitability

This section should be completed for ALL sites.

Suitability			
Is the site within the settlement boundary? ⁵			
If no, where is the site located in relation to the built up area of the settlement?			
Would redevelopment of the site relate well to the site surroundings?			
Designations and constraints			
<i>Is the site affected by any of the following?</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Is the site within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?			
Is the site within a Local Gap? (designated in Policy E3 of the Revised Local Plan)			
Is the site within, or adjacent to, a SSSI/SAC/SINC/SPA or Ramsar site? (see glossary for definitions)			
Is the site within a Conservation Area?			
Are there any Listed Buildings on, or within close proximity of, the site?			
Is the site located within a Historic Park or Garden?			
Does the site have any known archaeological remains?			
Does the site have any trees/vegetation subject to a Tree Preservation Order?			

⁵ As defined within Policy COM2 of the Revised Local Plan

Does the site have any ecological potential or known protected species? e.g. badgers, bats, great crested newts etc.			
What Agricultural Land Classification does the site fall into?			
Is the site within a Groundwater Protection Zone?			
What Flood Risk Zone does the site fall into?			
Does the site fall within a Minerals and Waste Consultation Area?			
Does the site have any known contaminants?			
Are there any powerlines, overhead cables, pipelines or other infrastructure crossing the site?			
Are there any Public Rights of Way within the vicinity of the site? ⁶			
Could development result in conflict with the surrounding uses?			
Would the development of this site result in the loss of green/open space separating settlements?			
Are there any other Local Plan designations affecting the site or close by? e.g. Residential Area of Special Character.			
How is the site currently accessed? Is it easily accessible from the road?			
Are you aware of any other factors that could hinder development of the site?			

⁶ Details of Public Rights of Way are available on Hampshire County Council's website:
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/row.htm>

<i>Proximity to local services and facilities</i>		
Facility	Distance (m)	Comments e.g. route quality, safety, lighting etc.
Town/local centre ⁷		
Primary school		
Secondary school		
Convenience store		
Doctors surgery		
Bus stop		
Railway station		
Open space		
Any other facility?		
<i>Site Characteristics</i>	<i>Comments</i>	
Landform e.g. Flat, Gently Undulating, Strongly Undulating, Steep Valley, Valley Floor, Plateau		
Views In e.g. wide, channelled, long, short, glimpsed		
Views Out ⁸ e.g. wide, channelled, long, short, glimpsed		
Natural features on and around the site e.g. boundary hedgerow, trees, shrubs, grass		
What age/condition/value?		

⁷ Andover, Romsey, Stockbridge

⁸ Please not do enter a site without the owner's permission. If you cannot obtain permission, stand on the boundary line if possible and assess views out from this perspective.

Ecology ⁹ e.g. birds, signs of mammals, wildlife corridors, water habitats	
Built form on and around the site e.g. walls, on site freestanding buildings/structures, neighbouring buildings/structures in view	
Are there any noises generated from surrounding uses which can be heard on the site?	
What Landscape Character Area is the site in ¹⁰ ?	

Section 3: Availability

This section should be completed for ALL sites.

Availability	
Is the land in single or multiple ownership?	
Is/are the landowner(s) aware of the inclusion of this site in the assessment?	
Is/are the landowner(s) willing for their land to come forward for development?	
If so, do you have any written evidence to support this?	
Are there any factors which might prevent or hinder development, e.g. tenancies, leases, ransom strips etc?	

⁹ If the site is considered suitable, available and achievable, further ecological information regarding protected species would be required from ecologists.

¹⁰ <http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/tvlcp/>

Any other comments on availability	
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Section 4: Achievability

This section should be completed if you think that your site is, or has potential to be, available and suitable.

This section will help you to think about whether development can realistically be achieved, considering potential costs, returns, and infrastructure requirements.

You may well require further information from relevant experts and service providers (e.g. utility companies, highways engineers and Hampshire County Council) to assist you in completing this form.

Achievability	
Estimate the developable area of the site: Are there any areas of the site which could not be developed, for example due to steep topography/trees which should be retained etc? If so, take the approximate area of this away from the gross site size (hectares). This will leave the developable area.	
Estimate how many houses could be accommodated on the site: As a guide, use an estimated density of 30 dwellings per hectare.	
Infrastructure requirements	
Is there capacity within existing infrastructure to support new development, or would development of the site require additional infrastructure to be provided?	
Highways	
Water supply	
Sewerage	
Gas supply	
Mains electricity supply	
Is there sufficient capacity at local schools or would additional places be required?	
Is the site viable for development? Considering the issues you have identified above, are there likely to	

be any major financial costs associated with preparing the site for development? Are these costs likely to be offset by the type of proposed development?			
Considering the issues identified above, what are the potential timescales for development?	0 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	11 – 15 years
How many dwellings could be delivered on the site within these timescales?			

Section 5: Overall Assessment Summary

This section should be completed for ALL sites.

Overall assessment summary	
Choose one of the following:	<p>The site is suitable for allocation (The site is well located and has lower environmental sensitivity to change)</p> <p>The site is a potential allocation subject to on- or off-site mitigation (The site is either well-located but with higher environmental sensitivity to change, or poorly located but with lower environmental sensitivity to change)</p> <p>The site is not suitable for allocation (The site is poorly connected and located and has higher environmental sensitivity to change)</p>
What are the reasons behind your assessment?	
<p>If judged to be suitable or potentially suitable, what type of development could the site accommodate? e.g. housing, employment, facilities etc.</p> <p>Are there any types of development which would be inappropriate?</p>	

<p>If judged to be suitable, what mitigation would be required to make the site properly suitable for development?</p>	
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