Purpose of report

For Members to consider the draft Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) Methodology and determine whether wish to recommend it for formal public consultation.

1.0 Recommendation

The meeting is recommended:

1.1 To approve the publication of the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment Methodology for a minimum of 6 weeks public consultation.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 In 2014 the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy was adopted. Part of the evidence base included a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA); this was last updated in 2012. The SHLAA is a technical document and its purpose is to identify sites with potential for housing, whether the site could be developed and in what timeframe.

2.2 A number of sites identified in the SHLAA were allocated as strategic sites within the Joint Core Strategy. The WNJCS includes strategic proposals for major residential development in Towcester, Brackley and the NRDA, it does not include any site specific proposals for residential/employment development in the rural areas. This is for the Local Plan Part 2A to determine.

2.3 The Local Plan Part 2A is in early stages of production. In line with national policy we need to be proactive and plan positively for the rural areas and to ensure that the development needs of all villages are met in a sustainable way. This requires clear and robust evidence.
2.4 An assessment of land availability will be an essential part of the evidence base in preparing the Local Plan Part 2A and will, once prepared, identify a future supply of land which is suitable, available and deliverable for both non-strategic housing and employment land uses. Therefore an updated assessment of both potential housing and employment land is required.

2.5 This work will culminate in the publication of a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

3.0 Report details

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that Local Authorities should identify “land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period. This should set out how much housing and the amount of economic development land that can be provided, and at what point in the future.

3.2 The methodology to be used in preparing the SHELAA will follow the approach outlined in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). The overall aim of the SHELAA will be to:
- Produce list of sites, cross referenced to maps showing locations of specific sites
- As assessment of each site in terms of its suitability, availability and achievability for development.
- The potential type and quantity of development that could be delivered on each site; including a reasonable estimate of build out rates; and setting out how any barriers to delivery could be overcome
- An indicative trajectory of anticipated delivery

3.3 It is important to note that:
- The inclusion of a site in the SHELAA should not be taken as an indication on whether the council would consider the site suitable or not suitable for development
- Inclusion of a site in the SHELAA does not mean that a site will be allocated for development in the new Local Plan Part 2A
- Inclusion of a site in the SHELAA should not be taken to imply that planning permission would be granted.

Methodology

3.4 The SHELAA methodology document (Appendix A) sets out a flow chart (Figure 1) this reflects the structure of the methodology that will be used to formulate the Council’s SHELAA. It will include 5 stages:
- Stage 1 – Site identification
- Stage 2 – Site assessment
- Stage 3 – Windfall assessment
- Stage 4 – Assessment review
- Stage 5 – Final evidence base
Site identification

3.5 There will be two broad methods of identifying sites these are:
- Call for site exercise
- Desktop reviews

An initial “call for sites” took place between October 2013 and January 2014 and the current Local Plan Part 2A options consultation also provides an opportunity for landowners, site promoters and interested parties to submit land for consideration. Alongside this a desktop review will take place using sources recommended through the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). Some sites will be excluded prior to the site survey assessment. The exclusions are set out at 5.15 of the report and also within the Site Assessment Criteria proforma at Appendix B.

Brownfield sites

3.6 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduces a new duty for local authorities to keep a register of brownfield sites within its area. The definition of brownfield land is land which meets the definition of “previously developed land” in the NPPF.

3.7 The sites will be assessed against specific criteria that will be set out in regulations to ensure they are suitable for housing. It is envisaged that the criteria for the Regulations will be drawn from the National Planning Policy Framework. Proposals for the criteria have been set out in a Technical Consultation on Implementation of Planning Changes (February 2016). These are as follows:
- Available – sites should be deliverable or developable
- Capable of supporting five or more dwellings or more than 0.25 ha
- Capable of development

Once the outcome of this consultation is known then the methodology for brownfield sites will be updated as required.

Site Survey Assessment

3.8 Those sites (except those excluded sites) that have been promoted or identified will be subject to a Site Assessment Survey, a copy of the Site Assessment criteria is attached at Appendix B. The Site assessment survey will draw out further information about each site and its potential suitability for housing/employment development. The questions in the Site Assessment Survey are divided into 5 areas:
- Assessing suitability
- Assessing availability
- Assessing deliverability
- Assessing viability

3.9 The Site Assessment Survey will use a traffic light system for each question. Where constraints have been identified these will be highlighted a “red-amber-green assessment”. Each question will score either 1 for Green, 2 for Amber and 3 for Red. At the end of the assessment the scores for each site will be added together. The lower the overall score the more suitable the site is likely to be for housing/employment
Windfall assessment

3.10 The NPPF states that LPA can make allowance for windfall sites if they have compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply.

3.11 The inclusion of a windfall allowance is well established and has been consistently supported at appeals. Therefore it is considered that the Council could identify broad locations which could include a windfall allowance.

Assessment review

3.12 This stage will consider the results of the SHELAA and whether the required scale of housing and economic development that will be determined through the consultation process can be met by the land identified as suitable, available and deliverable.

Final evidence base

3.13 The result of the site assessment will be presented in final version of the SHELAA. The output from the SHELAA will be a list of potential housing/employment sites, their capacity and an assessment of when they could be developed.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 The existing SHLAA needs to be updated to take into account the focus of the Local Plan Part 2A on non-strategic housing and employment development opportunities. A robust assessment of all sites that have been put forward to the Council is required to ensure that the Local Plan Part 2A plans positively and ensures that the development needs of our towns and village are met in a sustainable way.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 The draft SHELAA methodology will be subject to formal public consultation for a minimum of 6 weeks.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The Council could chose not to approve the draft SHELAA methodology for formal public consultation however this would delay the preparation of the Local Plan Part 2A.

7.0 Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
George Hill, Corporate Finance Manager
01295 221731 george.hill@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk
7.2 **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
Nigel Bell; Team Leader – Planning and Litigation
01295 221687 nigel.bell@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

8.0 **Decision Information**

**Wards Affected**

All

**Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework**

- Strategic Priority: Preserve what's special
- Strategic Priority: Protect our quality of life
- Strategic Priority: Secure a prosperous and sustainable future
- Strategic Priority: Enhance the council’s performance

**Lead Councillor**

Cllr Roger Clarke - Portfolio holder for Planning and Environment

**Document Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix No</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>South Northamptonshire SHELAA methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>South Northamptonshire Site Assessment criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Background Papers**

None

**Report Author**

Jacqueline Brooks – Planning Policy Officer

**Contact Information**

Adrian Colwell - Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy
Adrian.Colwell@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk
Tel 0300 003 0110

Andy D’Arcy – Lead Officer: Planning Policy
Andy.Darcy@southnorthants.gov.uk
Tel 01327 322267

Jacqueline Brooks – Planning Policy Officer
Jacqueline.brooks@southnorthants.gov.uk