SHELAA methodology

1 Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the draft methodology for preparing a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability assessment (SHELAA); it takes account of the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance on “Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments”. 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 achievable for non-strategic housing and economic development uses over the remainder of the plan period (up to 2029).

2 Background

2.2 The West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (WNJPU) representing Northampton Borough, Daventry District and South Northamptonshire District previously published a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA); last updated in 2012.

2.3 The purpose of the SHLAA was to assess the potential of sites to contribute towards the supply of land for housing. It provided the starting point for further site analysis through the Local Plan process and the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy. A number of sites identified in the SHLAA were then allocated as strategic sites for housing and employment purposes within the Joint Core Strategy.

2.4 The West Northants Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS) (Local Plan Part 1) includes strategic proposals for major residential development in Towcester, Brackley and the NRDA, the SHELAA will not consider or make any changes to the sites already allocated in the WNJCS.

2.5 The WNJCS did not include any site specific proposals for non-strategic residential/employment development in the rural areas. It does however set out the overall housing requirement for both the urban and rural areas. The Council has effectively met the rural areas housing requirement in the rural areas. In line with national policy we need to be proactive and plan positively for the 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 The council is now documenting and assessing potential housing/employment sites that may be capable of development for non-strategic sites. Unlike the SHLAA, this time the work will also encompass an assessment of land for economic purposes. The assessment will look at the suitability, availability, and achievability of sites to
inform work on the new Local Plan Part 2A. This will culminate in the publication of a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) late 2016.

2.5 As part of this process the council has issued two “call for sites” once during the issues consultation in 2013/2014 and again as part of the Local Plan Part 2A options consultation in April –June 2016.

2.6 The information gathered from the call for site exercises and a desktop review of sites will be used to develop the SHELAA.

3 Purpose of the SHELAA

3.1 The aim of the SHELAA is to provide an assessment of potential housing and economic land that are capable of development within a prescribed timeframe, in this case the duration of the Local Plan Part 2A. The SHELAA will provide the following guidance and outputs:

- It will identify sites and broad locations for assessment shown on maps;
- Provide indicative quantity of housing or amount of employment land that can be delivered on each identified site;
- Assess sites on their suitability for development and the likelihood and timing of development coming forward (availability and deliverability).
- Determine constraints to development and if so how they could be overcome in the prescribed timescales.

3.2 With regards to assessing land for economic and employment purposes the Council in 2013, commissioned consultants to undertake an Employment Land Study (ELS). This was completed in February 2014. The aim of this study was to review existing and potential employment sites that could be bought forward over the short, medium and long term. The study undertook an independent assessment of potential future sites; data on the sites was supplied in part by the council, market knowledge at the time and discussions with developers promoting sites across the District.

3.3 The independent assessment used a range of market and physical criteria to record details of each site and then undertook some quantitative analysis. The information gathered from this report we be used in the SHELAA alongside additional material received through the issues and options consultation stages.

3.4 Whilst the SHELAA will identify land, it will not allocate land for development. This is the role of the Part 1 of the Local Plan (Joint Core Strategy) and the Local Plan Part 2A.
4 National Policy

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities (LPAs) to significantly boost the supply of housing and to support sustainable economic growth (Paragraph 47). Paragraph 158 identifies that local planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals.

4.2 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) makes clear that "it is the role of the assessment to provide information on the range of sites which are available to meet need, but it is for the development plan itself to determine which of those sites are the most suitable to meet those needs”.

4.3 The NPPF states that LAs 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.

5. Methodology

5.1 The methodology to be used in preparing the SHELAA will follow the approach outlined in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). It makes clear that LPAs should not simply rely on sites that they have been informed of, but actively identify sites through a desktop review.

It is important to note the following:

- 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.

5.2 The following flow chart (Figure 1) sets out the methodology contained within the NPPG and PPG; this approach will reflect the structure of the methodology that will be used to formulate the council’s SHELAA.

5.3 As a technical document, the SHELAA will not be subject to a formal consultation period, although any additional information that may affect the delivery of site would be welcome. Those wishing to make a formal representation about the suitability of sites for development will have the opportunity to do so through the Local Plan Part 2A consultation process.
Appendix 1

Stage 1 - Site / broad location identification

- Determine assessment area and site size
  - Desktop review of existing information
    - Call for sites / broad locations
      - Site / broad location survey

Stage 2 - Site / broad location assessment

- Estimating the development potential
  - Suitability
  - Availability
  - Achievability – including viability
    - Overcoming constraints

Stage 3 - Windfall assessment

- Determine housing / economic development potential of windfall sites (where justified)

Stage 4 - Assessment review

- Assessment of development need for housing and economic development uses
  - Review assessment and prepare draft trajectory
    - Enough sites / broad locations?
      - No
      - Yes

Stage 5 - Final evidence base

- Evidence base
  - Monitoring
    - Deliverability (5 year supply) and developability for housing
    - Informs development plan preparation
**Stage 1 - Identification of Sites and Broad Locations**

**Area of assessment**

5.4 The area covered by the Local Plan Part 2A (Appendix A - Plan area) will be the assessment area for the SHELAA. It will include the whole administrative area of South Northamptonshire District including those parts of the District which are within the Northampton Related Development Area.

5.5 Two broad methods of identifying sites will be employed as outlined below:

- Call for sites
- Desktop review

**Call for sites**

5.6 The “Call for Sites” is an opportunity for landowners, site promoters and interested parties to submit land for consideration. An initial “call for sites” took place between October 2013 and January 2014. The recent Local Plan Part 2A Options Consultation also provided a further and final call for sites opportunity. A copy of the pro-forma is available at Appendix B.

**Desktop review**

5.7 The Council will be proactive in identifying sites through the desktop review process. It will use sources recommended through the PPG. In summary this stage will include a review of:

- The existing 2009 (updated 2012) SHLAA database
- Sites identified by officers
- Call for sites
- Sites promoted to the Council by landowners, developers, agents or registered providers
- Any other known sites, including vacant and derelict land, brownfield sites*, surplus public sector land
- Planning application records to establish sites that have planning permission for housing and economic development that are unimplemented or under construction
- Expired planning permissions
- Sites identified in master plans/ development briefs
- Council owned land
Appendix 1

Brownfield sites*

5.8 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. 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.

Engagement with stakeholders

5.9 The NPPF identifies a range of stakeholders who should be involved in the land availability process (Call for sites). This includes developers, those with land interests, land promoters, property agents, local communities, local enterprise partnerships, businesses and business organisations, neighbouring authorities, town and parish councils.

5.10 Engagement will take place at different stages in the SHELAA process, notably:

- Engagement on “call for sites” through the issues and options consultation events
- Consultation on the SHELAA draft methodology
- Site specific discussion and assumptions
- Local Plan Part 2A formal consultation process

5.11 The published SHELAA will include a summary of the engagement process on the draft methodology, a summary of comments received and how these have been addressed.

Site size threshold

5.12 The assessment will consider all sites which meet the following size criteria unless otherwise justified:

- Sites capable of delivering ten or more dwellings (or not less than 0.5 ha);
- Economic development on sites of 0.25ha (or 500sqm of floor space) and above.
Appendix 1

Density

5.13 In terms of density, the West Northants Joint Core Strategy Policy H1 adopts a design led approach to determine densities on a site by site basis, having regard to the objective of securing the efficient use of land and the particular characteristics of a site and the area in which it is located.

5.14 Therefore regard will be given to existing development schemes within the locality as a potential steer for the type of development scale that may be considered acceptable. Adjustments will be made to take account of any site specific considerations. The development potential / site capacity is an important factor affecting the economic viability and suitability of sites for development and will be considered alongside the assessment of suitability and achievability.

Site identification

5.15 All sites identified in both the desktop review and Call for sites will be included in a comprehensive list of sites. All sites will be mapped via GIS and recorded on a database with a unique reference number so that it will be easily identified. This database will be available to view on the councils’ website.

Sites to be excluded at Stage 1

5.16 Some sites will be excluded at the first stage of the assessment if they fall into one or more of the following categories:

- The site did not meet the site size thresholds
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Ancient Woodland
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within functional flood plains (Flood Zone 3A or 3B)
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Registered Battlefield sites
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Mineral Development sites or allocations
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Waste Development sites or allocations
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Registered Village Greens
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within sites of Registered Common Land
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Local Geological / Geomorphological sites (RIGS)
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within an Air Quality Management Area
- Sites which lie wholly or largely within HS2 safeguarding zone
Appendix 1

- Sites which lie wholly or largely within Sites on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens
- Sites which lie within or partly within the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area and RAMSAR Site and 250m buffer zone
- Sites considered to be detached from and unrelated to a Settlement (more than 100m)
- Development of the sites has been completed and there was no potential for further development
- An extant planning permission exists on the site (residential sites only)
- The site was an exact duplicate of another site
- The site was included in error
- The site has been withdrawn from the Assessment process

Stage 2 - Site Assessment

5.17 Stage 1 results in a list of identified sites for further assessment for housing and economic development. Stage 2 assesses the suitability, availability and deliverable for each site.

5.18 All sites that are identified will be subject to a site assessment survey. After general information on the site and exclusions the survey is divided into 5 areas:

- Assessing suitability
- Assessing availability
- Assessing deliverability
- Assessing viability

The Site Assessment Criteria can be located at Appendix C.

5.19 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”. For many criteria, the existence of a constraint that is considered able to be overcome would be assessed as ‘amber’. For other criteria a ‘red’ assessment may be more appropriate. However it is important to stress that the existence of a ‘red’ assessment will not automatically render the site as undeliverable.

5.20 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.

Stage 3 - Windfall assessment

5.21 The term “windfall site” is defined as sites which have not been specifically identified as available. The normally comprise previously developed sites that have unexpectedly become available. 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. In the Council’s 2015 Five Year Housing Land Supply report, it was reported that between 2001-2015 there had been an average of 215 windfall completions with an annual average of 101 of these on sites of less than 10 dwellings. 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.

Stage 4 - Assessment review

5.22 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.

Stage 5 - Final evidence base

5.23 The results of the above assessments will be presented in the final version of the SHELAA and will contain the following information:

- A list of all sites considered and cross referenced to their locations on maps; including the sites which have been excluded
- An assessment of each site in terms of its suitability, availability and deliverability for development.
- The potential type and quantity of development that could be delivered on each site; including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how many barriers to delivery could be overcome
- An indicative trajectory of anticipated delivery.