

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

Draft Methodology for Consultation

Introduction

1. This document sets out the method to be used for carrying out a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The SHLAA is an important part of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing to meet the local need for more homes.
2. The methodology has been prepared in accordance with Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, Practice Guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (July 2007).

Local Planning Context

3. Local planning authorities in England and Wales are required to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) containing policies to guide development within their area. Epping Forest District Council is in the process of producing an LDF to replace the existing Local Plan and Alterations.
4. The key document in the LDF is the Core Strategy which will make decisions about the locations for new housing, employment, infrastructure and community facilities within Epping Forest District. The SHLAA will provide information on potential housing sites within the district to assist the decisions that will be made in the Core Strategy. It is important to note that the SHLAA will only provide background information on potential housing sites. The SHLAA is not a policy document.
5. The Regional Plan for the East of England identifies a housing target for Epping Forest District of 3,500 houses in the period 2001 to 2021. This equates to an average of 175 new dwellings per annum. Since the baseline of 2001 a significant number of new dwellings have either been built, received planning consent, are under development or identified in a development brief (1,784 dwelling completions, 712 dwellings planning consent not implemented, 299 dwellings commenced not completed, 167 dwellings in development brief up to 31/03/09). In the remaining period to 2021 538 dwellings are needed to be developed to meet the minimum housing target in the East of England Plan.
6. The East of England Plan is now being reviewed to provide new targets for development, including housing, up to 2031. A new housing target for the district up to 2031 is likely to be confirmed in 2011 when the review of the East of England plan is adopted. Current indications suggest there will be a continuation of a similar growth rate over 2011-2031. The SHLAA will therefore be carried out within these parameters.
7. The East of England Plan also sets out a housing target for Harlow which includes “urban extensions” of the existing town into the districts of East Hertfordshire and Epping Forest. In practice this means that any new housing forming an urban extension from Harlow will not count towards the housing target for Epping Forest District. In effect this increases the number of new dwellings to be planned for within Epping Forest District.

National Planning Policy

8. The national approach to planning for housing is contained in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) which seeks to provide a ready supply of land for housing to meet future demand and needs. To ensure there is sufficient land available at the local level PPS3 requires planning authorities to carry out an assessment of land supply for housing in their area known as the SHLAA. Specifically this requires the following:
- **Identify specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that are ready for development** – this information is to be kept up to date and topped up as sites are developed
 - **Identify specific, developable sites for years 6-10**, and ideally years 11-15, in plans to enable the five year supply to be topped up¹
9. For years 11-15 broad locations for growth can be indicated where it is not possible to identify specific sites. An allowance for windfall sites² should not be made for the first 10 years of the plan. However where local circumstances make it difficult to identify specific sites a windfall allowance may be justified.

Purpose of the SHLAA

10. The role of the SHLAA is to identify sites with potential for housing in appropriate locations; assess their potential; and assess when they are likely to be developed.

Overall aim of the SHLAA

11. According to the Practice Guidance the SHLAA should aim to achieve the following outcomes
- i. Produce a list of sites, cross referenced to maps showing locations and boundaries of specific sites (or broad locations where applicable)
 - ii. Provide an assessment of each site's deliverability/developability and a realistic timescale for when the site is expected to be developed i.e. during the period 0-5 years, 6-10 years or 11-15 years.
 - iii. An estimate of the potential number of houses that could be developed on the site.
 - iv. Provide details of any constraints on the site.
 - v. Recommendations on how these constraints could be overcome and when.

Partnership Approach

12. Where possible the SHLAA should be carried out at the level of the Housing Market Area which usually extends across the boundary of neighbouring local authorities. A joint Housing Market Assessment has been carried out for the local

¹ Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, Practice Guidance – Department for Communities and Local Government (July 2007)

² Windfall – a housing site that was not allocated by local planning policy and becomes available for development at a later date

authorities in the sub-region known as the M11/London Commuter Belt East. This area comprises the districts of Uttlesford, Epping Forest, Harlow, Brentwood, East Hertfordshire and Broxbourne. A number of Housing Market Areas have been identified in the sub-region, and Epping Forest District falls within 5 separate areas.

13. Epping Forest, Harlow and East Hertfordshire are adopting a co-ordinated approach to the development of their individual Local Development Frameworks because of the planned regeneration and growth of Harlow and how it will involve the two neighbouring districts. All three local authorities have timetabled the stages in producing their Core Strategy to happen at approximately the same time. Each of the three local authorities will produce their own SHLAA. Due to the different nature of the three districts the timing of each SHLAA will vary although this should not affect the overall timetable for producing each Core Strategy.
14. The other authorities in the sub-region, Uttlesford, Brentwood and Broxbourne are all at different stages in the production of their LDF. It was decided that it was not practical to prepare the SHLAA in partnership with these neighbouring authorities. The SHLAA is to be prepared for the area of Epping Forest District only, this approach being acceptable under the Practice Guidance. The other authorities in the Housing Market Area will be consulted on the Epping Forest SHLAA, in particular East Hertfordshire and Harlow.

Key Local Stakeholders

15. The work of producing the SHLAA will include the input of key local stakeholders such as house builders, social landlords, planning agents, town/parish councils and any other agencies that have a recognised interest in the district. These key local stakeholders ('the SHLAA Partnership') will be consulted on this methodology and their views will help to shape the way in which the SHLAA is carried out. In addition the views of key local stakeholders will be sought in assessing the deliverability and developability of potential sites.

Stages in the Methodology

16. These stages are set out below and follow the approach given in the Practice Guidance.
 - 1) Planning the Assessment
 - 2) Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment
 - 3) Desktop review of existing information
 - 4) Assessing which sites and areas will be surveyed
 - 5) Carrying out the survey
 - 6) Estimating the housing potential of each site
 - 7) Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed
 - i. Assessing suitability for housing
 - ii. Assessing availability for housing
 - iii. Assessing achievability for housing
 - iv. Overcoming constraints
 - 8) Review of the Assessment
 - 9) Identifying and assessing the housing potential of broad locations (where necessary)
 - 10) Determining the housing potential of windfall (where justified)

17. The Forward Planning team at Epping Forest District Council will manage the production of the SHLAA via the appointed consultants. The Forward Planning team has an extensive knowledge of local policies and the development of housing sites within the District which will be relayed to the appointed consultants. At different stages other officers of the Council will be needed to provide specific assistance (see Stages 6 and 7). Consultation with key local stakeholders will ensure that the assessment is properly conducted to the expected level of detail and in accordance with the Practice Guidance.

Stage 2 Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment

Table 1 below lists the sources of potential sites that will be considered in the assessment. If any other sources of potential sites become apparent during the Assessment these will also be investigated.

Sites in the planning process	
Source of potential sites	Source of information
Unimplemented planning permissions for housing	In-house database
Planning permissions for housing under construction	In-house database
Housing allocations	Local Plan and Alterations
All other land allocations	Local Plan and Alterations
Sites not currently in the planning process	
Sources of potential sites	Source of information
Vacant and derelict land and buildings	National Land Use Database Urban Housing Capacity Study 2002 Empty Property register Valuation office database LPA vacant property registers (industrial and commercial) Commercial property databases English House Condition Survey
Surplus public sector land	Essex County Council Land Terrier Primary Care Trust(s) Environment Agency British Waterways Contact Utility companies for Land holdings EFDC Land Terrier via Asset Management Group Register of Surplus Public Sector Land
Land in non-residential use which may be suitable for redevelopment for housing	Urban Housing Capacity study 2002 National Land Use Database Call for Sites Site visits Desktop survey
Additional housing opportunities in established residential areas	Urban Housing Capacity Study 2002 Desktop survey using Aerial Photographs Site visits
Large scale redevelopment and re-design of existing residential areas	Call for Sites Development and Design Brief St John's, Epping Broadway Options Development Brief,

	Debden Broadway Site visits
Sites in rural settlements and rural exception sites	Local Plan representations that were not allocated. Call for Sites Parish Council information Site visits
Urban extensions	Call for Sites
New free standing settlements	Call for Sites

18. Wherever possible the initial assessment will not exclude consideration of any type of land. The exception will be those sites that have particular designations and are protected from harmful development, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Stage 3: Desktop review of existing information

19. The sources of information for potential sites have been discussed in Table 1 above. A Call for Sites exercise was conducted in 2008 to enable landowners, developers and members of the public to put forward potential development sites. Due to the delay in producing the Core Strategy, sites being put forward under the Call for Sites process are still currently being accepted.

20. Apart from setting out the sources of information another key aspect is deciding the size of sites that will be included in the assessment. It is possible to look at all sites that have potential for at least one dwelling. However the potential housing yield from the exercise would be unlikely to justify the amount of extra work involved. Analysis of the information for the 5 year housing land supply for the District shows that while there are a considerable number of small sites they contribute a relatively small number of dwellings in the overall housing supply. A 5 year housing land supply can still be achieved even when those sites with 5 or less dwellings are removed from the figures.

21. It is proposed that a threshold of 6 dwellings minimum per site is set PPS3 states that a minimum density for new dwellings to be achieved is 30 dwellings per hectare. Therefore the threshold for sites to be included in the assessment should be 6 dwellings or 0.2 hectare (this area allows for 6 dwellings at a density of 30 dwellings per hectare).

22. As part of the desktop review each site will be assessed against a Site Appraisal Sheet (see Appendix to this report). This asks a series of standard questions that draw out further information about each site and its potential suitability for housing development.

23. All the sites identified by the desktop review will be listed and mapped at the scale of 1:1250.

Stage 4: Assessing which sites and areas will be surveyed

24. All the sites identified by the desktop review will be visited. In addition to considering all identified sites attention will be paid to the following:

- Current development hotspots that are the focus of recent planning permissions and give an indication of current market demand;

- Town and district centres and an area within 10 minutes walking time of these centres (up to 800metres is approximately a 10 minute walk time);
 - Principal public transport corridors and their walking catchment areas.
25. The survey of potential sites will follow a sequence with the most sustainable sites considered first. In this context the most sustainable sites are considered to be urban brownfield sites in the main towns located close to existing public transport routes, followed by brownfield sites in the main towns, followed by brownfield sites surrounding the main towns, then Greenfield sites around the main towns, then brownfield sites in smaller settlements, then sites on the edge of smaller settlements, then brownfield sites located away from existing settlements and finally Greenfield sites located away from settlements.
26. The above sequence is based on the guidance in PPS3 to give preference to brownfield sites in urban areas particularly where located close to existing public transport links and infrastructure, for example a town or district centre. Any site in the above sequence that is located close to existing public transport links will be considered more sustainable and preferred over a similarly located site that is not close to existing public transport links.

Stage 5: Carrying out the survey

27. A standard site visit sheet will be used by all those carrying out the survey, to ensure a consistent approach.

Stage 6: Estimating the housing potential of each site

28. The housing potential for each surveyed site will be guided by the dwelling densities that are appropriate in a particular area of the District. The lowest density for potential sites will be 30 dwellings per hectare in accordance with national planning policy in PPS3 unless the character of the area specifically justifies a lower density being considered.
29. Where an estimation of potential has already been made this will be used e.g. unimplemented planning permissions, pre-application discussions, development briefs.
30. For other sites the estimate will take into account the context of the location and existing dwelling densities. This will be combined with using examples of recent schemes in other similar areas to determine an appropriate density.

Stage 7: Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed

31. In deciding when and whether development is likely to occur consideration must be given to the suitability, availability and achievability of the site. Any constraints and whether they can be overcome should also be considered.
- Suitability – a site would be considered suitable for housing development if it offers an appropriate location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities. Factors to be considered include planning policy restrictions; physical problems or limitations such as access, flood risk or contamination; potential impacts such as effect on landscape

features or natural habitats; environmental conditions that would be experienced by prospective residents.

- Availability – this depends on there being no restrictions in terms of legal ownership, and an owner prepared to sell for development or a developer expressing interest to develop the site. Planning permission does not necessarily indicate availability if for example the landowner is not willing to sell the site. Assessment will be made on the best available information on the ownership and legal status of a site.
- Achievability – where the economic conditions allow for development at a particular time the site can be considered achievable. Essentially the cost of development needs to be balanced against the eventual value of the dwellings when sold. To gauge whether a site is economically viable for development, views will be sought from local Council officers, housebuilders and developers/agents to gain an understanding of viability. Their comments on the selected sites can then be used to check whether conclusions drawn on the economic viability of the remaining sites are correct.
- Overcoming constraints – Any constraints and the actions needed to overcome them will be considered. For example a new road access may be needed to make development possible.

32. A conclusion can then be reached about whether, according to the Practice Guidance, the site is deliverable or developable.

- Deliverable – a site is available now, offers an appropriate location for housing development now and there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years from the date of adoption of the plan.
- Developable – a site should be in an appropriate location for housing development, and there should be a reasonable prospect that it will be available for and could be developed at a specific point in time.

33. It is important to note however, that the identification of a site at this stage does not mean it will ultimately be found to be a suitable development site. Allocation of sites for housing purposes will be via the Local Development Framework.

Stage 8: Review of the Assessment

34. Once stages 6 and 7 are completed a list of sites will have been generated where the housing potential of each site has been assessed and a judgement made on when the site could come forward for development. A map showing the boundary of each site will also be produced.

35. The information collected will be used in updating the five year land supply of deliverable housing sites and will also be used to produce a housing trajectory showing when potential housing sites are likely to come forward up to 2031, the period covered by the revised East of England Plan.

36. The collated information will be set out in a spreadsheet showing the likely delivery of the identified sites with housing potential over the periods 0 to 5 years,

6 to 10 years and 11-15 years as required. The 15 year period covered by the SHLAA would start in 2011 when it is intended the Core Strategy will be adopted.

Stage 9: Identifying and assessing the housing potential of broad locations (where necessary)

37. If insufficient sites have been found the next step would be to identify broad locations for housing development. Broad locations give some indication to the local community about where future development will be directed and provide some certainty to developers about where development will be encouraged. If it is necessary to find broad locations for housing development regard will be had to the policies in the East of England Plan, the nature and scale of opportunities in the area identified and market conditions.

Stage 10: Determining the housing potential of windfall (where justified)

38. PPS3 makes it clear that where possible the supply of land for housing should be based on specific sites or where necessary broad locations as these provide a more positive approach with greater certainty over the future direction of housing growth. Therefore the intention is not to make an allowance for windfall sites as part of the housing supply; however this position will be kept under review as the SHLAA progresses.

Key Stakeholders for Consultation

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Neighbouring Councils

Borough of Broxbourne
Brentwood Borough Council
East Hertfordshire District Council
Harlow Council
Uttlesford District Council

Other Neighbouring Authorities

Chelmsford Borough Council
Enfield Council
Havering London Borough
Redbridge Council
Waltham Forest Council

Housing Associations

East Thames Housing Group (Dan Read, 0208 522 2000 email: dan.read@east-thames.co.uk)
Hastoe Housing Association (Ulrike Maccariello, 01799 522901 email:umaccariello@hastoe.com)
London and Quadrant Housing Trust (Andrew Clarke, 0208 535 2931 email: aclarke.lqgroup.org.uk)
Moat Housing Group (Paul Martin, 01621 841180 email: paul.martin@moat.co.uk)
Warden Housing Association (Home Group) (Jay Rutnam, 01279 621621 email: jay.rutnam@homegroup.org.uk)

Town/Parish Councils

Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Council
Buckhurst Hill Parish Council
Chigwell Parish Council
Epping Town Council
Epping Upland Parish Council
Fyfield Parish Council
High Ongar Parish Council
Lambourne Parish Council
Loughton Town Council
Matching Parish Council
Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers Parish Council
Nazeing Parish Council
North Weald Bassett Parish Council
Ongar Town Council
Roydon Parish Council
Sheering Parish Council
Stanford Rivers Parish Council
Stapleford Abbots Parish Council
Stapleford Tawney Parish Council
Theydon Bois Parish Council
Theydon Garnon Parish Council
Theydon Mount Parish Council
Waltham Abbey Town Council
Willingale Parish Council

Housebuilders or Planning Agents

Andrew Newman

BB Partnership

Bellway Homes Essex

Bidwells

BRD Tech

Clear Designs

Colin Southgate

Crest Nicholson (Eastern) Ltd

Darren Hunt

David Sadler

Hill Partnerships

Higgins Homes Plc

JB Planning (Tim Waller tim.waller@jbplanning.com 01438 312130 they promoted 2 sites through Call for Sites)

JCN Design Ltd

JSP Partnerships

JTS Partnership

Ken Fox

Ken Judge

Martyn Pattie

Redrow Homes Eastern Ltd

White & Mileson

Other Agencies/Bodies

Corporation of London

English Heritage

Environment Agency

Essex County Council

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

Natural England