

**WOKING STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT**  
**DRAFT METHODOLOGY CONSULTATION PAPER**

**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This paper sets out the approach to be used by Woking Borough Council in the production of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for Woking Borough.
- 1.2 The Council intend to follow the methodology proposed in the Government's guidance on SHLAAs which was published in July 2007<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.3 Comments on this paper should be received by the Council no later than 5pm on 4 March 2008. Any comments should be sent to:

Planning Policy  
Civic Offices  
Gloucester Square  
Woking  
Surrey  
GU21 6YL

Or Email: [planning.policy@woking.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@woking.gov.uk)

**2.0 Policy Context**

- 2.1 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) requires local authorities to set out policies and strategies for delivering the level of housing provision determined by the Regional Spatial Strategy, including the identification of broad locations and specific sites that will enable continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years. In order to achieve these requirements, PPS3 requires that a SHLAA be undertaken.
- 2.2 The SHLAA should enable the Council to demonstrate:
  - Specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that are ready for development and keep this topped up over time in response to market information.
  - Specific deliverable sites for years 6 – 10 and ideally years 11 – 15, in plans to enable the five year supply to be topped up.
  - Broad locations for future growth where it is not possible to identify specific sites for years 11 – 15 of the plan.
  - No allowance for windfalls in the first 10 years of the plan unless there are justifiable local circumstances that prevent specific sites being identified.
- 2.3 Annex C of the practice guidance states that a SHLAA should:
  - Assess the likely level of housing that could be provided if unimplemented planning permissions were brought into development.
  - Assess land availability by identifying buildings or areas of land (including previously developed land and greenfield) that have development potential for housing, including within mixed use developments.
  - Assess the potential level of housing that can be provided on identified land

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<sup>1</sup> 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance' (CLG, July 2007)

- Where appropriate, evaluate past trends in windfall land coming forward for development and estimate the likely future implementation rate.
  - Identify constraints that might make a particular site unavailable and/or unviable for development.
  - Identify sustainability issues and physical constraints that might make a site unsuitable for development.
  - Identify what action could be taken to overcome constraints on particular sites.
- 2.4 The SHLAA has strong links with the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The SHMA is being prepared by consultants jointly commissioned by Woking, Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils. The SHMA provides local and sub-regional evidence of housing need and demand in accordance with Government requirements set out in PPS3. The SHMA is due for publication in spring 2008. More information on the SHMA is available on the Council's website at:  
<http://www.woking.gov.uk/council/housing/policies/housingmarketassessment>
- 2.5 The need and demand for particular types of housing in Woking will be matched with potential housing sites in the Borough, which are being identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.
- 2.6 *The Woking Context*
- 2.7 Currently, the Development Plan for Woking comprises the Surrey Structure Plan 2004 and the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999. The housing target for Woking is set in the Structure Plan which requires the Council to accommodate an additional 3,340 homes between 2001 and 2016 (223 dwellings per annum).
- 2.8 When it is adopted, the South East Plan will replace the Surrey Structure Plan and will contain a new housing allocation for Woking. The draft South East Plan allocates 4,840 new dwellings for Woking between 2006 and 2026 (242 dwellings per annum). The South East Plan Panel Report recommends that the allocation for Woking is increased by an additional 1,000 dwellings over the plan period, equivalent to 292 new dwellings per annum.
- 2.9 Between 1 April 2001 and 31 March 2007, 2,100 dwellings were completed in Woking leaving a residual requirement of 1,240 (138 dwellings per annum) to 2016 against the Structure Plan allocation.
- 2.10 During the first year of the allocation set out in the draft South East Plan, 427 dwellings were completed in Woking, leaving a residual requirement of 5,413 dwellings to 2026 (285 per annum).
- 2.11 *Woking's Approach*
- 2.12 The remainder of this document describes in detail the Council's intended approach to the SHLAA. For the purpose of consultation, specific questions are asked at the end of each section.

### **3.0 Planning the Assessment**

- 3.1 The practice guidance recommends that local authorities should work in partnership with all interested parties in the production of the SHLAA. It is recognised that a number of people can provide valuable information and input at all levels of the process.

- 3.2 It is recommended in the guidance that the SHLAA is undertaken jointly with other local authorities within the Housing Market Area, and preferably through a Housing Market Partnership where one has been established. Woking Borough Council does not consider it practical to undertake a joint study at this time, particularly as no Housing Market Partnership as such has been established, although the Council is undertaking a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) jointly with Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils. The main reason for this is that the three authorities have different timetables for the production of Local Development Documents and undertaking a joint study would delay the production of Woking's Local Development Framework. However, every effort will be made to ensure that the methodology and SHLAA information is shared with Guildford and Waverley to ensure that the Assessments can be aggregated to the Housing Market Area level.
- 3.3 The guidance also recommends that key stakeholders such as house builders and local property agents should be involved in the SHLAA from the outset. In January 2008, the Council invited such key stakeholders to attend two workshops which were intended to seek views on the Council's proposed approach at an early stage. The views of the stakeholders have been taken in to consideration and used to inform this draft methodology. It is proposed to continue to involve stakeholders in the SHLAA process (see section 10, Validation, on page 6).
- 3.4 An officer level Project Team has been set up to undertake the SHLAA. The Project Team includes:
- Planning Strategy Manager
  - Principal Policy Officer (Planning)
  - Senior Policy Officer (Planning)
  - Deputy Development Control Manager
  - Senior Planning Officer (Development Control)
  - Principal Design and Conservation Officer
  - Valuation Services Manager
- 3.5 The following officers will join the Project Team to provide advice on their specific areas of expertise:
- Scientific Officer (Contaminated Land)
  - Housing Officer
  - Arboricultural Officer
  - Highways Engineer (Surrey County Council).

**Q1. Do you have any comments on the Council's intended approach to partnership working and the involvement of key stakeholders in undertaking the SHLAA?**

#### **4.0 Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment and desktop review of existing information**

- 4.1 The Council, with stakeholders, has identified the following sources of sites for inclusion in the Assessment:
- Sites allocated in the Local Plan

- Secondary employment sites (as identified in the Employment Needs Assessment).
  - Unimplemented planning permissions.
  - Sites where there has been a previous planning refusal.
  - Sites of previous development interest.
  - National Land Use Database.
  - Sites considered as part of PFI.
  - Previous Housing Potential Study sites.
  - Sites for which unimplemented planning briefs have been prepared.
  - Sites put forward by stakeholders.
- 4.2 As a basis for the assessment, the Council intend to include sites which are capable of accommodating six or more residential units. This is primarily to keep the number of sites assessed to a manageable level.
- 4.3 Once the list of sites has been collated, they will be mapped on the Council's GIS system and checked for potential constraints such as flooding and environmental designations.

**Q2. Do you agree with the proposed list of sources of sites?**

**Q3. Are there any additional sources of sites that should be considered?**

**Q4. Do you agree with the proposed threshold?**

## **5.0 Determining which sites and areas will be surveyed**

- 5.1 In addition to the sites identified in Section 4 above, the Council will undertake a detailed survey of broad locations in the Borough that are considered likely to contain development opportunities. The SHLAA guidance suggests that these should include town and district centres and their surrounding pedestrian catchments, principal public transport corridors and their walking catchment areas, development hotspots and other specific locations within or outside settlements where there might be potential due to regeneration, redevelopment, intensification of development or significant infrastructure provision nearby. With this in mind the Council will carry out a detailed street-by-street survey of the following areas:
- The town and district centres (Byfleet, Goldsworth Park, Horsell, Knaphill, St. Johns, Sheerwater, West Byfleet).
  - The pedestrian catchments of the town and district centres (i.e. the area within 800m of the centre boundaries).
  - The pedestrian catchments of the Borough's railway stations (i.e. 1,250m of the railway station).
- 5.2 This street-by-street search for potential sites will be undertaken by the Project Team.

**Q5. Are there any other areas within the Borough that are likely to contain development opportunities and which should be subject to a detailed survey?**

## 6.0 Carrying out the survey

6.1 The sites identified in sections 4 and 5 above will be visited by Council officers during March 2008. The characteristics will be recorded for each site as follows:

- Site size.
- Site boundaries.
- Current use(s).
- Surrounding land use(s).
- Character of surrounding area.
- Physical constraints (e.g. access, topography, location of pylons).
- Development progress (e.g. any ground works completed, number of homes started and completed).

6.2 A copy of the site survey form and a full list of constraints that will be checked are located at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 sets out the Council's intended approach to specific issues and constraints such as flood risk and the Special Protection Area.

**Q6. Do you agree with the site survey assessment criteria?**

**Q7. Do you agree with the list of constraints to be checked for each site?**

## 7.0 Estimating the housing potential of each site

7.1 Assessing the housing potential of sites will involve making estimations of housing densities. The Council intends to compare each site with a sample scheme that represents the form of development considered desirable in a particular area. The Council aims to use exemplar schemes representing the range of site sizes and locations where housing development is anticipated. Regard will be had to the character of the area and the type of housing and density aspirations set out in the emerging Core Strategy as well as a consideration of issues such as the shape of and access to the site which will influence capacity.

**Q8. Do you agree with the Council's proposed approach to estimating residential densities?**

## 8.0 Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed

8.1 When judging whether or not a site is deliverable and developable, that is, whether or not it will come forward for development, the Council will consider:

- If and when the site will be **available** for residential development - this part of the assessment involves a consideration of whether there are any legal or ownership problems with the site. If problems are identified, a judgement will need to be made about how and when these problems can be overcome.
- Whether the site is in a **suitable** location for housing development – this is a consideration of both policy and physical constraints on this site.
- The **achievability** of the site - a judgement about whether development of the site is economically viable.

- 8.2 This part of the Assessment will also involve a consideration of whether any constraints that have been identified can be overcome. This might involve securing investment in infrastructure or amending planning policies, for example.

**Q9. Do you have any comments regarding the Council's intended approach to assessing deliverability and developability of sites?**

## **9.0 Identifying and assessing the potential of broad locations and windfall allowance**

- 9.1 Following the assessment of deliverability and developability, it will be possible for the Council to determine whether or not there is a sufficient number of deliverable and developable sites to meet the housing target over the required 15-year period. Should the review of the Assessment not identify a sufficient number of specific sites for years 10-15 then it may be necessary for the Council to identify broad locations with housing potential. Should it be necessary to identify broad locations, the SHLAA will identify the options and assess the housing potential of those options.
- 9.2 The Council will consider a windfall allowance if following review of the Assessment and identification of broad locations, it is not possible to identify sufficient future housing supply, particularly for years 10 – 15 of the Plan, and it can be demonstrated that windfall sites are a significant component of land supply.

## **10.0 Validation**

- 10.1 At the stakeholder workshop held on 10 January 2008, the Home Builders' Federation suggested that it would like to involve its members in reviewing Woking's SHLAA at appropriate stages. The Council welcomes this proposal as it appreciates that the housebuilding industry has expertise and knowledge that would assist in assessing the deliverability and developability of the sites. The Council will liaise with the HBF to make arrangements for involvement of its members. This will help to make the SHLAA more robust and validate its preparation at key stages.
- 10.2 The Council currently employs an independent planning consultant to act as a 'critical friend' for the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF). It is proposed to commission the consultant to evaluate the SHLAA at key stages to ensure that it is being prepared in accordance with Government guidance and is a robust study and evidence base for Woking.

**Q10. Do you agree with the Council's proposed approach to validation of the SHLAA?**

## **11.0 Monitoring and Review**

- 11.1 It is proposed that the SHLAA is updated by officers annually in order to ensure that a 5 year supply of deliverable sites is maintained as required by PPS3. The progress of the sites through the planning and development process will be monitored as well as any changes in circumstances regarding deliverability constraints.

**Q11. Do you have any other comments to make on the proposed SHLAA methodology?**

**APPENDIX 1a: WOKING SHLAA – SITE ASSESSMENT SHEET**

|   |                    |                               |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>1. UNIQUE SITE REF:</b>  | <b>2. OFFICER:</b> | <b>3. DATE OF SITE VISIT:</b> |
| <b>4. SITE ADDRESS:</b>   |                    | <b>5. CURRENT USE:</b>        |
| <b>6. SITE DESCRIPTION:</b>   |                    |                               |
| <b>7. DETAILS OF NEIGHBOURING USES/CHARACTER OF SURROUNDING AREA:</b>   |                    |                               |
| <p><b>8. ISSUES TO CHECK ON SITE:</b></p> <p>Are there any mature trees on site?</p> <p>Describe the topography of the site</p> <p>Are there any visible contamination issues</p> <p>Are there any obvious issues relating to suitability of existing access to the site?</p> |                    |                               |
| <b>9. ANY OTHER ISSUES/INITIAL COMMENTS ON SUITABILITY:</b>   |                    |                               |
| (Map of site overleaf)  |                    |                               |

**Q.12 Are there any other considerations that the Council should have regard to on site?**

## **APPENDIX 1b: LIST OF CONSTRAINTS**

The following constraints will be checked for each site through the desktop review and site surveys.

### *General background information*

1. Unique Ref.
2. Site Address
3. Current site use
4. Site Area
5. Existing units
6. Details of site owner(s)
7. Details of Stakeholder / Agent
8. Relevant planning history
9. Known developer interest
10. Existing use value

### *Development Plan designation/planning issues*

11. Woking Borough Local Plan sites allocated for particular purpose
12. Within Woking Town Centre?
13. Within other district/village centre?
14. Public Transport Accessibility Level
15. Green Belt
16. Urban open space
17. SPA zone
18. SAC zone
19. SSSI Consultation
20. Listed/locally listed buildings/impact on setting of listed building
21. Flood risk zone
22. Existence of significant trees
23. Contamination issues
24. Highways assessment
25. Compatibility of neighbouring uses
26. Any other issues (e.g. topography of the site, Scheduled Ancient Monument)
27. Urban Area of Special Residential Character
28. Conservation area
29. Environmental designation (e.g. archaeology potential; LNR; SSSI; SNCI)
30. Other designations (e.g. Common Land; Public Open Space; escarpments; canal/river corridor);
31. Accessibility (e.g. by foot; by bike; to GP, primary and secondary schools and to the town centre)
32. Site survey notes



## **APPENDIX 2: INTENDED APPROACH TO SPECIFIC ISSUES/ CONSTRAINTS**

### Areas at risk of flooding

The Council intend to:

1. Initially only consider sites in Zone 1 (less than a 1 in 1000 year flood event probability)
2. If necessary, the Council will then look at sites in Zone 2 (between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 year flood event probability) in line with the sequential test prescribed by PPS25: Development and Flood Risk.

The Zones are defined in the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. This approach has been agreed by the Environment Agency.

### Special Protection Area

The whole of Woking Borough falls within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. It is the Council's intention to discount any sites that come forward within 400m of the SPA on the basis that Natural England has advised that within this zone harm to the SPA cannot be avoided.

The Council's SPA Interim Strategy currently sets out avoidance measures which will allow sites in the rest of the Borough to be mitigated against the impacts of residential development on the SPA. The Council do not therefore intend to discount sites that fall between 400m and 5km of the SPA for the purpose of this study.

The Council is currently discussing this approach with Natural England.

### Special Area of Conservation

A part of the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC lies within the Borough boundary. The Council does not currently have a procedure for dealing with sites that come forward in close proximity, however would propose that Natural England should be consulted on any sites that may come forward within 500m of this SAC.

The Council is currently discussing this approach with Natural England.

### SSSIs

There are also a number of SSSIs within the Borough. It is the Council's intention to consult with Natural England on any sites that may be identified within 500m of a SSSI.

The Council is currently discussing this approach with Natural England.

### Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

It is not the Council's intention to consider sites that fall within a SNCI.

Surrey Wildlife Trust has been asked to give their view on how the Council should deal with sites within close proximity to an SNCI (i.e. should a distance threshold be applied?).

### Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments & Conservation Areas

1. Sites that are within the curtilage or adjacent to Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments will be subject to appraisal by the Council's Principal Design and Conservation Officer.

2. Sites that come forward within or adjacent to Conservation Areas will be subject to appraisal by the Council's Principal Design and Conservation Officer.

The Council is currently discussing this approach with English Heritage.

#### Urban Areas of Special Residential Character (UASRC)

The Council do not intend to exclude sites within UASRCs from the SHLAA. Estimates of the housing potential of these sites would have regard to the guidance set out in existing SPG on UASRCs and the character of the area, etc.

#### Green Belt / Greenfield

Sites that are in the Green Belt or that are greenfield will not be excluded from the SHLAA. In light of the South East Plan Panel Report, the Council will undertake a comprehensive assessment of housing potential in Woking to include consideration of Green Belt/greenfield sites.

#### Areas of Public Open Space

The Council's audit of open spaces, as required by PPG17, concluded that there was not a surplus of open space in the Borough. The audit is currently being reviewed and early indications suggest that the Council still cannot afford to lose any identified urban open space to development. For this reason, the Council does not intend to comprehensively review the potential of all its identified and protected open space for housing development as part of the SHLAA, but will not exclude from the SHLAA any open spaces suggested by stakeholders where there may be the potential to provide alternative or additional open space as part of potential housing development.

#### Site Assembly

For the purpose of the SHLAA, the Council will generally discount sites that have more than 6 landowners/ occupiers, due to difficulties with site assembly.

**Q13. Do you agree with the Council intended approach to these specific issues and constraints?**

**Q14. Are there any other issues and/or constraints that have not been considered?**