



Neighbourhood Planning Guidance

Neighbourhood Planning: Site Assessments

South Cambridgeshire District Council

September 2017

This document includes hyperlinks to a range of websites, and the hyperlinks can be accessed using the published version of this document, which is available to view via: www.scambs.gov.uk/npguidance. Every effort has been made to ensure that these hyperlinks are up-to-date, however as websites change these hyperlinks can become invalid.

Herefordshire Council has kindly given permission for us to provide links to their guidance on neighbourhood planning.

Huntingdonshire District Council has kindly allowed us to take inspiration and wording from their Neighbourhood Planning Guidance.

If you have any queries relating to this document, please contact us via neighbourhood.planning@scambs.gov.uk or 01954 713183.

Site assessment for neighbourhood planning

In preparing your neighbourhood plan if you are considering including any site allocations for different land uses such as housing or employment you will need to have assessed each site thoroughly and carefully. It is currently possible to get a grant towards the cost of consultants helping with this work from Locality

Stage One: Does your plan need to allocate sites?

Understanding the development needs for your area?

Before you start the process of looking at sites you will have to consider whether there is a need for sites to be allocated in your area. Is there any unmet housing need? Do you need a new village hall or new employment area?

You will be required to have evidence to justify planning for additional uses in your area such as more housing - it may be that you will have to carry out a 'Housing Needs Survey' for your area.

The desire to provide more housing for local people may have been one of the reasons your local community decided to prepare a plan. We recommend that you consult at an early stage with SCDC to help you decide on your next step.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that a neighbourhood plan can allocate sites for development. A qualifying body (parish council in South Cambridgeshire) should carry out an appraisal of options and an assessment of individual sites against clearly identified criteria.

The NPPG considers that all rural settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development.

Once you have decided to consider looking at sites where is a good starting point for this task?

All policies included in your neighbourhood plan including site allocations must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in SCDC's adopted development plan – this is one of the Basic Condition tests that your plan must meet.

You should check within our adopted LDF and in the emerging Local Plan to see whether there are any sites already allocated for development in your neighbourhood area. Your plan can allocate additional sites to those in our adopted LDF as long as this is supported by evidence to demonstrate need above that identified in the Local Plan. You should not promote less development than is set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

Your neighbourhood planning steering group/ parish council should work with SCDC to ensure that there is consistency between sites allocated in your plan and those included in our adopted plan or in the emerging Local Plan.

Where to look next?

When SCDC started to prepare its new Local Plan one of the first tasks was to prepare a Strategic

Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This SHLAA forms part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan and is a technical assessment to identify sites that are potentially suitable for housing.

To help identify sites for assessment, SCDC undertook a Call for Sites in Summer 2011, which was an opportunity for anyone (e.g. landowners, developers, parish councils) to put to SCDC any land that they would like to be considered for housing development or for Gypsy & Traveller sites.

Further sites were submitted to SCDC during the following consultations of the Local Plan:

- Issues and Options - Summer 2012, and
- Issues and Options 2 - Early 2013.

The latest version of the South Cambridgeshire SHLAA from 2013 is published on our [website](#). It is a technical assessment of the potential suitability, availability and achievability of sites for housing development or as a new settlement.

The information from this assessment could be a good starting point for your neighbourhood plan to see what land has been previously proposed and put forward for housing in your area. The SHLAA will include SCDC's assessment of each of the sites.

What information does the SHLAA contain?

The assessment of each site included in the SHLAA considers a range of issues such as:

- any physical constraints on development (e.g. flood risk, environmental and wildlife designations),
- the potential impact of development of the site on heritage assets, landscape and townscape, and the Green Belt purposes,
- any environmental conditions (e.g. noise or quality issues) that would have an impact on residents of the proposed development,
- capacity of infrastructure and utility services (e.g. transport, electricity, water, sewerage, schools, health facilities),
- availability of the site for development, and
- achievability and viability of the site.

The SHLAA only considered sites that were:

- Capable of being allocated for 10 or more dwellings;
- At least 0.25hectares in size;
- Located within or adjoining the development framework; and
- Located in a Rural Centre, Minor Rural Centre or Group Village.

As part of the preparation of the plan for your village you may want to consider smaller sites but the SHLAA provides a starting point to see what sites in your area have already been considered. Also it is worth noting that a SHLAA sets out all the land with potential for housing and it does not follow that all deliverable sites in the SHLAA should be allocated.

How can SCDC help?

SCDC – Links to our [adopted development plan](#) and to the [emerging Local Plan](#) to see whether there are site allocations within your area.

SCDC's SHLAA (2013) can be viewed on our website:

Guidance and Regulations

NPPG

[NPPG Preparing a plan](#)

Paragraphs:

042 Reference ID: 41-042-20140306

043 Reference ID: 41-043-20140306

044 Reference ID: 41-044-20160519

There is guidance in the NPPG on [assessing sites](#) and on [viability](#).

Locality

[Site Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans](#)

Other Resources

SCDC Neighbourhood Plan Guidance Documents

What are the Basic Conditions and How to Meet them

Strategic Policies

Site assessment - What are the benefits?

Allocating sites can be one of the most controversial parts of neighbourhood planning. However it does have the benefit of bringing forward sustainable development to meet local needs within your area and providing new infrastructure and services for the benefit of the local community.

By having specific sites identified within your area for particular uses, decisions on planning applications can be given a clear steer. This can provide a greater degree of certainty for developers, service providers and residents on the future shape of your area.

How do you carry out a site assessment?

The site selection process should be carried out in an **open and transparent way** and should include **consultation with your local community**. You will need to record why sites have been selected and to be able to give reasons why some have been selected over others. This will provide you with evidence for your plan that will 'tell the story' of how the most appropriate sites have been chosen for inclusion in your plan.

It is not just housing sites that can be identified and allocated in your neighbourhood plan – you may wish to consider employment, business uses, leisure or community facility.

[Stage Two: The Site Assessment](#)

How do you find out what sites to look at?

You may find that during the early publicity on your neighbourhood plan that suggestions are put forward from the local community for development sites for different uses within your parish area. Local landowners may be on your steering group for your plan and be willing to offer their land for development.

The method most commonly used to identify potential housing land is to undertake a 'Call for Sites'. This is where the parish council / neighbourhood plan steering group invites landowners, developers and other interested parties to submit potential sites for future allocation in your plan.

This could be advertised through a door to door leaflet drop, on the parish website, in the parish magazine and through social media.

Appendix A is a Proforma that can be adapted for the purposes of your Call for Sites exercise.

It is a good idea to engage with local landowners at an early stage in your plan making. This will provide you with the opportunity to find out what they are considering doing in the future with their property and you can explain the communities' aspirations for future planning.

How can SCDC help you?

As SCDC has carried out a Call for Sites we can advise you on what questions to include in your questionnaire form.

By providing an example template for you 'Call for Sites' form.

What to do with the list of potential sites?

Once you have carried out your Call for Sites and have a list of potential sites you need to determine which of these have development potential.

Each site should be tested for the following:

- Suitability
- Availability and
- Economic viability

These are explained more fully in the [Locality](#) guidance.

This is an opportunity to gather as much evidence as you can of each site so that you have the full information to decide which is the most appropriate to include in your plan.

Issues to consider in assessing a site

- Proximity to services such as shops, school, employment, and public transport.
- Transport and highways access;
- Impact upon the landscape and wider countryside;
- Impact upon the townscape within a settlement;
- Environmental health impacts – contaminated land, noise and light pollution;
- Connection and availability of utilities such as water supply and drainage.

Other Resources

SCDC Neighbourhood Plan Guidance Documents

Sources of Evidence and Information

Locality

[Site Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans](#)

How to eliminate unsuitable sites

You may wish to highlight in your assessment some major constraints which will result in a site being considered completely unsuitable for development.

Such constraints could include:

- Compliance with the strategic policies in SCDC adopted development plan
- Flood Risk –sequential tests must be carried out on all sites - if the site is within flood risk zone 3a or 3b (based on Environment Agency maps) it should be rejected.
- Proximity to and impact on national or international wildlife sites – any site proposed within such an area must be rejected.
- Deliverability – sites must be capable of being available, developed and built within the plan period – otherwise they should be rejected

When completing the assessment form you may find it useful to contact our statutory consultees as they will be able to advise you with information or assistance on the constraints of different sites. Below is a list of statutory consultees contact details:

SCDC Environmental Health	env.health@scambs.gov.uk
Environment Agency	planning_liaison.anglian_central@environment-agency.gov.uk
Historic England	eastplanningpolicy@historicengland.org.uk
Natural England	consultations@naturalengland.org.uk
Highway authority	victoria.keppey@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Network Rail	townplanningse@networkrail.co.uk
Rail authority	info@abellio.com & chris.grayling.mp@parliament.uk
Sport England	planning.east@sportengland.org
Local Flood Authority	fr.planning@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Stage Three: Shortlisted sites

After the assessment

Once you have a shortlist of sites that are suitable; available and viable you will need to identify which are the most appropriate ones to be carried forward to the next stage of your plan making. This is likely to be carried out through a consultation to find out the views of your community and other stakeholders on the different sites.

Next steps

Within your draft neighbourhood plan you will need to have a map showing any sites that you are proposing for development with their boundaries shown clearly.

Each site will then require a policy specifying what the requirements for the development will be. This could be a criteria based policy setting out how the site will be delivered, by who, when and what infrastructure is required for delivery.

Other Guidance:

Herefordshire Council guidance note 21

[Guide to site assessment and choosing allocation sites](#)

Appendix A - Site Submission Form

(Insert name of Parish Council) is looking at the potential availability of land for a range of uses across (insert name of designated area) up to 2031. This exercise is being undertaken as part of the evidence base to support the preparation of the (Insert name of designated area) Neighbourhood Plan. This form should identify sites which will be considered by the Parish Council for their suitability for the used proposed over the lifetime of the plan.

Please use a **separate form** for each site and complete the form to the best of your knowledge.

Sites submitted to the Parish Council will be in the public domain and the information submitted will not be treated as confidential.

A map showing exact site location and boundary in red must be submitted.

If you need any assistance completing the form, please contact the (insert contact details – email/ telephone number)

Please return this form to (insert parish council)

- Via email to (insert email address of parish council)
- Via post to (address of parish council)

Please return by (insert date for end of exercise)

PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS

YOUR DETAILS:			
Title	Name
Organisation (if applicable)		
Address		
Telephone no	Email
AGENT'S DETAILS: (if applicable)			
Name		
Address (with postcode)		
Telephone no	Email

1 Site ownership		
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What is your interest in the land?	Landowner	
	Developer	
	Land agent	
	Planning Consultant	
	Registered Provider (Housing Association)	
	Other	
Site ownership If you are not the landowner, please provide the details of all landowners:	Landowners Name: Address:	
	Email Telephone no.	
If not the landowner , please confirm landowner/s have been informed of this submission:	Yes No	
Does the landowner/s support the submission? If yes, please provide evidence of their support e.g. a letter	Yes No Don't know	

2 Site Information	
Site address	
OS Grid reference	
Site area (hectares)	
<u>Site Map</u> Please provide a scale map showing at least two named roads, any surrounding buildings and the direction of north. It is recommended that the scale is either 1:1250 or 1:2500 or as appropriate to fit a map no larger than paper size A3. The site for consideration should be clearly edged in red and should include all land necessary for the proposed development (e.g. access, visibility splays, landscaping). Any other land in the same ownership close to or adjoining the site for consideration should be clearly edged in blue.	

3. Site Description		
What is the current use of the site		
If the site is developed but not currently in use what was the last use of the site and when did it cease.		
Proposed use (Please tick appropriate box)	Housing	
	Employment	
	Retail	
	Other (please note)	

Site description:		
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4 Timescales		
Awaiting relocation of existing use:		
Likely timeframe for development (please tick appropriate box)	0-5 years	
	6-10 years	
	11-15 years	
	16 -20 years	

5 Site Details	
Access to an adopted highway (please describe)	
Vegetation on the site (e.g. trees, hedgerows)	
Hydrological features (e.g. streams, watercourses)	
Other on-site features (e.g. particular features, existing buildings etc.)	
Are you aware if there are any site contamination issues? e.g. hazardous / polluted ground conditions, hazardous installations, air quality, noise issues If yes please give details.	Yes No

6 Site Accessibility	
Within which settlement is the site located?	
Is the settlement served by public transport?	Yes No
What key services/ community facilities does this settlement have> (e.g. a shop, pub, village hall)	
Distance from the settlement centre	
Does the site have access to utility services? (e.g. gas, electricity, water, sewerage)	
Are you aware of any restrictive covenants within or adjacent to the site?	