

Thurrock Council

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

SUMMARY METHOD STATEMENT

Thurrock Council has recently published Preferred Options Consultation Documents for the Core Strategy and Sites Allocations DPDs. Given the extensive and detailed mapping, consultation and analysis undertaken to date by the Council on all known sites at three successive stages over the last two years, it is not necessary to undertake a full SHLAA. However, there are elements of a SHLAA, such as the assessment of 'alternative' sites and testing how 'deliverable' each site is, which are essential components, and will need to be carried out in full.

Therefore, the proposed method follows the key stages as set out in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment practice guidance, taking account of the valuable work that has already been undertaken in assessing housing capacity in the Borough.

Stage 1: Planning the assessment

This stage is largely project management tasks including agreeing a project work programme and gathering the data necessary to start the assessment. This consultation stage is also an early part of the project, which comes under Stage 1.

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

The assessment will include sites from the following sources:

- The Urban Capacity Study
- Preferred Options Consultation documents: Core Strategy and Policies for control of development; sites allocations and policies; technical site appendix
- Responses to the Preferred Options consultation process (Feb 2008)
- Sites coming forward through the planning application process
- Potential sites identified in informal discussions with developers
- Any additional sites identified during the course of the study, including from this consultation.

Stage 3: Desktop review of existing information

The purpose of this stage is to build on the database of sites and determine an agreed list of sites, which are deemed appropriate to be carried forward for full assessment. This will include a review of sites included in the published Preferred Options Documents and a preliminary assessment of newly identified sites, including sites that have emerged through the Preferred Options consultation and SHLAA consultation.

Stage 4: Determining which sites and areas will be surveyed

The Council has an extensive database of sites, which has been assessed and consulted on. The Council are satisfied that no new survey work is needed, other than as part of the Stage 7 assessment to assess whether a site is deliverable / developable. The only circumstances where new sites will be assessed, is if a new site emerges through the Preferred Options consultation or the SHLAA consultation, which is judged to be an appropriate site to survey.

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Stage 5: Carrying out Desktop Site Surveys

Desktop surveys of new sites will be undertaken to identify the following characteristics:

- Site size
- Site boundaries
- Current use
- Surrounding land uses
- Character of surrounding area
- Physical constraints
- Development progress
- Initial assessment of suitability for housing / mixed use development

These desktop reviews will be supplemented by on-site surveys undertaken as part of Stage 7.

Stage 6: Estimating the Housing Potential of each site

This stage would involve a review of current capacity estimates for existing sites in the database and may involve reconciling different capacity estimates for the same sites, which have been formulated by different parties.

If necessary, case study design analysis will be carried out on new sites to test the capacity for housing.

Stage 7: Assessing Suitability, Availability and Achievability

For all sites, both current and new, an assessment will be made as to whether a site is 'suitable', 'available' and 'achievable' within a 15 year timeframe. These will be tested through site visits and desktop research:

Suitability criteria include:

- Policy restrictions
- Physical limitations
- Impacts on surroundings
- Environmental conditions

Availability of sites for housing will be tested through research and on-site inspections. Onerous agreements on parcels of land will be highlighted, where possible, as will unregistered land and multiple ownerships which will impact on land assembly and potential acquisition costs and relocation requirements.

Whether or not sites are 'achievable' will be assessed through an analysis of, among other things: the quality of housing in adjacent areas, neighbouring uses, open space, amenity provision, size of site, scope for new market creation and proximity to transport. Abnormal costs will also be identified, e.g. flood risk.

In addressing the factors set out above, barriers to delivery will be considered, and how these could be overcome.

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Stage 8: Review of the Assessment

At this stage, a review of total housing capacity may be necessary, in light of alternative sites that may have come forward in the course of the study.

Stage 9: Identifying and Assessing Broad Locations

Identification and assessment of broad locations will be part of the earlier desktop review, to ensure the robustness of the sites in the study. Any broad locations that are identified will help to inform strategic housing allocations and development options up to 2031.

Stage 10: Windfall allowance

The Council are satisfied that housing targets for Thurrock can be met by the sites currently included in the database. This decision will be revisited at Stage 3 of the study but an inclusion of a windfall allowance is not expected to be necessary.