

TRIBAL



Thurrock Council

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

Final Report

Tribal

in association with CBRE

February 2010

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Study

- 1.1.1 In line with the guidance given in PPS3, Thurrock Council commissioned consultants Tribal¹ (in association with CBRE) to undertake a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This study establishes the potential for accommodating new housing in Thurrock over a 15-year period from a base date of December 2009.
- 1.1.2 The study will underpin the Council's final adopted strategic approach to housing development in the Borough up to 2021 and beyond and will provide supporting technical evidence to inform the preparation of the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD).
- 1.1.3 The Assessment identifies a pool of sites which are suitable, available and achievable, and gives information on what action would need to be taken in order for sites to come forward. It does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for housing development, rather, it informs the decision-making process.
- 1.1.4 The study has been completed in accordance with the SHLAA Practice Guidance (CLG, July 2007) and adapted where necessary to take account of work already carried out as part of Thurrock Council's LDF preparation.
- 1.1.5 Underpinning the methodology applied is the design led approach. This provides a robust means of estimating site capacity and also helps to illuminate some of the key policy choices to be taken (e.g. in terms of density, car parking and other design standards). 16 case study design examples were selected and the results of these were then applied to the other sites that were identified by the study. A number of these were carried over from the previous Urban Capacity Study (Llewelyn Davies, May 2005). The 16 case studies also include 'neighbourhood density' estimates based on research into appropriate gross densities at the neighbourhood or 'broad location' level.
- 1.1.6 The SHLAA is a snapshot in time, representing the situation during the study period. Such studies can be used as a proactive planning tool by the Council to bring forward sites for development through their LDF. However, some of the sites identified will not come forward for development, particularly in the current economic climate, even given the thorough nature of the assessment into a site's availability and achievability. Equally, other un-identified sites will come forward that have not been included in the assessment. As such, the SHLAA should be treated as part of a 'living' evidence base, which should be monitored and updated regularly to reflect changes in the housing supply, to take into account sites being built out and new sites coming forward.
- 1.1.7 It should be noted that this study is not a statement of Council policy; rather it is a technical document for consideration, assisting in the production of new development plan documents as required under planning procedures.
- 1.1.8 The capacity of the study area to accommodate residential development has been estimated in isolation for the equally pressing need to identify land for development for other purposes, including schools, health facilities, open space, shops, leisure, community facilities, etc.

¹ The Tribal team that carried out the SHLAA are now at Scott Wilson as part of the Strategic Planning and Urban Design team (Contact: Ben Castell 0207 798 5137 or Ben.Castell@scottwilson.com)

1.1.9 The SHLAA is presented in four volumes. This report represents Volume 1 of the SHLAA. The other documents in the SHLAA suite are as follows:

- Volume 2: Design Exercises
- Volume 3 – Site Schedules
- Volume 4 – Mapping

1.2 The Study Area

1.2.1 The borough is a key regeneration area in the East of England, lying within the Thames Gateway, and a major growth area in the Government’s Communities Plan. Its appropriateness as a growth area is a result of the availability of large areas of former industrial land for redevelopment, its proximity to London and its good transport links.

1.2.2 There is considerable potential for house building and regeneration within the existing urban areas and on Brownfield land, most particularly in the key settlements within the major urban areas of Thurrock, including Purfleet, West Thurrock and South Stifford / Grays (Figure 1.1)

1.2.3 Although this study only considers land suitable for housing development, it is also appreciated that there is a need to balance the demands for new sustainable housing and regeneration projects with the need to safeguard appropriate employment land and the need to provide further employment land within the Borough.

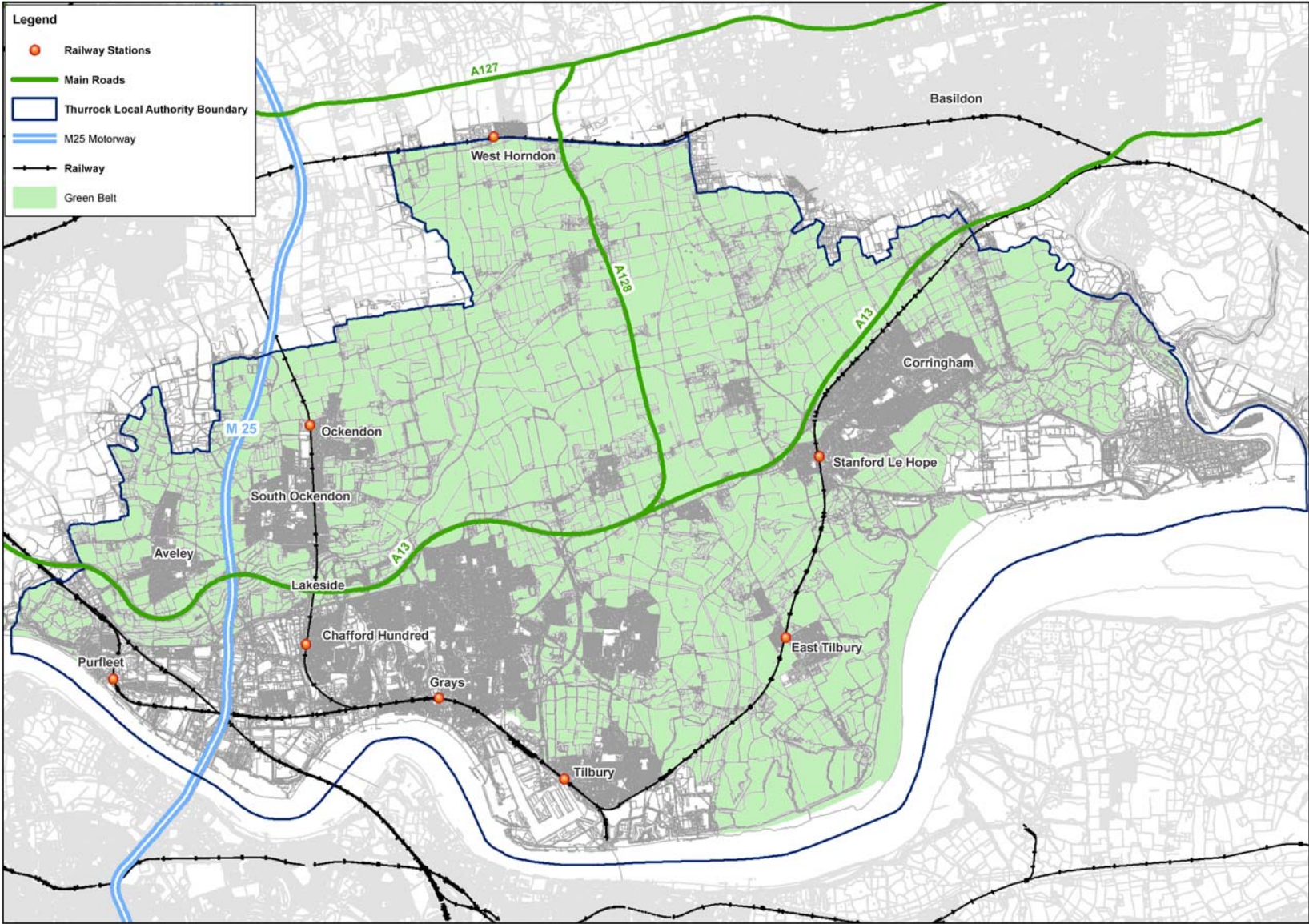
1.2.4 The study has assessed housing potential across the Borough, including sites outside the urban area, such as Brownfield sites outside settlement boundaries and potentially suitable Greenfield sites.

1.2.5 The results are presented by ward, for the following wards:

- Aveley and Uplands
- Belhus
- Chadwell St Mary
- Chafford and North Stifford
- Corringham and Fobbing
- East Tilbury
- Grays Riverside
- Grays Thurrock
- Little Thurrock Blackshots
- Little Thurrock Rectory
- Ockendon
- Orsett
- South Chafford
- Stanford East and Corringham Town
- Stanford-le-Hope West
- Stifford Clays
- The Homesteads

- Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park
- Tilbury St Chads
- West Thurrock and South Stifford

Figure 1-1: Thurrock Context Plan



1.3 Study Approach

1.3.1 Until 2006, national housing policy was set out in Planning Policy Guidance 3 (PPG3). PPG3 required local authorities to undertake assessments of housing land supply known as Urban Capacity Studies (UCS). However, from 2006, PPG3 was superseded by PPS3 and the requirement for a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

1.3.2 This change was partly as a response to the Barker Review (2004), which concluded that the UCS relied on identifying land supply in a limited area with sometimes unrealistic assumptions on the likelihood of sites coming forward. The report recommended a step-change in housing delivery through an increase in the rate of house building in order to meet demand at local level. It stressed the importance of an evidence-based policy approach, and recommended that Local Development Documents and Regional Spatial Strategies policies should be informed by a robust, shared evidence base.

1.3.3 The SHLAA is intended to:

- Identify specific, deliverable sites for the first 5 years of a plan that are ready for development (and keep this replenished over time in response to market information);
- Identify specific, developable sites for years 6-10, and ideally years 11-15, to enable the 5 year supply of deliverable sites to be topped up;
- Where it is not possible to identify specific sites for years 11-15 of the plan, indicate broad locations for future growth; and
- Not include an allowance for windfalls in the first 10 years of the plan unless there are justifiable local circumstances that prevent specific sites being identified

1.3.4 The approach to this SHLAA is underpinned by the principles set out in PPS3 and the accompanying SHLAA Practice Guidance (July 2007).

1.4 Summary of Findings

1.4.1 A summary of the findings from the Assessment is set out below. The methodology used to arrive at these capacity estimates is set out in Chapter 3 of this report. The figures in this section provide an estimate of the housing potential for Thurrock in total. Chapter 5 provides a more detailed ward-by-ward breakdown.

1.4.2 In total, 441 potential sites were identified. Of these sites, 294 were accepted as suitable for residential development, 128 were rejected as unsuitable and the remaining 19 sites were rejected as unsuitable for residential development on the basis of current policy only. The 294 accepted suitable sites amount to a total area of just under 600ha.

1.4.3 Across these 294 sites there is an estimated capacity for 19,280 residential dwellings with the potential to come forward in the first 15 years, with a further 1,482 estimated as deliverable beyond the first 15 years. The total figure has been broken down into the following phases:

0-5 years = 4,293 dwellings

6-10 years = 7,983 dwellings

11-15 years = 7,004 dwellings

15+ years = 1,482 dwellings

1.4.4 Capacity for 3,642 dwellings was identified on sites rejected on the basis of current policy only.

1.5 Overview of this Report

1.5.1 The remainder of this report is set out as follows:

- Chapter 2: Context
- Chapter 3: Study Method
- Chapter 4: Estimating housing potential through design
- Chapter 5: Results
- Chapter 6: Towards a monitoring framework

2 Context

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter sets out the context within which this study was undertaken. The chapter firstly provides an overview of relevant national, regional and local planning policy. This includes details of Thurrock Council's advanced position in LDF preparation, the implications of which are assessed considering advice prepared by the Planning Advisory Service. The chapter then provides a summary of the Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which analysed the key housing market factors underlying housing supply and demand in the sub region.

2.2 National Planning Policy

2.2.1 PPS3 sets out the national planning policy framework for delivering housing objectives. The principal aim of PPS3 is to underpin the Government's response to the Barker Review of Housing Supply (2004), and in particular the necessary step-change in housing delivery, through a 'new, more responsive approach to land supply at the local level'. This is a clear departure from PPG3 and the previous guidance 'Tapping the Potential'.

2.2.2 PPS3 reflects the Government's commitment to improving the affordability and supply of housing in all types of communities, as well as contributing to sustainable development (as set out in PPS1). The specific outcomes that the planning system should deliver are as follows;

- Well-designed, high quality housing
- Mix of tenure and price for both market and affordable housing
- A sufficient quantity of housing to improve choice
- Housing in suitable locations with respect to community facilities, key services, jobs and infrastructure
- A flexible supply of land that is managed to maximise the efficient and effective use of it – including the re-use of previously developed land.

2.2.3 These outcomes are achieved through a new approach underpinned by principles and core concepts, including:

- Sustainable development
- A visionary and strategic approach
- Market responsiveness
- Collaborative working
- An evidence-based policy approach
- A focus on outcome and delivery (applying the principles of 'Plan, Monitor, Manage').

2.2.4 Annex C of PPS3 puts forward the SHLAA as the evidence base, asserting that the assessment is an important part of the policy process. PPS3 states the 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.
- Where appropriate, evaluate past trends in windfall land coming forward for development and estimate the likely future implementation rate.
- Identify sustainability issues and physical constraints that might make a site unsuitable for development.
- Identify constraints that might make a particular site unavailable and/or unviable for development.
- Identify what action could be taken to overcome constraints on particular sites.

2.2.5 PPS3 also states that Regional Spatial Strategies should set out the level of overall housing provision for the region, broadly illustrated in a housing delivery trajectory, for a sufficient period to enable Local Planning Authorities to plan for housing over a period of at least 15 years. This should be distributed amongst constituent housing market and Local Planning Authority areas.

2.2.6 Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) sets out the Government's policy on the preparation of local development documents, outlining the principles behind the evidence base for the Local Development Framework. Although referring to Urban Capacity Studies, such principles on baseline evidence and soundness are upheld, and the SHLAA should therefore conform to this. Paragraph 4.8 of PPS12, entitled 'Development of the Evidence Base', reads;

“The policies prepared by the local planning authority should be founded on a thorough understanding of the needs of their area and the opportunities and constraints which operate within that area. Local planning authorities should prepare and maintain an up-to-date information base on key aspects of the social, economic and environmental characteristics of their area, to enable the preparation of a sound spatial plan meeting the objectives of sustainable development.”

2.3 Regional Planning Policy

East of England Plan

2.3.1 In May 2008 CLG issued the East of England Plan (the Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England) and the Supporting Documents. The review for the East of England Plan is the first region wide RSS review to be completed. It is based on the Draft Plan produced by the East of England Regional Assembly.

2.3.2 The Plan provides a long term vision for development in the region. The importance of this vision is especially crucial given the strong growth pressures facing the East of England, including significant housing targets. Paragraph 5.2 of the Plan reads:

“Provision of sufficient high quality housing to meet the needs of the region's growing population is a key priority. In the most pressurised housing market areas, such as close to London and around Cambridge, the emphasis is on maximising sustainable

housing capacity on previously developed land and limited green field development in response to strong market demand and acute affordability problems.”

2.3.3 Policy H1 of the Plan, Regional Housing Provision 2001 to 2021, sets the following minimum housing provision targets:

East of England:

- 508,000 net additional dwellings over the period 2001 to 2021. Taking account of completions of 105,550 between 2001 and 2006, this means the minimum regional housing target is 402,540 for the period 2006 to 2021.

Thurrock Unitary Authority:

- 18,500 units was set for the period 2001 to 2021. Taking account of completions of 4,250 (or 850 p.a.) between 2001 and 2006, this means a minimum housing target of 14,250 (or 950 p.a.) for the period 2006 to 2021.

2.3.4 The Plan states that ‘Local planning authorities should plan for an upward trajectory of housing completions, seeking first to achieve the annual average development rates for 2006-21 as soon as possible, then to make up any shortfall from the period before that rate is achieved’ (para. 5.4).

2.3.5 The Plan contains a policy that requires EERA to commence an early focussed review to be completed by 2011. The review requires the Plan to extend its coverage to 2031.

East of England Plan Lakeside Basin Single Issue Review

2.3.6 In January 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government published the single-issue review of the East of England Plan concerning Thurrock Key Centre for Development and Change.

2.3.7 The single issue review provides a revised Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Policy ETG2 which establishes the northern part of Lakeside Basin as a new Regional Centre and provides a strategy for the regeneration and remodelling of the wider Lakeside Basin and West Thurrock area.

2.3.8 This policy change has been taken into account in the Lakeside Basin housing capacity estimates set out in the SHLAA.

Regional Housing Strategy for East of England

2.3.9 Complementing the RSS is the Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England (RHS), published by EERA in 2005. The Strategy covers the period 2005-2010, with the key vision being: ‘To ensure everyone can live in a decent home which meets their needs, at a price they can afford and in locations that are sustainable’.

2.3.10 The RHS addresses the following issues:

- Providing more, sustainable housing in order to bring about the step change in delivery.
- Improving the quality of existing and new build homes, including working towards the ‘Decent Homes Standard’. In addition to the quality of housing, the strategy also focuses upon improving neighbourhoods and residential environments on the whole.

- Creating inclusive communities. This involves providing appropriate community structures to facilitate the extent and range of housing needed in various locations.

2.3.11 The RHS also sets out recommendations for public investment and a framework for implementing, managing and monitoring the Strategy.

Thames Gateway Key Growth Area and the Thurrock Urban Area

2.3.12 In 2003 the ODPM launched the Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future. The Sustainable Communities Plan sets out a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. A key priority, which is especially relevant in this context, is a strategy to tackle housing supply issues in the South East. In addition to this, and equally as relevant, is the emphasis placed on providing a programme of action for safeguarding the countryside in the region.

2.3.13 The Sustainable Communities Plan identified a number of Key Growth Areas, one of which being the Thames Gateway. The ODPM promised £446m for the Thames Gateway Growth Area to be spent on land assembly, site preparation, affordable and key worker housing, neighbourhood renewal and urban renaissance. The area of Thurrock that broadly falls south of the A13 is designated as a key regeneration area of the Thames Gateway.

2.3.14 The Thurrock Urban Areas, as part of the Essex Thames Gateway, is addressed in the previously discussed RSS. The Thurrock Urban Area (from Purfleet in the west to Tilbury / Chadwell St Mary in the east) is designated as a Key Centre for Development and Change (KCDC). Policy SS3 of the RSS states that growth should be achieved through concentrating development at the KCDC locations. This will assist in securing a 'step change in the delivery of additional housing throughout the region' (para. 2.2).

2.3.15 Policy ETG2 specifically deals with the Thurrock Urban Area KCDC. The Policy states that Local Development Documents should, amongst other things, seek to: 'achieve an urban renaissance, re-using previously developed land and making best use of the Thames riverside'.

Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation

2.3.16 The Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation (TTGDC) became operational in January 2004 as a delivery mechanism to coordinate land assembly, development and local infrastructure and to drive forward regeneration in Thurrock. The TTGDC assists in bringing forward key sites, buildings and projects in order to secure, amongst other objectives, housing provision. In October 2005 the TTGDC began exercising its development control powers and prepared a Spatial Plan and series of masterplans in support of its Regeneration Framework for Thurrock.

2.3.17 The Development Corporation has been invited to be involved in the preparation of the SHLAA, and have contributed site information including housing capacity estimates for sites which are the subject of masterplans.

2.4 Local Planning Policy

2.4.1 At the time of the assessment, Thurrock Council was in the process of preparing the Proposed Submission Draft Thurrock Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document. This is due for submission in February 2010.

2.4.2 The following strategic spatial objectives are of particular relevance to the SHLAA:

- Achieve sustainable communities in Thurrock with regeneration and growth focused in the existing urban areas (Purfleet, Lakeside/West Thurrock, Grays, Aveley/South Ockendon, Tilbury, Stanford-Le-Hope, Corringham) with high quality mixed developments and higher density in locations accessible to existing and planned public transport and other non-car modes of travel (SSO1)
- To provide for sufficient sustainable housing to meet the subregional and regional requirement for Thurrock and provide for a mix of type, tenure and affordable housing to meet local peoples need, including family homes and smaller homes to meet lifetime need. (SSO4)
- To sustain and enhance the open character of the Green Belt in Thurrock and only allow development in very special circumstances (SSO11).
- Protect and enhance the natural, historic and built environment including biodiversity, landscape character, conservation areas, historic value and open space through positive improvement (SSO12)
- Policy CSSP1 of the proposed Core Strategy has the purpose of setting out the scale and broad locations of new housing development to meet the requirement as set by the RSS (i.e. 18,500 between 2001 and 2021). This equates to 13, 548 dwellings for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2021. The Council has also made an Indicative Provision for 3800 dwellings for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025 in accordance with the provisions of PPS3 to provide a 15-year supply from the planned date of Adoption of this DPD in 2010.

2.4.3 Policy CSSP1 states that

- New residential development will be directed to previously developed land in the Thurrock Urban Area, Outlying Settlements and other existing built-up areas to protect the surrounding countryside and Green Belt. Over the period 2009 to 2021 the Council will seek to ensure that up to 92% of new residential development will be on previously-developed land (PDL).
- Development will only be permitted on Greenfield and Green Belt land where it is specifically allocated for residential development and where it is required to maintain a five-year rolling housing land supply.
- The Council has and will continue to identify Broadly Defined Locations for the release of land within the Green Belt in accordance with Policies CSTP 1 and CSSP 4 to help maintain a rolling 5-year supply of available and deliverable housing land for the period 2009 –2021 and will maintain this rolling 5-year supply through an Annual Refresh of the SHLAA.
- The Council’s Strategic Spatial Housing Policy is to direct development to Broadly Defined Locations that make optimum use of Previously Developed Land both in and around the Thurrock Urban Area, at identified Outlying Settlements and within the Green Belt where appropriate, subject to section 2 and 3 below.

2.4.4 In terms of allocations and phasing, CSSP1 includes a commitment to

- Allocate at least 85% of new housing development in the 5-year period 2009-2014 inclusive to Previously Developed Land (PDL) locations in and around the Thurrock Urban Area, at the identified Outlying Settlements and within the Green Belt where appropriate.

- Allocate at least 80% of new housing development in the period 2009-2021 to PDL locations in and around the Thurrock Urban Area, at the identified Outlying Settlements and PDL locations within the Green Belt where appropriate.
- Identify and allocate Broadly Defined Locations for the release of land within the Green Belt in accordance with Policies CSTP 1 and CSSP 4 for the period 2009 –2021 to accommodate no more than 20% of new housing development.
- Identify indicative Broadly Defined Locations for the release of sufficient PDL in and around the Thurrock Urban Area and at the identified Outlying Settlements together with PDL and green-field locations within the Green Belt to provide an additional indicative Strategic Housing Land supply from 2021 to 2025 inclusive in accordance with PPS3.

2.4.5 In terms of the spatial distribution of proposed housing broad locations 2009-2021, Policy CSSP1 sets out the following distribution

- Thurrock Urban Area Key Centre for Development and Change (10,010 dwellings)
- Outlying Settlements north of the A13 (approximately 2100 new dwellings)
- Outlying Settlements south of the A13 (approximately 580 New dwellings)
- Stanford-le-hope/Corringham Urban Extension (330 new dwellings – indicative capacity)
- North-east Grays Urban Extension (approximately 460 dwellings – indicative capacity)
- Small Green Belt sites /Villages in Green Belt (approximately 120 new dwellings)

2.4.6 In terms of an indicative 15 year housing supply from 2021 to 2025 inclusive the following locations have been identified

- Lakeside Basin 2600 dwellings (approx)
- Tilbury Town Centre (eco-quarter) 546 dwellings (approx)
- Grays (broad location) 1935 dwellings (approx)
- West Thurrock 279 dwellings (approx)
- Stanford –Le-Hope and /Corringham 250 dwellings (approx)

2.4.7 Policy CSTP1 relates to strategic housing provision. It sets out the Council’s policy to monitor and review housing land supply on a regular basis to ensure sufficient land is available to enable the following:

- Provide an additional 13,550 dwellings per year for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2021, equating to an average of 1130 dwellings per year
- Provide a further 3,800 dwellings for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025 subject to RSS Review.

2.4.8 The SHLAA is an important tool to allow the Council to plan, monitor and manage its housing supply over this timeframe. Policy CSTP1 explains that:

- 2.4.9 the SHLAA and future reviews will identify deliverable sites for 5 years and developable sites within 10 year and 15 year periods that will underpin the AMR and Housing Trajectory.
- 2.4.10 Housing sites will be allocated as part of the Site Allocation Development Plan Document
- 2.4.11 The Council uses a Managed Delivery Approach to the calculation and maintenance of a continuing deliverable 5 year housing land supply, based on a 'plan, monitor, manage' regime, using the AMR and SHLAA.
- 2.4.12 The Council will seek to increase the supply of deliverable housing sites where it appears that the five year housing supply will not meet the required dwelling approach.

2.5 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and DPD Preparation

- 2.5.1 In July 2008 the Planning Officers Society (POS) published a note with the above title as part of the Planning Advisory Service. The intention was to address how the preparation of a SHLAA can be best fitted into the process of DPD preparation. It is intended to be read alongside the SHLAA Practice Guidance, which is summarised in the Methodology section of this report.
- 2.5.2 At the time of PPS3, and the subsequent SHLAA guidance's publication, Thurrock Council had already commenced work on its Sites Allocation Development Plan Document. Detailed consultation on potential housing sites was undertaken by the Council to inform this process and has subsequently fed into the preparation of the SHLAA.
- 2.5.3 The PAS note, PPS3 and SHLAA guidance, emphasise the importance of a continued process of monitoring, review and update to ensure the information contained in the SHLAA database is sufficiently up-to-date to inform plan-making decisions.

2.6 Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment

- 2.6.1 GVA Grimley was commissioned to prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) sub-region. The SHMA provides a basis for developing housing and planning policies by considering the characteristics of the housing market, how key factors work together and the probable scale of change in future housing need and demand. The report is prepared for sub-regional housing markets which often transcend administrative boundaries. The five local authorities of the sub-region formed a Housing Market Partnership to prepare the SHMA.
- 2.6.2 The outcomes of the Assessment most relevant to this context are as follows:
 - Thurrock has a higher proportion of families with young children compared with the other districts in TGSE. Also, it has a lower section of its population in the older age brackets than the sub-regional average (p46).
 - The main housing demand in Thurrock (reflecting the current housing stock) is for entry-level family housing. This is attractive to first-time buyers in the sub-region, including those looking to move from East London. It is also appealing to those working locally in low-to-mid skilled employment.
 - The housing market in the Essex Thames Gateway sub-region is predominantly for houses, but also notes that the trendy flatted and urban living offer to appeal to younger households is somewhat under-developed (p69).

3 Study Method

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 As the introduction to this report has highlighted, recent years have seen important developments in the Government’s policy approach to planning for new housing. This chapter outlines the main methodological changes that have characterised the transition from the UCS to the SHLAA. It also provides a justification for these changes.

3.1.2 This section sets out the methodology used in this Assessment.

3.2 SHLAA Practice Guidance – the 10 stages

3.2.1 The methodology is divided into eight main stages, with two further optional stages. The methodology used in this Assessment has broadly followed these stages; however there have been variations due to the specific circumstances under which the study has been undertaken.

3.3 Methodology

Stage 1. Planning the Assessment

3.3.1 This stage included a consultation process which invited comment on the proposed approach to the study and gave stakeholders, including developers and landowners, an opportunity to put forward sites to be assessed as part of the study.

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

3.3.2 Stages 2, 3 and 4 of the practice guidance were carried out to fit with the specific context of this assessment. This is predominantly due to the advanced stage of the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPD.

3.3.3 A SHLAA is usually undertaken early in LDF preparation, and as such is used to inform the Site Allocations DPD and the spatial elements of the Core Strategy. However, given that the Council had previously published its Preferred Options for both these DPDs, a full survey of the Borough to identify sites was considered unnecessary.

3.3.4 The sites that were included for assessment as part of the study included:

- LDF Preferred Options Housing Sites
- LDF Reasonable Alternative Housing Sites
- Sites that were submitted to the Council as part of the LDF Preferred Options consultation period
- Sites that were submitted as part of the SHLAA consultation process
- All sites within the borough that have planning history (whether it be a refused, pending, outline or granted planning permission)
- Large mixed use sites featuring in TTGDC masterplans

Stage 3. Carrying out the survey

3.3.5 The survey stage to identify sites was not necessary as the sites to be assessed had already been identified by the Council.

3.3.6 However a survey was carried out of each of the sites identified to assess whether the sites identified were deliverable and developable. This is explained in full as part of Stage 7.

Stage 4. Assessing the suitability of sites

3.3.7 The following factors were considered in assessing a site’s suitability for housing:

- policy restrictions – such as designations, protected areas, existing planning policy and corporate, or community strategy policy (see paragraph 21 above);
- physical problems or limitations – such as access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination;
- potential impacts – including effect upon landscape features and conservation; and
- the environmental conditions – which would be experienced by prospective residents.

3.3.8 Given the advanced stage of Thurrock’s LDF preparation, a number of the sites in the study were not considered to be in conformity with the existing planning policy. These sites were included in the assessment but the site capacity estimates are not included in the overall estimate for housing potential in the Borough. Although these sites are not considered to be suitable under current policy, they are considered to be suitable in other respects according to the SHLAA guidance, and therefore may be brought back into the housing supply pipeline at a later date.

Stage 5. Assessing the availability and achievability of sites

3.3.9 By assessing the availability and achievability of each site a judgement was made as to the likely delivery period of the site. The outcome of this stage was an allocation of each site into one of the following phasing periods:

- 0-5 years / 6-10 years / 11-15 years / 11-15 years / 15+ / undeliverable

3.3.10 Availability was judged on the following criteria:

- Land Ownership
- Rights of Way/Potential Onerous Agreements
- Operational Requirements
- Developer Interest

3.3.11 The following criteria informed the judgment as to each site’s Achievability:

- Attractiveness of Locality
- Viability of Existing/Proposed Uses
- Access/Highways
- Potential Market Demand
- Potential Density of Development
- Site Clearance and Contamination

- Ground conditions (level)
- Potential Townscape Impact (local services)
- Planning Costs , contributions and potential developers profit
- Overcoming Potential Constraints
- Possession
- Off Site Costs and Exceptional Works
- Prospect of Funding or Investment and Costs of Finance

3.3.12 Where constraints were identified relating to the availability or achievability of the sites, a consideration was made as to what action would be needed to remove them. These actions are included in the site schedules that are included as Volume 3 of the Assessment.

Stage 6. Estimating the housing potential of each site

3.3.13 This stage involved estimating the potential level of housing each site could provide. The main source of capacity estimates came from either applying a design case study to the site, or, for large sites, applying a neighbourhood density case study. Details of both approaches are provided in Chapter 4.

3.3.14 For sites that already have planning permission, or in some cases outline permission, the planning permission number was used as the capacity for the site. In addition to this, some of the sites extracted from the masterplans had indicative housing numbers; in some cases this was used as the capacity estimate.

Stage 7. Reviewing the assessment

3.3.15 The SHLAA results show that there are sufficient housing sites to deliver the requirements set out in the RSS. If there was a shortfall in provision then further stages would be needed in order to plan for this deficit. These stages would firstly reassess the pool of sites that were identified in the SHLAA as being suitable for housing, but were rejected under current policy only. These sites were assessed as having the capacity to accommodate 3,637 dwellings. The second stage would be to assess the housing potential of other broad locations in the Borough, and then (if there is still a shortfall) consider the housing supply that may come from windfall, based on previous trends and any knowledge regarding potential windfall sites.

3.3.16 One of the key purposes of a SHLAA is to allow a Local Authority to ensure an identifiable five year supply of deliverable sites. This SHLAA allows Thurrock Council to ensure that the first 5 years of sites are allocated and developable and that the 5-year supply is maintained as sites are developed out. Thurrock Council will be publishing a separate briefing report, which the SHLAA will inform, to demonstrate the 5-year supply in compliance with PPS3.

Stage 8. Identifying broad locations for growth

3.3.17 The SHLAA practice guidance defines Broad Locations as areas where housing development is considered feasible and will be encouraged, but where specific sites cannot yet be identified. This stage has not been carried out as part of the SHLAA because the study demonstrated sufficient housing sites to deliver the RSS requirements within identifiable sites.

3.3.18 In addition to the SHLAA, an RSS review will be undertaken by Thurrock Council, timetabled for 2011, which will assess the potential of broad locations such as the

Lakeside Basin and the Tilbury 'eco-quarter'. This review will include an assessment of potential housing capacity in these areas.

4 Estimating housing potential through design

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 As discussed in the above section on methodology, Stage 6 of the Assessment involved estimating the potential level of housing each site could provide. The main source of capacity estimates were derived by applying a design case study to the site, or, for large sites, applying a neighbourhood density. This chapter details the processes and logic behind the generation of these capacity estimates; firstly dealing with design case studies (Section 4.2) before addressing the neighbourhood density approach (Section 4.3).

4.2 Design Case Studies

4.2.1 For sites under 5 hectares (the majority of the sites within existing settlements) a design-led approach has been used which involves applying site specific designs to a selection of sites of varying context to estimate appropriate housing densities for a range of sites. These densities are then applied to similar sites throughout the study area to inform the housing capacity of each site.

Site selection

4.2.2 In selecting sites, the study team sought to choose sites that were representative in terms of:

- Site location: the selection included sites within the ped-sheds (the ten minute walk-in catchments) of the town centres in the study area as well as sites in less accessible locations;
- Site typology and size: the sites selected range from small infill plots to large sites with a range of previous and neighbouring uses; and
- Design issues: each site provided an example of how to address particular challenges in terms of urban design.

4.2.3 It should be made clear that the sites illustrated were selected to provide a cross section of the sites identified by the study. They are not intended to imply that the Council favours these particular sites over any others. The analysis is merely intended to illustrate an approach that can be applied to the study settlements, providing a meaningful basis for assessing urban potential.

Design approach

4.2.4 The design led approach is based on the principles of sustainable, high quality residential, town centre and local centre environments.

4.2.5 The design principles for the study of urban potential for housing are set out below. These build upon the principles contained in the series of Sustainable Residential Quality (SRQ) documents². SRQ is an approach used to assess the potential for residential development. Llewelyn Davies (now part of Scott Wilson) pioneered it through the work undertaken for a client group comprising the DETR (now the ODPM), LPAC (London Planning Advisory Committee – now subsumed within the GLA), the Housing Corporation, London Transport, GOL (Government Office for London) and GOSE (Government Office

² Sustainable Residential Quality: New Approaches to Urban Living (1997), Sustainable Residential Quality: An Approach and Method Statement (1999) and Sustainable Residential Quality: Exploring the Housing Potential of Large Sites (2000).

for the South East) between 1997 and 2000. This work was endorsed both in PPG3 and Tapping the Potential. In summary, there are six key principles of SRQ:

- Intensifying the use of urban land and buildings while maintaining and enhancing environmental quality;
- Encouraging long term quality in new housing design;
- Maximising the contribution of new housing development to meeting urban regeneration objectives;
- Creating the greatest possible opportunity for pedestrian access to facilities and transport;
- Encouraging forms of housing which seek to reduce residents' propensity to own cars; and
- Enhancing the quality of the urban environment, as well as community and social facilities.

4.2.6 The principles also build upon the raft of good practice guidance published by the ODPM (now CLG) and CABE. These include 'By Design: Better Places to Live' (a companion guide to PPG3 / PPS3) and the design guide 'Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention'.

4.2.7 The case study design exercises follow the principles set out in Table 4.1 below.

4.2.8 Two scenarios were developed for each of the case study sites. One scenario (A) reflects current planning policies and design standards as set out in the development plan (but ensuring the exercises are PPS3 compliant), with the second scenario (B) looking to design to unlock higher densities and attractive living environments. The two scenarios are sufficiently distinct in order to illustrate the policy choices in terms of developing design standards and in indicating the lower and upper ends of housing potential.

4.2.9 The design case studies are presented in Volume 2 of this Report. The densities achieved under these exercises are summarised in Table 4.1 below. Case Studies 1 to 11 have been carried forward from the Urban Capacity Study.

4.2.10 Case Studies 12 to 14 are new design typologies. These new typologies have been introduced to reflect the changing demand for housing in Thurrock and also the new types of sites that are becoming available.

Table 4-1 Design case study densities

No.	Capacity Estimate source	Site Ref	Site Type	Density*	
				Scenario A	Scenario B
1	Urban Capacity Study	AVE 02	Urban	33	50
2		CSM 08	Urban	32	55
3		GRI 04	Urban	31	57
4		GTH 17	Urban	40	80
5		GTH 06	Urban	30	60
6		LTB 03	Urban	30	53
7		OCK 15	Urban	19	55
8		STW 06	Urban	48	76
9		WTS 21	Urban	85	110
10		WTS 38	Urban	81	102
11		GRI 29	Urban	69	150
12	New SHLAA Typology	GRI 28	Mixed use / Town Centre	306	306
13		STW02	Greenfield edge of urban area	30	45
14		GRI 35	Urban high density / Tower Blocks	323	323

*Densities are expressed as the number of dwelling units per hectare (dph)

4.3 Estimating the housing capacity of larger sites

4.3.1 The method for estimating site capacities using design case studies as set out above is suitable for small sites where using a net density is appropriate.

4.3.2 Larger sites (i.e. over 5 hectares) will require space for other uses than simply housing, such as infrastructure, open space and community facilities. Design case studies for larger sites would be a complex undertaking, and would not necessarily be applicable to the other sites in the study as there would be more variation in densities between larger sites than smaller ones. For this reason a different method is used for calculating the capacities of larger sites.

4.3.3 The method used in this study involves an estimation of residential densities, based on research into the density of large-scale sustainable neighbourhoods, which are normally residential-led mixed use but are large enough to accommodate land for other uses, including employment, community facilities, schools, hospitals, and open space.

4.3.4 The neighbourhood exemplars upon which this research is based have been selected from all Medium Super Output Areas (MSOAs) in England which display the following characteristics:

- predominantly housing and are predominantly urban in nature

- good levels of green space
- an element of employment land use.
- an appropriate ratio of housing to other land uses
- are socio-economically successful
- a good urban form and structure

4.3.5 The findings from this research have resulted in a generic density range of between 25dph and 35 dph for sites between 5 and 10 hectares in size and a 20 dph - 30 dph range for sites over 10 hectares in size.

4.3.6 The design case study sites work on net densities, which include:

- access roads within the site;
- private garden space;
- car parking areas;
- incidental open space and landscaping; and
- children's play areas where these are to be provided.

4.3.7 Using this neighbourhood density approach, a gross density is considered, which includes:

- Rail, tram, guided bus or other public transport infrastructure
- Community facilities (hospitals, schools, community centres)
- Retail, office or industrial areas
- Major open space such as parks and nature reserves
- Major roads
- Other non-domestic buildings (places of worship, leisure facilities and so on)

4.3.8 In the same way as for design case study sites, we have used a lower density scenario and a higher density scenario.

4.3.9 The neighbourhood densities that have been used are:

Table 4-2 Neighbourhood density estimates

No	Site Area	Scenario	Gross Density (dph)
15	5-10 ha	Scenario A	25
		Scenario B	35
16	Over 10ha	Scenario A	20
		Scenario B	30

Central urban sites over 5 hectares

- 4.3.10 As outlined above the neighbourhood density approach estimates housing capacities for large sites that are residential-led mixed use but also accommodate land for other uses, including employment, community facilities, schools, hospitals, and open space. The research that underpins this capacity is predominantly based on sustainable neighbourhoods that are functioning within a suburban setting.
- 4.3.11 Within this SHLAA there are numerous sites that are above 5 hectares that fall within central urban areas and are therefore extremely close to services and transport links that would be associated with a town centre location. With this in consideration, it is not appropriate to apply the neighbourhood density (i.e. 20–30 / 25–35) to such central sites. Therefore there are numerous sites within the SHLAA that, although over 5 hectares, have been assigned design case studies. Nearly all of these sites have been assigned a case study which is most appropriate for a large centrally located residential-led mixed-use development scheme.

5 Results

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter sets out the results of the assessment by ward. The potential capacity for housing in each ward is identified, as well as a judgement as to the phasing of housing delivery.

5.1.2 Detailed site schedules are included as Volume 3 of this report and the site maps are set out in Volume 4. The schedules include commentary for each site regarding particular constraints and site characteristics. They also give details of any relevant planning history, as well as indicating if the site appears in any of the TTGDC masterplans. The schedules in Volume 3 also include the individual capacity and phasing estimates for each site, as well as summary table for ward totals.

5.2 Site Suitability

5.2.1 After testing the suitability of each of the sites a final schedule of accepted housing sites was formulated. The method for determining these suitable sites is detailed in Stage 4 of our methodology (see Section 3). In total, 294 sites were deemed suitable for housing development and 128 unsuitable. 19 were rejected on the basis of current policy only.

5.2.2 The detailed Site Suitability assessment can be found in SHLAA Volume 3: Site Schedules.

5.3 Site Availability and Achievability

5.3.1 Each site was assessed according to whether it was judged to be available and achievable. Availability was based on whether there was a clear intention by a developer or landowner to develop the site for housing. Achievability was based on both cost factors and market factors. Each site was categorised as High, Medium or Low for each of these factors.

5.3.2 313 sites were included in the assessment. These are sites that were considered to be suitable for housing, including sites that had been rejected on the basis of current policy.

5.3.3 The detailed availability and achievability assessment can be found in SHLAA Volume 3: Site Schedules.

5.4 Capacity Estimate

5.4.1 Table 4 below shows the estimated housing capacity of each ward. As discussed in Chapter 4, the majority of the capacity estimates are derived from applying design case studies or the neighbourhood densities. Some of the capacity figures were taken from existing planning permissions or from indicative housing numbers as set out in masterplans.

5.4.2 Across the 294 sites there is an estimated capacity for 19,280 residential dwellings with the potential to come forward in the first 15 years, with a further 1,482 estimated as deliverable beyond the first 15 years. The total figure has been broken down into the following phases:

0-5 years = 4,293 dwellings

6-10 years = 7,983 dwellings

11-15 years = 7,004 dwellings

15+ years = 1,482 dwellings

Sites rejected on the basis of current policy = 3642 dwellings

Table 5-1 Capacity estimates by ward

Ward	Dwelling Capacity Estimate
Aveley and Uplands	602
Belhus	414
Chadwell St Mary	120
Chafford and North Stifford	17
Corringham and Fobbing	264
East Tilbury	528
Grays Riverside	3307
Grays Thurrock	1431
Little Thurrock Blackshots	385
Little Thurrock Rectory	968
Ockendon	1174
Orsett	65
South Chafford	140
Stanford East and Corringham Town	18
Stanford-le-Hope West	627
Stifford Clays	245
The Homesteads	55
Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park	715
Tilbury St Chads	303
West Thurrock and South Stifford	9386
Total ³	20,763

³ Total may not add up accurately due to rounding

Table 5-2: Phasing by ward

Ward	Phasing				Ward Totals
	0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	15+	
Aveley and Uplands	402	200	0	0	602
Belhus	31	183	200	0	414
Chadwell St Mary	36	73	11	0	120
Chafford and North Stifford	5	12	0	0	17
Corringham and Fobbing	27	33	204	0	264
East Tilbury	19	489	21	0	528
Grays Riverside	385	563	877	1482	3307
Grays Thurrock	85	1244	102	0	1431
Little Thurrock Blackshots	6	281	98	0	385
Little Thurrock Rectory	57	2	908	0	968
Ockendon	120	1026	28	0	1174
Orsett	53	12	0	0	65
South Chafford	140	0	0	0	140
Stanford East and Corringham Town	18	0	0	0	18
Stanford-le-Hope West	87	360	179	0	627
Stifford Clays	25	31	190	0	245
The Homesteads	45	10	0	0	55
Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park	31	88	595	0	715
Tilbury St Chads	202	7	94	0	303
West Thurrock and South Stifford	2518	3371	3497	0	9386
Total⁴	4292	7985	7004	1482	20,763

⁴ Totals may not sum due to rounding

- 5.4.3 The detailed dwelling capacity estimate assessment can be found in SHLAA Volume 3: Site Schedules

6 Towards a monitoring framework

6.1.1 The SHLAA can only be a snapshot in time, providing the estimated housing potential at the time the study was undertaken. It is therefore essential that the findings and assumptions underlying the assessment should be monitored over time by tracking the progress of sites and number of completions, as well as any possible new additions to housing sites. This section sets out an approach to monitoring, using the principles of 'Plan, Monitor, Manage' (PPS3 – Housing).

6.2 Annual Monitoring Reports – Local Authorities

6.2.1 In order to supply a flexible, responsive supply of sites, it is necessary to monitor the supply of deliverable sites on an annual basis. This is achieved through Annual Monitoring Reports, considered essential in meeting the objectives of PPS3. Local Planning Authorities should ensure the following tasks are carried out:

- On a regular and frequent basis, monitoring housing planning permissions granted and completions, whether on previously-developed land or greenfield, in both urban and rural communities.
- Reporting on progress against the housing and previously-developed land trajectories and, where relevant, targets and design quality objectives.
- Setting out the actions to be undertaken where actual performance does not reflect the housing and previously-developed land trajectories and/or target, and is outside of the specified acceptable ranges.
- Considering whether it is necessary to update the housing market and land availability evidence bases and review relevant Local Development Documents in order to be able to continue to maintain an up-to-date supply of deliverable sites.

6.3 Annual Monitoring Reports – Regional Bodies

6.3.1 As well as monitoring from Local Authorities, it is also essential that Regional Planning Bodies regularly scrutinise the housing potential of the area, and ensure that its full potential within the regional setting is being utilised.

6.3.2 It is therefore necessary that Regional Planning bodies complete Annual Monitoring Reports, which should be based upon undertaking the following tasks;

- On a regular and frequent basis, monitoring progress across the region in terms of housing planning permissions granted, completions, whether on previously-developed land or greenfield and in both urban and/or rural communities.
- Reporting on progress against the housing and previously-developed land trajectories and, where relevant, targets and design quality objectives.
- Setting out the actions to be undertaken at the regional level where actual performance does not reflect the regional housing and previously developed land trajectories, and/or targets.
- Considering delivery performance in the context of the relevant national policy objectives.

6.4 Towards a Monitoring Framework

- 6.4.1 In the completion of Annual Monitoring Reports, it is crucial that sites at every stage of the development pipeline are considered. This incorporates those sites identified with long-term potential in the SHLAA, through to their entry into the five years supply of deliverable sites, and to their eventual completion.
- 6.4.2 Table 6.1 sets out some initial categories that may be useful when establishing a monitoring framework. It should be noted that this is only a suggestion for monitoring and updating the SHLAA and that the Council may find it useful to adapt it to better reflect local circumstances.
- 6.4.3 In Table 6.1, a number of dwellings can be assigned to each category with a total at the bottom to indicate the cumulative number of dwellings. This method permits the calculation of potential units at every stage of the planning process, right up to the total number of dwellings at stage M. Actual numbers of dwellings are not provided for Broad Locations, so it would be sensible to exclude them from this cumulative calculation, hence a separate category at the end (N) has been provided.
- 6.4.4 In order to monitor sites that have been rated as ‘unsuitable’ in this SHLAA it is recommend that an annual review of sites in the database is carried out, in the light of any new information that may have come forward. The sites would remain ‘unsuitable’ unless anything has changed, for example a policy change, or a change to circumstances such as new information on flood risks. This would apply to sites that fall into the ‘R2’ category in this SHLAA (sites that are rejected on the basis of current policy only).

When referring to Table 6.1, it is worth bearing in mind that:

- the majority of units on sites granted outline consent (Block E) are considered as part of the five year supply of deliverable sites; although a small minority will fall into further phases.
- In contrast, the majority of the number of units subject to developer interest (Block J) will fall in the period beyond the first five years; although there will be some sites included in the five year supply of deliverable sites.

- 6.4.5 Through regular monitoring, and ongoing assessment as to the degree of suitability, availability and achievability of each site, when circumstances do change and housing potential does emerge, response time can be reduced. Therefore, rather than relying on infrequent large-scale land assessments, this method of continuous monitoring ensures there is little or no lag-time between the emergence of potential housing sites, their identification for reporting purposes and their subsequent progress into the planning process.

Table 6-1: Categories of planning process

Block	Stage of Planning Process
A	No. of completions 2001 – 2006 (prior to capacity assessment)
B	No. of units completed post 2006
C	No. of units under construction

D	No. of units on sites granted full consent
E	No. of units on sites granted outline consent
F	No. of units on sites where consent has been granted for part of the land area
G	No. of units on sites subject to planning applications
H	No. of units on sites where only part of the land area is subject to an application
I	No. of units on sites where applications have been refused, withdrawn or subject to appeal
J	No. of units on sites subject to developer interest
K	No. of units on other sites allocated in the local plan review / LDF for housing
L	No. of units on sites phased in the period 6-10 years
M	No. of units on sites phased in the period 11-15 years
N	Sites identified as broad locations

Appendix A – Consultation Letter

Dear _____

STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT FOR THURROCK COUNCIL

Thurrock Council has commissioned Tribal Urban Studio with CB Richard Ellis to undertake a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for the period 2008-2031 in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing. This was introduced by Government to encourage a step change in housing delivery and requires each Local Authority to carry out a SHLAA to inform their housing delivery strategy. The SHLAA will underpin the Council's final adopted strategic approach to housing development in the Borough up to 2021 and the rolling forward of a strategic 15 year housing supply.

As part of this process, Thurrock Council has to identify land for housing over a 15 year period and beyond, and to undertake a study that will make an assessment of the developable and deliverable identified land and buildings to meet Thurrock's future housing requirements.

This letter is intended to inform you of the study and to provide developers, landowners and the public the opportunity to suggest suitable land, sites and buildings within and adjoining settlements, which you consider may have potential for housing development up to 2031. **Sites that have previously been submitted that the council is aware of through previous consultation will be considered and do not need to be re-submitted.**

Please note, the inclusion of a site within the SHLAA does not mean that a site has been allocated for residential development and does not imply planning permission will be granted. Each site will be assessed.

A summary of our method statement and Site Suggestion form is attached. All completed forms must be received by Friday August 1st 2008. The Site Suggestion form is also available on the Council's website on www.thurrock.gov.uk/Strategicplanning

For further information please contact Una McGaughrin on 0207 079 9133 or at una.mcgaughrin@tribalgroup.co.uk.

We look forward to receiving any comments that you may have.

Yours Faithfully

XXXXXXXXXX

Note: This consultation is **NOT** part of the formal consultation of the Preferred Options Core Strategy and Site Specific Allocation DPD, which has already closed.

THURROCK SHLAA

6.4.5.1 SITE SUBMISSION FORM

Your Name						
Company/Organisation Name						
Contact Address						
Email Address						
Contact Tel no:						
Site Address (include site description)						
What is the current use of the land?			Site Area (Hectares)			
Suggested capacity of the site						
I have enclosed an OS base map clearly showing the site boundary.	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>(Please ensure the map provided complies with OS copyright, without a map the site may not be able to be progressed)</i>						
Are you the owner of the land?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If NO, who is the registered owner? (please give company organisation or individuals name)						
When do you believe the site will be available for development? Within the years	1-5yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>	6-10yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>	11-15yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Over 15yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>				

THURROCK 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.

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.

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.

