



Lancaster District Local Development Framework

Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology

January 2008



Lancaster City Council
January 2008

Document Number: BP2b
V3.0

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Introduction

This report sets out the draft methodology and approach proposed by Lancaster City Council for undertaking a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) of the District. The draft methodology is based on the guidance contained in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments Practice Guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in July 2007.

Comments on this approach are invited by the xxxx.

Policy Background

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) 'Housing' (November, 2006) provides new guidance on the components of housing supply that Local Authorities should be identifying in their Local Developments Framework (LDF) and the approach taken to managing and implementing this supply.

Paragraph 53 of PPS3 requires Local Authorities to set out in their Local Development Documents policies and strategies for delivering the level of housing provision, including broad locations and specific sites that will enable the continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years, taking account of the level of housing provision set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)¹. Failure to identify sufficient housing supply can result in documents being found unsound at examination.

An important element of PPS3 is the focus on deliverability. Sites can only be included as part of the housing supply where there is genuine evidence that a site is deliverable within the timeframe envisaged. For sites to be considered deliverable they must be *available, suitable and achievable*. Once identified PPS3 requires Local Authorities to manage the identified supply of land to ensure that a continuous five year supply of deliverable sites is maintained.

In order to achieve these requirements Local Authorities are required under PPS3 to undertake a SHLAA of their District. These assessments provide the main mechanism for identifying potential housing sites and assessing their deliverability. As such, SHLAAs form a key component of the LDF evidence base.

In addition to undertaking a SHLAA of the District the City Council have also commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and an employment land review. The SHMA will provide up to date information on housing need within the District identifying the future housing requirements of Lancaster residents. The employment land review will reassess the continued viability of employment sites identifying those sites no longer suitable for employment which may then be taken forward for consideration for housing in the SHLAA. The findings of both pieces of work have important implications for the SHLAA. The timetable for undertaking the SHLAA allows for both pieces of work to be considered in the assessment stage.

The SHLAA represents a comprehensive assessment of housing land availability and deliverability within the District. Annual appraisal of the SHLAA, via the annual housing monitoring report, will be incorporated into the District's annual monitoring process. In line with the SHLAA practice guidance a full review will take place when plans have to be reviewed and rolled forward to a longer time horizon, or some other

¹ For Lancaster District this is currently set at 400 dwellings per annum.

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significant change makes it necessary, for example, if through annual monitoring local authorities are unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites.

The SHLAA is not a development plan document (DPD) and as such can not allocate sites for housing. The allocation of sites will take place in the Land Use Allocations DPD. The SHLAA together with other evidence, including a sustainability appraisal, will be used to inform the Council's allocation of sites within that document.

SHLAA objectives

The following objectives have been identified:

- To provide a robust evidence base to support the Core Strategy and inform the production of the Land Use Allocations DPD;
- Provide sufficient information to enable the Local Authority to identify and maintain a rolling 5 year supply of deliverable sites for housing;
- Identify a sufficient supply of deliverable sites sufficient to meet the Districts housing needs for at least 15 years as required by PPS3;
- Provide a consistent framework for the assessment of housing sites within the District.

Methodology

Stage 1 – Planning the Assessment

As stated in the Practice Guidance it is essential that the SHLAA is based on a partnership approach involving all key stakeholders. The City Council as part of the evidence base used to inform the Core Strategy has already established a substantial database of housing contacts which can be drawn on for information and input into the SHLAA. This was produced following the City Council's initial work on housing supply in 2006 when developers were asked for information on existing and future proposals within the District. All contact details were logged in our database and requests were made for expressions of interest in participating in a housing forum.

Those people/organisations who indicated a willingness to participate in the housing forum were invited to join the SHLAA partnership. The first partnership meeting took place in October 2007. Membership was extended to include representatives from the following organisations: English Partnership, Fisher Wrathall, Home Builders Federation, Local Strategic Partnership, North West Regional Assembly, Government Office for the North West, North West Housing Board, Lancaster City Council Officers (Property Group, Strategic Housing and Development Control).

The first meeting:

- Finalised the draft methodology for wider circulation;
- Identified any absent stakeholders from the partnership;
- Defined and agreed the assessment area²;

² The Ecotec Housing Market Areas in the North West Report confirms the status of Lancaster District as a single housing market. There is therefore no scope to undertake this assessment with other authorities. It is however recommended that the views of neighbouring authorities be sought as part of the wider consultation process.

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- Determined and agreed the resources available for the assessment. The City Council is to be responsible for undertaking the majority of the assessment. Key findings must be reported to the rest of the partnership at key stages.
- Determined and agreed the timetable and work programme for the assessment agreeing roles and key milestones;
- Identified the key management and scrutiny arrangements. It is anticipated that the partnership will reconvene at key stages to agree and sign off key parts of the assessment (this can be done via electronic consultation where appropriate).

Since the initial partnership meeting it has been recognised that considerable benefit would be provided by firstly reviewing the conclusions of the employment land study with this information feeding into the SHLAA, and secondly by reviewing the implications of the District's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). David Couttie Associates have been commissioned to undertake the SHMA of the District.

The SHLAA methodology has been revised to take account of this work.

Whilst the partnership represents the main mechanism for developing the SHLAA methodology it is recommended that the agreed draft also be circulated amongst other contacts on the Council's database and be made available on the Council's website in order to ascertain wider opinion and views.

The methodology may need to be amended further following this consultation. Should this be the case the partnership would be re-consulted.

The final methodology will be reported to the Council's Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group for member endorsement.

In order to avoid consultation fatigue and ensure the best use of resources it is recommended that a pro forma for the SHLAA be sent out to stakeholders and be made available on the Council's website at the same time as the draft SHLAA methodology. This would invite people to identify sites that could be included in the assessment. Requests for information will also be sent to all parish councils. A draft pro forma is appended.

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

Stage 2 involves identifying potential sources of housing supply within the District. It is recommended that the assessment follows the approach established in the Practice Guidance and include the following sources:

Source of sites	Information source
Sites in the planning process:	
Land allocated (or with permission) for employment of other land uses which are no longer required for those uses.	Reviewed Employment study
Existing housing allocations and site development briefs	Existing Local Plan documents
Unimplemented/outstanding planning permissions for housing	Housing Monitoring Report
Planning permissions that are under construction	Housing Monitoring Report
Sites not currently in the planning process	

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Vacant derelict land and buildings	Urban Potential Study
Surplus public sector land	Urban Potential Study, Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council Property Services
Land in non-residential use which may be suitable for re-development for housing, such as commercial buildings, or car parks, including as part of mixed use development	Urban Potential Study
Additional housing opportunities in established residential areas, such as under-used garage blocks	Urban Potential Study
Sites in rural settlements and rural exception sites	Local Plan and Urban Potential Study
Urban extensions (Sites adjacent to existing settlements with high accessibility ³)	Information from developers/land owners obtained via the housing pro forma.

The City Council are not proposing to include new free standing settlements as a source of land with potential for housing. The Practice Guidance states that the broad locations for such settlements will normally have been identified by RSS. RSS does not identify the need for such settlements in Lancaster District.

The Practice Guidance states that the broad locations for urban extensions will have been identified by the RSS. The submitted RSS does not identify the need for such extensions in Lancaster District. The Council is however aware that RSS is to be the subject of an immediate partial review with housing forming one of the main components of this. Revised population projections indicate that the dwelling requirement across the region may be increased as a consequence of the partial review. It is therefore considered prudent to consider the implications for housing land within the District based on the possibility of a greater dwelling requirement.

Whilst the principle of urban extension runs contrary to the approach of the submitted Core Strategy it should be noted that the SHLAA is to be undertaken in advance of the Inspector's Report and as such it would be premature to conclude at this point that the approach of urban concentration will be found sound. The Council therefore considers it prudent to consider urban extension in the SHLAA.

Given the large number of sites that will be generated from this assessment and the limited resources available a size threshold will be applied. Sites 0.15ha or smaller and schemes of 4 dwellings or less will not be assessed further. An overview of the deliverability of these sites based on an assessment of past trends will instead be undertaken; this is discussed further under stage 7 of the methodology.

³ The Core Strategy is based on a policy of urban concentration. Based on existing evidence the City Council is confident that development can be met within existing urban areas. The policy of urban concentration was also supported by the sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy. The City Council whilst supporting a policy of urban concentration recognises that all sources of land must be considered. With this in mind it is acknowledged that urban extensions, whilst running contrary to the principles of urban concentration in the Core Strategy, must also be included in this assessment.

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Stage 3 – Desktop review of existing information

Stage 3 of the assessment requires Local Authorities to identify the information that will be used to identify sites with potential for housing. Some potential sources of information have already been identified above, these include:

- Urban potential study
- Employment study
- Housing Monitoring Report
- Lancaster District Local Plan
- Housing performance
- Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council Property Services

In addition to the above sources the project team will also consider the following information in identifying potential sites:

- Sites currently in the planning process
- Sites subject to S106 Agreements
- Site development briefs
- Planning applications refused
- Logged enquiries from prospective developers/land owners
- Strategic Housing Team
- Other Council Departments e.g. leisure
- Commercial property databases e.g. estate agents and property agents
- Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photography
- Register of surplus public sector land
- English House Condition Survey
- Local Planning Authority Empty Property Register
- National Land Use Database
- Valuation Office database

This information, together with information obtained under stage 2, will be used to identify potential sites. The output of this work will be a spreadsheet of sites which could provide the potential for housing development. The Practice Guidance requires all identified sites to be mapped. The boundaries of all identified sites will be mapped using GIS software and linked to the database.

Stage 4 – Determining which sites and areas will be surveyed

Resources permitting it is intended that sites identified above the dwelling threshold under stages 2 and 3 will be surveyed. This will provide an initial assessment of their deliverability. This information will be recorded on the database. The database will enable records to be updated regularly as new information becomes available.

The City Council is confident that this information together with detailed officer knowledge will ensure that all potential sites are included in the assessment. It is not proposed to undertake additional survey work to identify further sites. The recently completed Urban Potential Study was extended to include rural areas and addresses all potential sites; a size restriction was not applied in the survey. The City Council is therefore confident that a comprehensive evidence base exists to inform the assessment without the need for further survey work.

The results of the initial assessment will be reported to the partnership for comment.

Stage 5 – Carrying out the survey

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Resources permitting site visits will be undertaken for all the identified sites. This will be undertaken by members of the project team. The following information will be recorded for each site:

- Site size;
- Site boundaries;
- Current use(s);
- Surrounding land use(s);
- Character of surrounding area;
- Physical constraints e.g. access, step slopes, potential for flooding, natural features of significance
- Development progress
- Initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for housing or housing as part of a mixed use development.

Information will be recorded in the database of potential sites.

Stage 6 – Estimating the housing potential

The housing potential on each of the identified sites will be calculated based on the following densities:

Rural areas and edge of urban areas –	30 dwellings per hectare
Sub-urban areas ⁴ -	40 dwellings per hectare
Areas close to the town centre boundary ⁵ –	50 dwellings per hectare
Areas on the periphery of the town centre ⁶ -	70 dwellings per hectare
City Centre ⁷ -	90 dwellings per hectare

The findings of the District's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) will be reviewed and assessed at this stage. This may result in amendments to the densities used depending on the type of housing need identified. For example an identified need for family housing may result in lower densities being applied on sites.

By applying standard densities to the different sites it will be possible to obtain an estimate of the unconstrained potential. Unless additional information is available the City Council will use these thresholds to determine individual site potential. A discount will be applied to the sites to enable an allowance to be made for infrastructure and open space provision etc. The level of appropriate discount will be agreed by the partnership. One possible method is highlighted below. This applies a gross to net ratio to sites based on their size. The larger the site the more capacity will be used to provide infrastructure and as such the net capacity of the site would be reduced.

⁴ This is defined as areas of medium housing density which are predominantly residential in character.

⁵ This is defined as locations in excess of 300 metres of the town centre boundary but within the main urban area

⁶ This is defined as locations within 300 metres of the town centre boundary

⁷ This is defined as sites within the town centre boundary

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• Up to 0.4 hectares	100% gross to net ratio
• Up to 0.4 – 2 hectares	75-90% gross to net ratio
• Over 2 hectares	50-75% gross to net ratio

Source:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/428/HousingLandAvailabilityAssessmentsIdentifyingAppropriateLandForHousingDevelopment_id1162428.pdf

Developers and landowners will also be asked, via the pro forma, to indicate the likely number of dwellings to be delivered on their site. This will feed into the assessment of housing potential on the various sites.

It should be noted that the densities identified above are for illustrative purposes only and are designed to inform the assessment of housing potential. They do not restrict the potential of what can be delivered on identified sites. The actual layout of sites would be a matter for consideration at planning application stage.

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

The next stage determines whether sites can be developed for housing and the time frame in which they are likely to be developed. This is based on an assessment of the suitability, achievability and availability of the various sites.

This part of the assessment requires considered professional judgement with the outcome of this determining whether sites are included as part of the housing land supply and determining in what 5 year period they are expected to be delivered i.e. in 0-5 years, 5-10 years or 10-15 years. In order to provide impartial advice external consultants will undertake this element of the assessment.

Consultants would be asked to carry out stages 7a assessing suitability for housing, 7b assessing availability for housing, 7c assessing achievability for housing and 7d overcoming constraints. The process for assessing sites will be approved by the Council prior to commencement of stage 7.

Stage 7a – Assessing suitability for housing

A site is considered suitable if it offers a sustainable location and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities. In determining the suitability of a site the following factors would need to be assessed:

Policy restrictions – such as designations, protected areas, existing and emerging planning policy and corporate community strategy policy.

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.

Environmental conditions - which would be experienced by prospective residents.

The consultants would be required, based on this information, to provide recommendations to the project team as to whether sites could be considered

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suitable for housing. Potential constraints should be identified together with information on how these may be overcome; this information will feed into stage 7d described below.

Stage 7b – Assessing availability for housing

A site is considered available for development, when, based on the best information available the City Council is confident that there are no legal or ownership problems preventing the site from being available now.

The practice guidance indicates that sites can be considered available where there is confidence that none of the following problems exist: multiple ownership, ransom strips, tenancies or operation requirements of landowners. This means that the site is controlled by a housing developer who has expressed an indication to develop, or the land owner has expressed an intention to sell. The existence of planning permission alone does not necessarily mean that the site is available.

The consultants would be asked to provide recommendations as to whether sites can be considered available as defined in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Practice Guidance. Where constraints are identified the consultants would be expected to identify how and when they can realistically be overcome.

Stage 7c – Assessing achievability for housing.

A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed at a particular point in time. The practice guidance recognises that this is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of a developer to complete and sell the housing over a certain period. The City Council is not in a position to make assumptions on the economic viability of sites and would expect the consultants to provide recommendations on this part of the assessment. It is anticipated that the consultants would adopt some form of residual valuation model to undertake this part of the assessment, the model to be used would be agreed by the partnership prior to its use. Potential constraints should be identified together with information on how these may be overcome.

Stage 7d – Overcoming Constraints

The various constraints of sites will have been identified and recorded throughout the assessment. The consultants would be asked to advise the project team on whether these can be overcome and the actions that would be required to overcome them e.g. investment in infrastructure. Where constraints are identified it will need to be demonstrated that these can be overcome within the timeframe envisaged in order for them to be included as part of the housing supply for the District.

The output of stage 7 will be an amended database of deliverable housing sites within the District. This will be based on the recommendations of the consultants on whether the various sites can be considered deliverable based on the three tests of PPS3 (suitable, available and achievable). Justification will be required on all those sites identified under early stages but excluded from the deliverable supply list.

Stage 8 – Review of the assessment

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The consultants will be required to produce the final SHLAA report setting out the conclusions of the assessment. This would then enable a housing trajectory to be produced identifying whether the Council can demonstrate a 15 year supply of identified sites. The SHLAA report and trajectory will require approval from the partnership and the City Council via the Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group.

Following this work it would need to be determined if any further work was required. This would only be necessary if insufficient sites had been identified to meet 15 years of supply. If further work is required two further stages, stages 9 and 10, would be required.

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

The assessment work already undertaken will hopefully have identified areas where there is housing potential but where specific sites were not able to be identified. Criteria should be established by the project team in agreement with the partnership to identify broad locations.

Stage 10 – Determining the housing potential of windfalls (where justified)

A decision on whether to include windfall sites will need to be made by the partnership. The City Council will be able to advise the partnership on the appropriate level of windfall allowance based on an assessment of past trends.

The project team of the SHLAA will coordinate all the above stages. Regular meetings will also be required of the whole SHLAA partnership in order to ensure that the approach and findings reflect the requirements of the District and conform to the methodology.

A health check should be included in the assessment to note that it is just one component of the evidence base and it does not automatically follow that sites identified with potential for housing will be allocated for housing development.

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Draft timetable

Task	Output	Deadline	Carried out by:
Arrange Project Meeting with identified stakeholders	Agree draft methodology for wider consultation. Establish project team and finalise timetable.	October 2007	City Council
Finalise SHLAA methodology with selected consultants	Finalised SHLAA methodology	w/c 21 st April 2008	City Council and selected consultants
Re-consult SHLAA partnership with revised methodology	Agree SHLAA methodology for wider consultation	w/c 21 st April 2008	City Council
Consult on methodology and pro forma with wider stakeholders	Information on possible sites from developers and landowners	w/c 5 th May 2008 (4 weeks)	City Council
Finalise Methodology	Final methodology	w/c 2 nd June 2008	City Council
Report methodology to PPCLG	Member endorsement of methodology	June 2008	City Council
Desktop review of existing information	Identification of potential sites and supporting information	April – June 2008	SHLAA project team
Identification of housing potential	Database of potential sites	June 2008	SHLAA project team
Report initial findings to SHLAA partnership for agreement	Agree initial findings	June 2008	SHLAA project team
Survey	Collection of supporting information for potential sites.	April – July 2008	SHLAA project team
Estimate housing potential of each site	Identification of unconstrained housing potential for various sites	April – July 2008	SHLAA project team
Assessment of when and whether sites are likely to be developed	Identification of deliverable housing potential	August 2008	Consultants
Report assessment	Agree findings	August 2008	Consultants

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findings to the SHLAA partnership			
Produce draft housing trajectory and SHLAA Report	Draft housing trajectory and SHLAA report.	August – September 2008	Consultants
Report trajectory and report to the partnership	Sign off report and trajectory.	September 2008	Consultants
Finalise SHLAA report and trajectory	Final SHLAA Report and Trajectory	September 2008	Consultants
Report SHLAA to PPCLG	Approve report and trajectory.	September 2008	City Council
Publication of Assessment	Final SHLAA Report.	September 2008	City Council

* Additional meetings of the partnership may need to be arranged as and when required.

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Draft Pro forma

Lancaster City Council is in the preliminary stages of undertaking a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). These assessments provide the main mechanism for identifying potential housing sites and assessing their deliverability. As such, SHLAAs form a key component of the Local Development Framework evidence base and will be used to inform the allocation of sites in the Council's Land Use Allocations Development Plan Document.

The SHLAA is not a development plan document and as such can not be used to allocate sites for housing. The allocation of sites will take place in the Land Use Allocations Development Plan Document. The SHLAA together with other evidence, including a sustainability appraisal, will be used to inform the Council's allocation of sites within that document. It does not therefore automatically follow that sites identified with potential for housing will be allocated for housing development.

Please complete this form for each site you wish to be considered. A map showing the boundary for each site should also be provided.

Extra copies of the form are available from the following website xxxxxx

Please send completed forms and maps to: Rebecca Jones, Forward Planning, Planning Services, Lancaster City Council, Palatine Hall, Dalton Square, Lancaster, LA1 1PW or via e-mail to rjones@lancaster.gov.uk

Please contact Rebecca Jones on 01524 582591 should you require further information on this.

Name			
Company Name			
Contact Address			
E-mail			
Contact tel. no			
Are you a registered social landlord	Yes		No
Site Address (site which you are suggesting) <i>Where a site is suggested please provide a map showing site boundaries</i>			
Ownership Details			
Are you the sole owner of the site?	Yes		No
If not who is the registered owner? <i>Please provide full contact details for all owners</i>			
Is the site subject to any tenancy or operational requirements? If so what are they?			
Has the site been subject to developer interest for housing in the past 5 years? <i>Please provide</i>			

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<i>details</i>	
Is the site for sale or has the landowner expressed an interest to sell in the last 5 years? <i>Please provide details</i>	
Site Details	
Is the site located on previously developed land ⁸ ?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Site size (ha)?	
What is the current use of the site?	
What is the past planning history of the site? <i>Please provide details of application numbers where relevant</i>	
Are you aware of any sustainability issues or physical or economical constraints or land ownership factors that may hinder the development of the site?	
What measures do you propose to overcome these constraints?	
Future Development	
In what timescale do you believe the land will become available for development, assuming that it gets planning permission and that other constraints can be overcome?	5 years (2007-2012) <input type="checkbox"/>
	6-10 years (2013-2017) <input type="checkbox"/>
	11-15 years (2018 – 2022) <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you propose the site to be used for residential use? Or mixed use? (i.e. some combination of residential, commercial, industrial, office, or other land use) If mixed use please give an indication of the other uses proposed?	
What is the estimated number of dwellings that could be provided on the site? Some matters that you might like to take into account are: The type of development likely to be suitable (purely residential or	

⁸ Previously developed land is that which was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. The definition includes defence buildings, but excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built up areas such as parks, recreation grounds and allotments, which, although it may feature paths, pavilions and other buildings, has not been previously developed; land that was previously developed where remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time (to the extent that it can reasonably be considered as part of the natural surroundings).

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mixed use); the mix of housing; height and character of surrounding buildings; infrastructure provision.	
When do you estimate being in a position to submit a planning application for planning permission?	
When do you hope to be in a position to start building should permission be granted?	
Please provide any other information that you consider would be helpful to the assessment.	