

Wirral Council

# STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT - APPENDIX 4



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## FACTORS AND CRITERIA USED TO ASSESS SITE SPECIFIC HOUSING POTENTIAL

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# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>'SUITABILITY' CRITERIA.....</b>	<b>1</b>
	1a. Policy Restrictions or Limitations .....	1
	1b. Physical Problems or Limitations .....	2
	1c. Environmental Conditions (re prospective residents) .....	3
	Overall Score for 'Suitability' .....	4
<b>2</b>	<b>'AVAILABILITY' CRITERIA.....</b>	<b>5</b>
	Overall Score for 'Availability' .....	5
<b>3</b>	<b>'ACHIEVABILITY' CRITERIA.....</b>	<b>7</b>
	Overall Score for 'Achievability' .....	7
<b>4</b>	<b>OVERALL SCORE AND SITE CATEGORISATION.....</b>	<b>9</b>



# 1 'SUITABILITY' CRITERIA

**Note:** Criteria marked by asterisks (\*) are considered particularly important. If a site achieves a low score against any criteria marked by an asterisk, the site's overall suitability score will be capped accordingly (as described in more detail below).

## 1a. Policy Restrictions or Limitations

### *Impact on Green Belt (UDP Policies GBT1, GB2, GB6, GB7, GB8 and GB9)\**

- Not within the Green Belt 5
- Located on a Major Developed Site<sup>1</sup> or within an Infill Village<sup>2</sup> within the Green Belt 3
- Within the Green Belt (but not on a Major Developed Site or within an Infill Village) 0

#### Notes:

- UDP Policy GB8 allows the 'infilling and redevelopment of existing buildings' at the seven sites designated by UDP Proposal GB9 as 'Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt'. We have therefore assumed that some development at these sites could be acceptable in principle. A score of 3 is, however, more appropriate for such sites rather than 5 because they are still in the Green Belt and will normally be subject to additional policy restrictions because of their location outside the existing urban area. Where residential development is proposed, we have assumed that the net developable area is equivalent to the area covered by the existing built footprint.
- UDP Policy GB6 allows 'limited infill development' within the boundaries of the five 'Infill Villages in the Green Belt' designated by UDP Proposal GB7. We have assumed that some development within these five 'Infill Villages in the Green Belt' could be acceptable in principle. A score of 3 is, however, more appropriate for such sites rather than 5 because they are still in the Green Belt and will normally be subject to additional policy restrictions because of their location outside the existing urban area.

### *Impact on Recreational Open Space (UDP Policies GRE1, GR1, GR2, GR3, GR4, RE2 and RE6)<sup>3</sup>*

- Not within land designated as Urban Greenspace (UDP Policies GRE1, GR1, GR2), Allotments (Policies GR3 and GR4), New Recreation Facilities (Policy RE2) or Sports Grounds (Policy RE6) 5
- Within land designated as Urban Greenspace, Allotments, New Recreation Facilities or Sports Grounds 0

<sup>1</sup> The following are identified by UDP Proposal GB9 as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt: Arrowe Park Hospital, Clatterbridge Hospital, Thingwall Hospital, Wirral Metropolitan College - Carlett Park Campus, and Pensby Schools.

<sup>2</sup> UDP Proposal GB7 defines the following Infill Villages in the Green Belt: Barnston Village (outside the Conservation Area), Eastham Village (outside the Conservation Area), Thornton Hough, Raby Village and Storeton Village.

<sup>3</sup> UDP Proposal GR2 lists 220 sites which are designated as Urban Greenspace; Proposal RE2 lists 3 sites which are identified as Land for New Recreation Facilities; Proposal GR4 lists 24 sites which are identified as Allotments to be Protected from Development; and UDP Proposal RE6 lists 23 sites which are identified as Sports Grounds for Protection from Development.

*Impact on Nature and Earth Science Conservation<sup>4</sup> (UDP Policies NC5, NC6, NC7, NC8, NC10 and NC11)\**

- Not within a defined key nature/wildlife conservation area 5
- Within a defined key nature/wildlife conservation area 0

*Impact on Employment Land (UDP Policies EMP1, EM1, EM2, EM3, EM4, EM5, EM8 and EM9<sup>5</sup>)*

- Not within land designated as a Primarily Industrial Area, Employment Development Site or within Wirral International Business Park 5
- Within land designated as a Primarily Industrial Area (Policy EM8) 2
- Within land allocated as an Employment Development Site (Proposals EM1-EM5 and Policy EM9) 1

Note:

- Wirral International Business Park is designated as a Strategic Regional Site and it would not be appropriate for housing to be located within this area. Accordingly, any part of a site located within Wirral International Business Park has been ruled out of the SHLAA study.

## 1b. Physical Problems or Limitations

It is outside the scope of a strategic study of this nature to assess physical constraints in depth. Thus, the following criteria focus on obvious constraints. A score is awarded on the basis of available knowledge (e.g. if a large, undeveloped site is cut off from the existing urban area, we assume that significant new drainage etc will be required; conversely if a small site is located in a primarily residential area, we assume that it can be linked to existing road infrastructure and service provision)<sup>6</sup>.

### *Access Infrastructure Constraints*

- Existing road access to the site is adequate 5
- Existing road access to the site requires upgrading (e.g. to accommodate increased volumes of traffic, etc) 3
- No scope to provide a road access to the site 0

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<sup>4</sup> There are a number of nature/wildlife conservation designations in the Borough, including two 'Sites of International Importance for Nature Conservation' designated under UDP Proposal NC2, which incorporate European Sites, Ramsar sites and Special Protection Areas - and 10 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest', designated under UDP Proposal NC4. Due to the importance of these designations, any part of a site located within these areas has been ruled out of the SHLAA study. There are also 70 'Sites of Biological Importance identified by UDP Proposal NC6; four 'Local Nature Reserves' protected under Policy NC8; and 12 'Sites of Local Importance for Earth Science', identified under Proposal NC11. Some development in these designations may be acceptable (subject to compliance with criteria set out in the UDP) but we nevertheless consider them to be sensitive areas; accordingly, any sites within these areas will also achieve a score of 0 against this criterion.

<sup>5</sup> The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009 shows a shortage of employment land within Wirral which will need to be taken into account when considering alternative uses for these sites.

<sup>6</sup> We acknowledge that, cumulatively, the development of a large number of small sites might exert significant pressure on existing infrastructure and/or require the provision of new facilities. However, this will have to be assessed by other, more specialist studies.

### *Drainage Infrastructure Constraints*

- Limited new drainage infrastructure is likely to be required 5
- Site is adjacent to the existing urban area, but is of significant scale, and is likely to require some new drainage infrastructure 3
- Site is separate from the existing urban area, and of significant scale, and is likely to require extensive new drainage infrastructure 0

### *Ground Condition Constraints*

- Treatment not expected to be required (e.g. sites within primarily residential areas, where there is no obvious indication of previous contaminating uses) 5
- Treatment expected to be required on part of the site (e.g. sites where an existing industrial use occupies only a small proportion of the overall site area) 3
- Treatment expected to be required on the majority of the site (e.g. sites within employment areas, which would potentially require contamination treatment) 0

### *Impact on Flood Risk Areas (as defined by the SFRA Flood Maps)\**

- Within Flood Zone 1 5
- 10% - 50% of site area is within Flood Zone 2 4
- Over 50% of site area is within Flood Zone 2 3
- 10% - 25% of site area is within Flood Zone 3a 2
- 25% - 50% of site area is within Flood Zone 3a 1
- Over 50% of site area is within Flood Zone 3a 0

There is a clear sequential approach in PPS25 regarding flood risk. Flood Risk Zones 1 and 2 are both acceptable locations for housing<sup>7</sup>, but under the sequential approach, Zone 1 is preferable to Zone 2. Housing development can be acceptable in Flood Zone 3a, provided a PPS25 'Exception Test' is passed. Nevertheless, under the PPS25 sequential approach, Flood Zone 3a sites are the least preferred location for housing development and any sites within Flood Zone 3a will be given a Category 3 rating (if more than 25 per cent of the site is covered by Flood Zone 3a).

Flood Risk Zone 3b comprises 'functional floodplain', and as such is unsuitable for residential development. Any site located within Flood Zone 3b has not been assessed as part of this SHLAA study.

## **1c. Environmental Conditions (re prospective residents)**

### *'Bad Neighbour' Constraints (e.g. hazard/nuisance)*

- None 5
- Yes, but potential for mitigation (sites within residential areas with bad neighbours that could be screened, e.g. heavy industry along one boundary of the site only) 3
- Yes, major constraint with limited potential for mitigation (e.g. sites enclosed on all or most sides by heavy industry/employment areas, or with another known bad neighbour which is difficult to mitigate against, e.g. sewage works) 0

<sup>7</sup> See Table D.3 of PPS25.

## Overall Score for 'Suitability'

- Maximum possible unweighted 'suitability' score = 45 (i.e. 9 criteria, each with a maximum potential score of 5)
- Sites with a total 'suitability' score of over 33 are given an overall suitability score of **3** (site is suitable and could go to make up part of the five year supply).
- Sites with a total 'suitability' score of 22-33 are given an overall suitability score of **2** (site is potentially suitable but faces some constraints and should not be included in the five year supply).
- Sites with a total 'suitability' score of under 22 are given an overall suitability score of **1** (site faces significant suitability constraints).
- Criteria marked by asterisks (\*) are particularly important. If a site scores 0 or 1 against any of these criteria, the site can only achieve a maximum overall 'suitability' score of **1**. If a site scores 3 against any of these asterisked criteria, the site can only achieve a maximum overall 'suitability' score of **2** overall.
- In exceptional circumstances suitability factors not listed above may be taken into account to give a different overall score<sup>8</sup>. These exceptions will always be explained fully in the sites database.

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<sup>8</sup> An example would be where sites are identified within the Programme of Development for the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point which was submitted to the Government in September 2008.

## 2 'AVAILABILITY' CRITERIA

It is outside the scope of a strategic study of this nature to collect and assess detailed information on legal and ownership issues. Thus, score on the basis of available information as follows:

- Held by developer/willing owner/public sector (e.g. "call for sites" submissions, and sites being actively marketed), and sites where it is known that pre-application discussions are underway 5
- Vacant land and buildings 4
- Low intensity land uses (e.g. agriculture, informal car parking) 3
- Established single use (e.g. business, sports club, school) 2
- Established multiple uses (e.g. industrial estate, retail parade) 1
- Thought to be in particularly complex/multiple ownership, (or apparently subject to ransom strip) 0

Note: Where a site is known to be held by a developer, willing owner or public sector body then it should score 5 even if one of the other conditions is also fulfilled - so, for example, an established business where the site is being promoted for housing by the landowner would score 5.

### Overall Score for 'Availability'

- The above key criterion directly scores the 'availability' of each site.
- A score of 5 or 4 gives an overall 'Availability' score of **3** (site is available and can be included in the 5 year supply).
- A score of 3 or 2 gives an overall 'Availability' score of **2** (site is potentially available but faces some constraints and should not be included in the 5 year supply)
- A score of 1 or 0 gives an overall 'Availability' score of **1** (site faces significant availability constraints)
- In exceptional circumstances availability factors not listed above may be taken into account to give a different overall score. These exceptions will always be explained fully in the sites database.



## 3 'ACHIEVABILITY' CRITERIA

### 3a. Market/Cost/Delivery Factors

#### *Deliverability of the Site*

AP Sheehan & Co to score on the basis of known information (e.g. on land values, locality, market conditions, physical constraints, etc), using a sliding scale as follows:

- Good marketability and/or viability. Site faces few achievability constraints and is likely to be achievable within 5 years 3
- Moderate marketability and/or viability. Site is potentially achievable but faces some constraints and should not be included in the 5 year supply 2
- Poor marketability and/or viability. Site faces significant achievability constraints and is unlikely to be achievable 1

#### **Overall Score for 'Achievability'**

- The above key criterion directly scores the 'achievability' of each site.
- The 'availability' score can range from 1 to 3.



## 4 OVERALL SCORE AND SITE CATEGORISATION

Each site thus achieves three separate scores, as follows:

- an overall 'suitability score' of 3, 2 or 1;
- an overall 'availability score' of 3, 2 or 1; and
- an overall 'achievability score' of 3, 2 or 1.

The sites are assigned to an overall Category band (1, 2 or 3) on the basis of these scores. Our approach to site categorisation is set out in Table 4.1 below.

In sum, if a site is to form part of the Council's five-year housing land supply (i.e. a Category 1 site), it must be deliverable; that is, the site should be '*available now, offer a suitable location for housing now and there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years from the date of adoption of the plan*'<sup>9</sup>. Category 1 sites must, therefore, attain high overall scores against each of the suitability and availability criteria, and a moderate or high overall score against the achievability criteria.

Sites designated as 'Category 2' are those likely to be 'developable' over the next 10 years, but which are not deliverable within the first 5 years. Paragraph 33 of the CLG Practice Guidance states that such sites should be, '*in a suitable location for housing development, and there should be a reasonable prospect that [they] will be available for and could be developed at a specific point in time*'. Category 2 sites must, therefore, attain a high overall score against the 'suitability' criteria, and reasonable overall scores against the 'availability' and 'achievability' criteria.

Category 3 sites are those which can be regarded as 'not currently developable'. These sites are not likely to be appropriate for residential development in their current form, or are unlikely to come forward for development in the next 10 year period, unless evidence is brought forward to demonstrate that the significant constraints can be overcome/mitigated. Category 3 sites, therefore, attain low scores against any or all of the 'suitability', 'availability' and 'achievability' criteria.

**Table 4.1 - Summary of Site Categorisation Methodology**

Categorisation	Permutation of Scores	Overall Score (out of 5)		
		Suitability Criteria	Availability Criteria	Achievability Criteria
<b>Category 1 - Deliverable Sites</b>	A	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Category 2 - Developable Sites</b>	A	<b>2</b>	2 - 3	2 - 3
	B	2 - 3	<b>2</b>	2 - 3
	C	2 - 3	2 - 3	<b>2</b>
<b>Category 3 - Not Currently Developable Sites</b>	A	<b>1</b>	1 - 3	1 - 3
	B	1 - 3	<b>1</b>	1 - 3
	C	1 - 3	1 - 3	<b>1</b>

*Note: Scores which are highlighted in **bold** in each row, are definitive in determining the Category band of a site (as long as the site also scores within the defined range for each of the other two criteria)*

*There are three possible permutations of scores for Category 2 and Category 3 sites. The three different permutations have been labelled A, B and C.*

<sup>9</sup> CLG, *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance* (July 2007), paragraph 33

Thus Table 4.1 shows that:

- Category 1 sites must achieve high overall scores of 3 against the suitability, availability and achievability criteria;
- Category 2 sites achieve moderate (but not low) overall scores against one, two or all three of the criteria. Thus, if a site achieves an overall score of 2 against the suitability criteria, **or** 2 against the availability criteria, **or** 2 against the achievability criteria - and scores higher than 1 for all criteria - it is designated as Category 2; and
- Category 3 sites achieve low scores against one, two or all three of the criteria. Thus, if a site achieves an overall score of 1 against the suitability criteria, **or** 1 against the availability criteria, **or** 1 against the achievability criteria, it is designated as Category 3.

