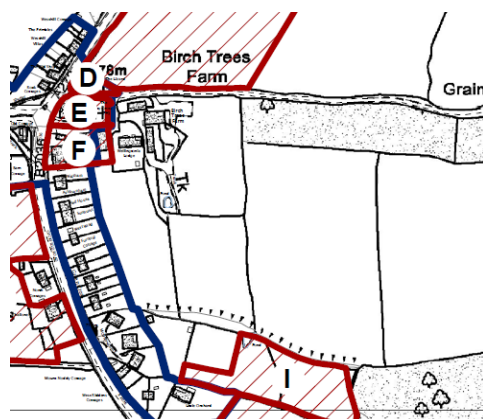




Neighbourhood Planning Site Assessment Pro-forma

Beta Version



July 2014

URS Neighbourhood Planning Site Assessment Pro-forma

Introduction

This form has been developed to assist with the Neighbourhood Planning site selection process. It will help you gather information on and weigh up the constraints and opportunities for potential development sites that you may wish to include in the Neighbourhood Plan and to decide which sites are best to allocate.

The form is in four parts. The first section is **general information** on the site location and context. The second and third sections relate to the **suitability and availability** of the site, which are key parts of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process. The final section is a summary of the development potential of the site, which includes a judgement on whether the site is acceptable for development, in principle.

The information requirements for the pro-forma have also been designed to allow data to be collected for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for a Neighbourhood Plan, should you decide to undertake one. However, the exact criteria will need to be tailored to fit with the SEA scope. The criteria included here reflect a range of environmental, social and economic considerations. A traffic-light system of colour coding has been included for most criteria listed in the 'suitability' section in order to reflect the performance of the sites in sustainability terms. This will help you to determine the relative sustainability of individual sites, whereby a **red** categorisation equates to the predication of a 'significant negative impact', an **amber** categorisation equates to the prediction of a 'moderate negative impact' and a **green** categorisation equates to the prediction of 'no negative impact or minor negative impact which could potentially be mitigated'.

Before you start

It should be established whether or not any given site is already under consideration in the SHLAA. It will also ensure you gain further information on the land use and planning history of the site. It is useful to understand whether there have been previous planning applications put forward, and if so, their grounds for approval / refusal.

Planning applications are decided by the local planning authority. Most local authorities publish information on planning applications on their websites. You can find the website address for your local planning authority on the Planning Portal <https://www.planningportal.gov.uk>.

Explanation of the criteria

The suitability of a site is dependent on whether there are any significant constraints to development, such as planning policy implications, access and local services.

It is essential that the **availability** of the site is investigated. This information may not always be available from the outset, but it is important to establish whether the site is likely to become available for development and the likely time frame as this will inform whether it is appropriate to include within the plan. Information on availability of sites might be available in the local authority's strategic housing land availability assessment (SHLAA). If not, we recommend contacting the local authority and local landowners.

A third crucial element that will need to be considered is the 'achievability' of the sites being assessed. This relates to the economic viability of a site, or whether development of the site works financially for a developer. For the purposes of this exercise, we advise neighbourhood groups to:

- Involve business, developers and landowners at early stages of evidence gathering to advise the neighbourhood group on viability of sites.
- Carry out the viability appraisal possibly with a panel of local developers, after the site assessment process is complete and the shortlist of suitable and available sites has been established.
- Check with the local planning authority that the proposals for development are appropriate and in conformity with the local plan / core strategy.
- If you still have doubts about the process, **URS** can also provide support on viability assessments.

Form instructions

The form should be completed with **as much detail as possible** to ensure the decision is well informed. If data is lacking, do record this as part of the pro-forma. In addition you should take additional notes, photos and sketches which may assist you in coming to decisions about which are the most appropriate sites for development. You should retain your completed site forms as evidence. See also the URS tips on developing a good site selection process (appendix 3).

1. Background information

Site location and use	
Site location <i>General description (see examples- Appendix 1)</i>	
Parish Name	
Gross area (Ha) <i>Total area of the site in hectares</i>	

SHLAA site reference (if applicable)	
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Context				
Surrounding land uses <i>(see examples- Appendix 1)</i>				
Site boundaries <i>(see examples- Appendix 1)</i>				
Is the site: <i>Greenfield: Land (or a defined site) usually farmland, that has not previously been developed.</i> <i>Brownfield: Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.</i>	Greenfield <input type="checkbox"/>	Brownfield <input type="checkbox"/>	Mixture <input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If a mixture, please provide details i.e. northern part of site Brownfield, southern part Greenfield</i>				
Existing/ previous use				

Site planning history

Have there been any previous applications for development on this land?

What was the outcome?

2.0. Suitability

Assessing the suitability of the site will give an indication of whether the site has any constraints to development. It should consider aspects such as infrastructure, planning policy, local services, historic and other considerations.

Suitability			
Where is the site located in relation to the built up area of the village?	Within the settlement	On the edge	Outside
How would development of this site relate to the surrounding uses? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would be the impact of the proposed land use for the site? What would be the impact of the proposed design of site development? What would be the impact of the proposed scale of site development? 	Well	Not very well	Don't know
How the site is currently accessed? Is it accessible from the highway network? <i>Provide details of site's connectivity i.e. distance to nearest motorway, A road or B road</i>			

Environmental Considerations		
What is the distance from the edge of the site to any of the following	Distance	Comments
Greenbelt	<400m 400-800m >800m	

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	<400m 400-800m >800m	
Important green space? Discretionary designation for green areas of particular importance to the local community (see appendix 2)	<400m 400-800m >800m	
Sites designated as being of European Importance¹ (see appendix 2)	<400m 400-800m >800m	
Sites designated as being of national importance² (see appendix 2)	<400m 400-800m >800m	
Sites designated as being of local importance³ (Consult local planning authority)	<400m 400-800m >800m	

Community facilities and services		
What is the distance to the following facilities (measured from the site centre)	Distance (metres)	Observations and comments
Town / local centre / shop	<400m 400-800m >800m	
Public transport e.g. Train Station or Bus Stop (with at least a half hourly service during the day)	<400m 400-800m >800m	
School(s)	<400m 400-800m >800m	
Open Space / recreation facilities	<400m 400-800m >800m	

¹ Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar Sites

² Sites of Special Scientific Interest

³ Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

Health Centre facility	<p><400m</p> <p>400-800m</p> <p>>800m</p>	
Key employment site	<p><400m</p> <p>400-800m</p> <p>>800m</p>	
Cycle route	<p><400m</p> <p>400-800m</p> <p>>800m</p>	
Amenity footpath	<p><400m</p> <p>400-800m</p> <p>>800m</p>	

Historic considerations		
Proximity of site to the following sites / areas	Proximity	Comments
Conservation Area <i>(see appendix 2)</i>	<p>Site is within a conservation area</p> <p>Site is adjacent to a conservation area</p> <p>Site is not within or adjacent to a conservation area</p>	
Archaeological sites <i>(see appendix 2)</i>	<p>Site is within an archaeological site</p> <p>Site is adjacent to a SAM</p> <p>Site is not within or adjacent to a SAM</p>	
Scheduled ancient monument (SAM) <i>(see appendix 2)</i>	<p>Site is on a SAM</p> <p>Site is adjacent to a SAM</p> <p>Site is not on or adjacent to a SAM</p>	
Listed buildings <i>(see appendix 2)</i>	<p>Site contains a listed building</p> <p>Site is adjacent to, or within the setting of a listed building</p> <p>Site does not contain or adjoin a listed building</p>	

Other key considerations			
Which Flood risk zone (fluvial) does the site fall within or intersect with?	Zone 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Zone 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Zone 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments	
Are there any Tree Preservation Orders on the site?	More than one <input type="checkbox"/> One <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments	
Is the site affected by any of the following?	Yes	No	Comments
Ecological value? Could the site to be home to protected species such as bats, great crested newts, badgers etc? (see appendix 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Contamination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Significant infrastructure crossing the site i.e. power lines/ pipe lines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Utility services available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Characteristics	
Characteristics which may affect development on the site:	Comments
Topography: Flat/ plateau/ steep gradient	
Views in? Wide/ channelled/ long/ short	
Views out? Wide/ channelled/ long/ short	

3.0. Availability

A site is considered available for development, when on the best available information there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems. This will often mean that the land is controlled by a developer or landowner who has expressed an intention to develop, or the landowner has expressed an intention to sell.

Availability			
	Yes	No	Comments
Is the site landowner willing to submit the site for development (if known)? Please provide supporting evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any known legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies, or operational requirements of landowners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a known time frame for availability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Any other comments?			

4.0. Summary

Conclusions	
Site name/number:	
Please tick a box	

The site is appropriate for development	<input type="checkbox"/>
This site has minor constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
The site has significant constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
The site is unsuitable for development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potential housing development capacity (estimated as a development of 30 homes per Ha):	
Estimated development timeframe:	
Explanation / justification for decision to accept or discount site.	

Further information

Infrastructure requirements?

You may also need to gain additional information from service providers such as highways, water, education etc. Please provide your comments.

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Appendix 1: Examples of answers

Field	Example
Site location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Address) - Open field used for pastoral farming, mainly sheep grazing. Site is positioned between the BXXX and XXX Street. • Agricultural field with a road down the western boundary. Footpath connecting site to main settlement, road access only down XXX Lane.
Surrounding land uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential to the East, roads to the North and Agriculture to the South
Site boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the site is surrounded by a 2 metre fence which is topped with barbed wire. Along some boundaries are hedges of varying densities. • Hedgerows to the South, remaining boundaries open with a few trees to the North. • Roads border the West and South of the site, agriculture to the East

Appendix 2: Glossary

Term	Definition
Archaeological sites	Archaeological sites are incorporated into a local Historic Environment Record (in places these are called Sites & Monuments Records). In England most Historic Environment Records are available online either in their own right, or through the Heritage Gateway: http://heritagehelp.org.uk/planning/archaeological-sites . Local planning authorities maintain a Historic Environment Record (often available online) with details of all designated heritage assets and other known archaeological sites, historic buildings, landscapes and sites of local value.
Achievability	A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of the site, and the capacity of the developer to complete and sell the housing over a certain period (Department for Communities and Local Government Guidance 2008).
Allocation/Site allocation	Area of land identified in the local planning authority's development plan. The allocation will also indicate the local planning authority's preferred use for the land. Neighbourhood groups are able to identify and allocate sites for new development including housing, employment, business use, leisure and other forms of development which the local planning authority considers appropriate. They can also protect and safeguard land for future uses (for example open spaces) and define development boundaries or settlement limits for those places where some further growth may take place.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Areas of national importance for their landscape character and appearance, within which the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty is a priority.
Availability	A site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. This means that it is controlled by a developer who has expressed an intention to develop, or a landowner has expressed an intention to sell or develop.
Conservation area	An area designated as an area of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance. There are additional controls over demolition, minor developments and the felling of trees.
Contamination	The Environment Agency provide information on local issues and environmental data at a local level: http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/37793.aspx

Brownfield	It is land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings), and associated fixed surface infrastructure. The definition covers the curtilage of the development
Ecological value	Interactive maps about nature, including the location of designated sites and environmental information are available at MAGIC. This website provides authoritative geographic information about the natural environment from across government. The information covers rural, urban, coastal and marine environments across Great Britain http://magic.defra.gov.uk/
Flood risk zone	Environmental Agency classification of areas ta risk of flooding. These areas are notified to the local planning authority by the Environment Agency. More information: Technical Guidance to National Planning Policy Framework https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6000/2115548.pdf Flood Map for Planning available at: http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?x=357683.0&y=355134.0&scale=1&layerGroups=default&ep=map&textonly=off&lang=_e&topic=floodmap
Greenbelt	An area of open land where strict controls on development are applied in order to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas, safeguard the countryside from encroachment, prevent neighbouring towns from merging with one another, preserve the special character of historic towns and assist in urban regeneration.
Greenfield	Term used to describe land that has not been previously developed.
Important green space (Designation for green areas)	The UK's approach to conservation employs a range of different types of site and extensive area designations for landscape and nature conservation purposes. A list of main designations is available at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/default.aspx
Listed buildings	The National Heritage List for England is the only official and up to date database of all nationally designated heritage assets including: Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, World Heritage Sites. Further information: http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/
Natural Nature Reserves (NNRs)	Areas managed for either (or both) the preservation of flora, fauna, geological and physiological features of special interest or to provide opportunities to study fauna, flora and their physical conditions.

Ramsar sites	<p>Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, designated under the Ramsar Convention. Wetlands are defined as areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres. Ramsar sites may also incorporate riparian (banks of a stream, river, pond or watercourse) and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands. Ramsar sites in England: http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1390</p>
Scheduled ancient monument (SAM)	<p>'Scheduling' is shorthand for the process through which nationally important sites and monuments are given legal protection by being placed on a list, or 'schedule'. English Heritage takes the lead in identifying sites in England which should be placed on the schedule by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Further information: https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/content/imported-docs/p-t/guideforownersofsams.pdf</p>
Site assessment	<p>All potential development sites within the neighbourhood plan area should be assessed against a wide ranging and detailed list of criteria to ensure that all relevant issues are addressed and the most appropriate and sustainable sites are selected. Inevitably, not all the shortlisted sites will be chosen and other sites may be considered. But in taking this approach neighbourhood groups should be able to identify the most appropriate sites which can then be taken forward to the next, formal stage, of the process following consultation with the community and other stakeholders.</p>
Site of special scientific interests (SSSI)	<p>A site identified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as incorporated in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) as an area of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features (basically, plants, animals, and natural features relating to the Earth's structure). These areas are designated by Natural England and have statutory protection.</p>
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	<p>Areas which have been given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive. They provide increased protection to a variety of wild animals, plants and habitats and are a vital part of global efforts to conserve the world's biodiversity. Strictly protected sites for rare and threatened species and habitats on land or sea as designated under the EC Habitats Directive.</p>
Special Protection Area (SPA)	<p>Areas which have been identified by the European Commission as being of international importance for certain breeding, feeding, wintering or migration of rare and vulnerable species of bird populations found within the EU countries. They have statutory protection under the EC Directive for the Conservation of Wild Birds 79/409.</p>
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	<p>An assessment of the significant environmental effects of the neighbourhood plan. It is a process to ensure the environmental implications of decisions are taken into account before the decisions are made. The need for environmental assessment of plans and programmes is set out in the EU Directive 2001/42/EC – known as the SEA Directive.</p>

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)	<p>An assessment of the land capacity to determine potential housing development. The result is a list produced by the Local Authority of sites that have the potential for housing development. This is also used to estimate the housing supply in the area.</p>
Suitability	<p>A site is considered suitable for (housing) development if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities. For sites not allocated for housing in development plans or having the benefit of planning permission for housing, policy restrictions, physical problems or limitations, potential impacts and environmental conditions should be considered.</p>
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	<p>The process of assessing the economic, social and environmental effects of a proposed plan. This process implements the requirements of the SEA Directive.</p>
Tree Preservation Order (TPO)	<p>A legally enforceable order made by the local planning authority to protect trees and woodland in the interests of public amenity.</p>
Viability	<p>A site is considered viable if the proposal for development is financially able to proceed. Viability therefore varies from site to site, and development to development, and over time (i.e. if the cost of development; including the price of the land and necessary borrowing) is less than the value of the development (sales, the value of rental streams and any available grant or other funds) then the development is viable and likely to go ahead.</p>

Appendix 3: Check-list for a robust site selection process in neighbourhood planning

To be used together with URS harmonized site selection pro-forma

	Check!	Tips
1	Have a reasonable number of people been involved in site assessments and have they declared any relevant interests from outset?	Look for 3 people minimum with at least one person involved in whole process (i.e. every site)
2	Have the same people been involved with all the site assessments?	Look for consistency of expertise/experience. If not consistent, look for inconsistency in scoring (see 6)
3	Was the LPA site assessment criteria used as a basis for the NDP's criteria or was the NDP criteria developed separately and/or without knowledge of former?	If using URS criteria share with Local Planning Authority (LPA). If using LPA assessment criteria check you are using the most up to date version– see their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
4	If adding your own local criteria, are they fair?	Avoid criteria that will only discriminate against one site. Check local criteria with LPA. See also URS criteria
5	Has the same criteria and scoring method been used for each site?	If any doubt do a spot check (depending on resources) for a consistency check, particularly focusing on those sections not subject to Yes/No answers in score sheet
6	Have you clearly documented every assessment meeting and in particular short-listing meeting(s) and preferred sites meeting(s)?	Identify how this was done from minutes etc. Check they have clearly summarised the journey and clearly stated why sites have been rejected, shortlisted or become preferred sites
7	Have you integrated a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) into your site selection process?	NB if allocating sites you will need to carry out an SEA and consider any reasonable alternatives to short-listed sites. Check your SEA work is procedurally correct. URS can advise on this – see also URS's harmonised site selection pro-forma
8	Are you intending to develop site briefs?	If yes consider a simple document that identifies characteristics of a site, details relevant planning policy considerations and advises on appropriate land uses, materials, vernacular and access

<p>9</p>	<p>Is there a capacity study (study to establish how much housing / commercial/ open space can be accommodated) or crude estimate for each site?</p>	<p>Check. If not find out the site size and multiply by the local plan's habitable room per hectare</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>How has the site selection activity and its conclusions been communicated to local people, site owners, promoters and other stakeholders?</p>	<p>Check relevant parties have been consulted. Check if engagement methods reasonable (see also URS engagement checklist). An SEA report will help with this</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Have the reasons for the preferred sites been properly and effectively explained?</p>	<p>Check clarity of website, exhibition & newsletter material. Check whether conclusions have been clearly and fairly presented in terms of pros and cons and the finding of SEA/SA clearly presented at same time</p>