

## Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology



2002-2003  
Crime Reduction in Rural Areas  
2004-2005  
Services for Older People  
2007-2008  
Emergency Planning



## Housing Land Availability Methodology Scoping Report

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1** Housing is high on the national agenda and Government policy set out in Planning Policy 3: Housing<sup>(i)</sup> states that Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (HLAA) are an important part of the policy process.
- 1.2** Guidance has been published regarding the production of HLAA<sup>(ii)</sup>. Each Local Authority will be responsible for evaluating land availability in their area.
- 1.3** The HLAA is a key component of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing to meet the community's need for more homes. It will inform the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, which sets out the key elements of the planning framework for Stroud District.
- 1.4** PPS3 requires Local Planning Authorities to:
- **identify specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that are ready for development**, and to keep this topped up over time in response to market information
  - **identify specific, developable sites for years 6-10**, and ideally years 11-15, in plans to enable the five year supply 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

## Purpose of Assessment

- 1.5** The purpose of this scoping report is to set out the proposed scope and methodology of an HLAA to be prepared by Stroud District Council in support of its emerging Local Development Framework. This document should not be confused with a full Housing Land Availability Assessment. This is simply a scoping report and will be developed into a full HLAA following stakeholder consultation.
- 1.6** The primary role of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is to:
- identify sites with potential for housing
  - assess their housing potential, and
  - assess when they are likely to be developed
- 1.7** It should aim to identify as many sites with housing potential in and around as many settlements as possible in the study area. It should aim to identify sufficient specific sites for at least the first 10 years of a plan and ideally for longer than the whole 15 year plan period.

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i Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, Communities and Local Government, November 2006  
 ii Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment: Practice Guidance, Communities and Local Government, July 2007

- 1.8** Where it is not possible to identify specific sites, it should provide the evidence base to support judgements around whether broad locations should be identified and whether a windfall allowance may be justified in the first 10 years of the plan.
- 1.9** The Assessment does not determine whether a site should be allocated for housing development. The assessment findings will identify:
- the recent pattern of housing development
  - the choices available to meet the need and demand for more housing and provide a basis for making decisions about how to shape places in the future
  - whether action would need to be taken to ensure sites will become deliverable (including infrastructure investment) or whether plan policies need to be reviewed to enable identified sites to be developed for housing

### Partnership Approach

- 1.10** Guidance advocates that regional planning bodies and local planning authorities work together, and with key stakeholders, to ensure a joined-up and robust approach. Key stakeholders should be involved from the outset to help shape the approach. House builders and local property agents should provide expertise and knowledge to assist with views on deliverability and developability of sites and how market conditions may affect economic viability.

## 2 Core Requirements

**2.1** The Housing Land Availability Assessment should provide these core outputs:

1. A list of sites, cross-referenced to maps showing locations and boundaries of specific sites (and showing broad locations, where necessary)
2. Assessment of the deliverability / developability of each identified site (i.e. in terms of its suitability, availability and achievability) to establish when an identified site may realistically be expected to be developed
3. Potential quantity of housing that could be delivered in each identified site or within each identified broad location (where necessary) or on windfall sites (where justified)
4. Constraints on the delivery of identified sites
5. Recommendations on how these constraints could be overcome and when

**2.2** The assessment should meet the requirements of the following process checklist:

1. Involve key stakeholders including house builders, social landlords, local property agents and local communities. Other relevant agencies may include the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships (a requirement in areas where they are particularly active).
2. The methods, assumptions, judgements and findings should be discussed and agreed upon throughout the process in an open and transparent way, and explained in the Assessment report. The report should include an explanation as to why particular sites or areas have been excluded from the Assessment.

**2.3** In following the methodology set out in the Practice Guidance, Stroud District Council will meet the requirements of Assessment.

## Keeping up to Date

**2.4** Once completed the Assessment will be kept up-to-date as part of the Council's Annual Monitoring Report to support the updating of the housing trajectory and the five-year supply of specific deliverable sites. Information to be recorded will include whether:

- sites under-construction have been completed, or whether individual stages have been developed
- sites with planning permission are under-construction and what progress has been made
- planning applications have been submitted or approved on sites and broad locations identified by the Assessment
- progress has been made in removing constraints on development and whether a site is now considered to be deliverable or developable

- unforeseen constraints have emerged which now mean a site is no longer deliverable or developable, and how these could be addressed
- the windfall allowance (where justified) is coming forward as expected, or may need to be adjusted

## 3 The Methodology

- 3.1** The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment has eight main stages, with two further optional stages covering broad locations and windfalls. Guidance states that stages 3 and 4, 6 and 7 and 9 and 10 may be carried out in parallel.

### Stage 1: Planning the Assessment

- 3.2** The Department of Communities and Local Government Guidance raises management issues that should be addressed in the assessment.
- 3.3** In order to carry out the Assessment the Council are working closely with the other authorities in the County. The working group have agreed methodology criteria, areas of search thresholds and on going quality of the project. A working group are engaging with Home Builders Federation (HBF) as well as Government Office for the South West.
- 3.4** The work is to be carried out by Stroud District Council, utilising the resources of Development Services and knowledge available, as well as those of local developers, land owners and agents. The Assessment timetable needs to complement the Core Strategy in order to be a useful evidence base to inform decisions.
- 3.5** Resources in terms of officer time for making assessments and the production of a set of maps will be provided by the Council. It is hoped that all members of the wider stakeholder partnership will contribute towards assessing the identified sites.
- 3.6** Most of the skills required to produce the Assessment are available within the Council, however, the input of local agents and developers will be important in identifying suitable sites, assessing constraints and market factors.
- 3.7** The Assessment will be prepared by the Council, with the draft assessment to be agreed through the partnership approach. The process of assessing individual sites will be standardised to achieve a consistency of analysis.
- 3.8** The work programme and project milestones are shown in the table below, these take into account resources, timings of the relevant plans or assessments of five years supply of specific deliverable sites, or other evidence gathering exercises.

Table 3.1 Work Programme

	Sept	Oct	Nov Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Planning the assessment	█								
Methodology consultation	█	█							
Desktop review of existing information		█		█					
Review representations, revise methodology		█		█					
Determining areas & sites to be surveyed				█	█				
Carry out survey					█	█			
Estimating housing potential of each site					█	█			
Assessing when and where sites likely to be developed						█	█		
Review assessment								█	
Agree SHLAA									█

## Stage 2: Determining sources of sites

**3.9** In accordance with the Practice Guidance the types of sites that will be covered by the Assessment are outlined in the table below.

Sites in the planning process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>land allocated (or with permission) for employment or other land uses which may no longer be required for those uses</li> <li>existing housing allocations and site development briefs</li> <li>unimplemented planning permissions for housing</li> <li>planning permissions for housing that are under construction</li> </ul>
Sites not currently in the planning process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vacant and derelict land and buildings</li> <li>surplus public sector land</li> <li>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</li> <li>additional housing opportunities in established residential areas, such as under-used garage blocks</li> <li>large scale redevelopment and re-design of existing residential areas</li> <li>sites in rural settlements and rural exception sites</li> <li>greenfield urban / village extensions</li> <li>new free standing settlements</li> </ul>

**3.10** The Practice Guidance states that particular types of land or areas may be excluded from the Assessment, provided that reasons for doing so are justified and agreed by members of the partnership.

**3.11** Practice Guidance further states that the scope of the Assessment should not be narrowed down by existing policies designed to constrain development, so that the local planning authority is in the best possible position when it comes to decide its strategy for delivering its housing objectives.

## Stage 3: Desktop review of existing information

**3.12** The Guidance sets out data sources that can be used to identify sites with potential for housing and relevant information they might provide, such as on constraints.

**3.13** The table below sets out some of the data sources that will be used to identify sites with potential for housing:

Sites in the planning process	Purpose
Site allocations not yet the subject of planning permission	To identify sites
Planning permission / sites under construction (particularly those being developed in phases)	To identify sites
Site specific development briefs	To identify sites and any constraints to delivery
Planning application refusals	To identify sites - particularly those applications rejected on grounds of prematurity
Dwelling starts and completion records	To identify the current development progress on sites with planning permission
Other sources of information that may help to identify sites	
Local planning authority Urban Capacity Study	To identify buildings and land, and any constraints to delivery
Local planning authority Empty Property Register	To identify vacant buildings
English House condition Survey (Communities and Local Government)	To identify buildings
National Land Use Database (English Partnerships)	To identify buildings and land, and any constraints to delivery
Register of Surplus Public Sector Land (English Partnerships)	To identify buildings and land
Local planning authority Employment Land Review	To identify surplus employment buildings and land
Valuation Office database	To identify vacant buildings
Local planning authority vacant property registers (industrial and commercial)	To identify vacant buildings
Commercial property databases, eg estate agents and property agents	To identify vacant buildings and land
Ordnance Survey maps	To identify land
Aerial photography	To identify land

**3.14** Once the list of sites and information gathered on each site is assembled, duplications will be removed and sites will be mapped.

## Stage 4: Determining sites and areas to survey

- 3.15** The Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Documents will need to plan for large numbers of housing to be in accordance with the South West Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 3.16** All sites identified by the desk-top review should be visited in order to get an up-to-date view on development progress and to identify any possible constraints to development. The site survey will be used to identify further sites with potential for housing development which were not identified by the desktop review.
- 3.17** As stated in the guidance, mapping development hotspots, town centres, principal public transport corridors, specific locations within settlements and specific locations outside settlements will help to identify which geographic areas could be covered by the survey.
- 3.18** Factors to take into account in determining how comprehensive and intensive the survey needs to be include:
- **The nature of the housing challenge** - more comprehensive and intensive where existing or emerging housing provision targets in the study area are high or where there is worsening affordability, reflecting the need to identify more sites for housing
  - **The nature of the area** - areas dominated by smaller settlements may find it necessary to identify all the sites with potential for housing
  - **The nature of land supply** - where a large proportion of housing is expected to be delivered on small sites this may mean that the survey needs to identify smaller sites than would be necessary in an area where larger sites are likely to make up the bulk of supply
  - **The resources available to the partnership** - which can be brought together for best effect and, should reflect the scale of the task.

## Stage 5: Carrying out the survey

- 3.19** Sites identified from the desktop review will be visited following a brief to ensure consistent practice in identifying sites and recording information, handling enquires from council members to minimise misinformed speculation.
- 3.20** The following characteristics will be recorded, or checked that they were supplied by the desktop review:
- site size
  - site boundaries
  - current use(s)
  - surrounding land use(s)
  - character of surrounding area
  - physical constraints, e.g. access, steep slopes, potential for flooding, natural features of significance and location of pylons

- development progress, e.g. ground works completed, number of homes started and completed
- initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for housing mixed-use development

**3.21** A checklist for sites is contained in Appendix A 'Checklist of Site Details'.

### Stage 6: Estimating housing potential of each site

**3.22** The housing potential of each identified site should be guided by the existing plan policy, particularly the approach to housing densities at the local level. The Stroud District Local Plan was adopted in November 2005 and remains the current Plan for the District. In line with Regional Guidance, densities within the Gloucester SSCT (Strategically Significant City or Town) should be applied at 50 dwellings per hectare for urban areas and extensions.

**3.23** Alternative approaches to estimating potential are to sketch a scheme from scratch, or use relevant existing schemes as the basis for an outline scheme adjusted for individual site characteristics and physical constraints. A further method is to compare the site with a sample scheme which represents the form of development considered desirable in a particular area.

**3.24** Housing potential is a significant factor that affects economic viability. The guidance states that stage 6 and 7 of the Assessment can be carried out in parallel to ensure that the housing potential for each site is guided both by the plan and economic viability.

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

**3.25** Assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of a site will provide the information as to whether a site can be considered deliverable, developable or not currently developable.

**3.26** Where it is unknown when a site could be developed it should be regarded as not currently developable. This could be where there is a severe constraint and it is not known when it might be overcome. In accordance with guidance, the assessment of deliverability / developability of specific sites should be made irrespective of the level of housing provision that is actually needed over the plan period.

**3.27** This stage of the Assessment is divided into four steps outlined below.

#### Stage 7a: Assessing suitability for housing

**3.28** A site is suitable if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable mixed communities. The following factors should be considered to assess a site's suitability for housing:

- **Policy restrictions** - designations, protected areas, existing planning policy and corporate or 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

### Stage 7b: Assessing availability for housing

- 3.29** A site is considered available for development when there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as multiple ownerships, ransom strips<sup>(iii)</sup>, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. Therefore, land is considered available when it is controlled by a housing developer who has expressed an intention to develop or the land owner has expressed an intention to sell.
- 3.30** Where problems have been identified then an assessment will need to be made as to how and when they can realistically be overcome.

### Stage 7c: Assessing achievability for housing

- 3.31** 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 a site and the capacity of the developer to complete and sell the housing over a certain period. It will be affected by market factors, cost factors and delivery factors.
- 3.32** The views of housebuilders and local property agents will be considered in order to make a residential valuation on sites to determine whether housing is an economically viable prospect for a particular site.

### Stage 7d: Overcoming constraints

- 3.33** Where constraints have been identified the Assessment will consider what action would be needed to remove them. Actions might include investment for infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement or a need to amend planning policy which is currently constraining housing development.

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iii Also known as an access strip. A piece of land that typically provides access to a development site, which is held back by a vendor, preventing access and effectively holding prospective developers to ransom.

## Stage 8: Review of the Assessment

- 3.34** The initial survey and assessment of sites will enable the production of an indicative housing trajectory that sets out how much housing can be provided and at what point in the future. Guidance recommends that an overall risk assessment be made as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated. If it is concluded that insufficient sites have been identified, further sites may need to be sought or assumptions that were applied may need to be altered.
- 3.35** If there are still insufficient sites then it will be necessary to identify broad locations for future housing growth (both within and outside settlements) and to use a windfall allowance (refer to stages 9 and 10).
- 3.36** This will be conducted with input from town and parish councils, as well as other stakeholders, to ensure transparency and agreement with as much local knowledge as possible.

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

- 3.37** This stage of the Assessment is optional, as described above. Broad locations are areas where housing development is considered feasible and will be encouraged, but where specific sites can not yet be identified. By identifying broad locations communities have a better understanding about where future development will be directed and there will be greater certainty for developers about where development will be encouraged. It is a proactive approach that reflects positive choices about the direction of future housing development.
- 3.38** Examples of broad locations include:
- **Within and adjoining settlements** - areas where housing development is or could be encouraged and small extensions to settlements.
  - **Outside settlements** - major urban extensions, growth points, growth areas, new free-standing settlements and eco-towns. The need to explore these will usually be signalled by the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 3.39** The search can be focused by establishing a set of criteria, such as direct development into areas where significant infrastructure exists or is planned, or to avoid the coalescence of settlements.
- 3.40** Where broad locations have been identified estimates of potential housing supply should be developed having regard to:
- any evidence underpinning the Regional Spatial Strategy
  - the nature and scale of potential opportunities within the broad location
  - market conditions

**3.41** Guidance suggests housing potential for broad locations outside settlements can be calculated by using the residential density of an existing area that works well (dividing the total area by the number of homes) and applying this calculation to the broad location. However, the density will be lower as it will contain land that will need to be provided for other uses such as shops, offices and schools.

### **Stage 10: Determining the housing potential of windfall (where justified)**

**3.42** PPS 3 expects the supply of land for housing to be based upon specific sites and, where necessary, broad locations. However, it is recognised that there may be genuine local circumstances where a windfall allowance is justified.

**3.43** Where a windfall allowance can be justified this should be based on an estimate of the amount of housing that could be delivered in the area on land that has not been identified in the list of sites. One way of determining the allowance is to estimate the housing potential from each likely source of housing, by calculating the average completion rate from each source. This can be done from the Council's Housing Land Availability database. This can help in coming to an informed review as to:

- whether the annual rate is likely to increase or decrease
- whether the pattern of redevelopment is likely to remain the same, increase or decrease
- whether current market conditions are likely to stay the same, worsen or improve in the future

## Appendix A Checklist of Site Details

Site Characteristics			
Site Size (or range if appropriate)			
Current Land Use(s)			
Surrounding Land Use(s)			
Greenfield / Brownfield			
Current Policy / Physical Constraints			
	No	Yes	Opportunity to mitigate or improve
Do you consider the site to be within an Urban Area?			
Does the site fall within the Flood Plain? (Zone 2, 3)			
Does the site fall within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?			
Does the site fall within a Special Landscape Area?			
Does the site fall within a Site of Special Scientific Interest?			
Does the site impact on cultural heritage? (e.g. Listed Buildings, Area)			
Is there any known contamination on site?			
Accessibility			
Public transport accessibility (e.g. range of means of transport and frequency of service)			

<b>Access to Primary Services, Facilities &amp; Jobs (e.g. employment, retail, leisure)</b>	
<b>Access to Key Local Services &amp; Facilities (e.g. Post Office, health, primary school, village hall, pub, general store)</b>	
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
<b>Water Supply</b>	
<b>Drainage</b>	
<b>Electricity</b>	
<b>School Places</b>	
<b>Strategic transport Infrastructure</b>	

## Appendix B Consultees

**B.1** The following table illustrates individuals and organisations that will be specifically consulted on this Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology Scoping Report. This list is not exhaustive and the consultation will be extended to a wider audience through the Council's website.

Housing Associations	Bruton Knowles
English Partnerships	Andrew Watton
Government Office for the South West	Ash & Co
Gloucestershire County Council	Bennett & Jones
Gloucester City Council	R A Bennett
Tewkesbury Borough Council	Stage Coach
Forest of Dean District Council	Learning Skills Council
Cotswold District Council	Severn Trent
Cheltenham Borough Council	Westbury
NHS South West	Persimmon
Gloucestershire Diocese	Wimpy Homes
Stroud Preservation Trust	Redrow
Civic Society	Crest Nicholson
National Home Builders Federation	McCarthy & Stone
Stroud District Council Regeneration - empty properties	Bovis Homes
South Gloucestershire Council	Neighbouring Town & Parish Councils
Town & Parish Councils	Bristol City Council
Environment Agency	Wessex Water
English Heritage	Highways Agency
Natural England	Network Rail
Transco national Grid	Gloucestershire Constabulary

## Appendix C References

- C.1** *Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West*, 2006. South West Regional Assembly
- C.2** *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing*, 2006. Department of Communities and Local Government
- C.3** *Planning Policy statement 12: Local Development Frameworks*, 2004. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- C.4** *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance*, 2007. Department of Communities and Local Government
- C.5** *Stroud District Council Local Plan*, November 2005. Stroud District Council