



**Strategic Housing and Economic Land
Availability Assessment (SHELAA)**

2019

What Is a SHELAA?

SHELAA is an acronym for Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment.

A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a requirement of national policy and is seen as an important part of the evidence base for Local Plans. The latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, February 2019) states in paragraph 67 that:

‘Strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability.’

Planning Practice Guidance (updated in September 2018) sets out the purpose of an assessment of land availability, or SHELAA. This states that

‘An assessment of land availability identifies a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period. The assessment of land availability includes the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment requirement as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.’

The purpose of the SHELAA is to identify a list of possible housing and economic development sites and assess the overall potential of those sites. The assessment then provides evidence on the availability of land for housing or economic development in the plan area. The assessment of land availability is an important step in the preparation of Local Plans.

SHELAA 2019

This is the second time that the Council has brought together its housing and economic land availability assessments to produce a SHELAA – the first was produced in 2018. Previous to this, SHLAAs and Economic Land Availability Assessments (ELAAs) were produced separately, with the SHLAAs being produced on an annual basis and the last ELAA produced in 2013.

This SHELAA supersedes the 2018 SHELAA and all previous SHLAAs and ELAAs.

The geographical area covered by the SHELAA corresponds with the boundary of the district.

The publication of the SHELAA coincides with the start of detailed work to identify potential sites for housing and employment allocations as part of the Council’s review of its Local Plan adopted in November 2017.

It should be noted that the SHELAA is a technical document to identify potential sites for housing and economic development. The inclusion of a site in the SHELAA does not provide any indication of the Councils view of its acceptability for future development. Any inclusion of sites within the document does not necessarily mean that a site will be included in the reviewed Local Plan nor does it

imply or guarantee that planning permission would be granted should an application be submitted for consideration.

In addition, sites considered in the SHELAA have been assessed against current local policy constraints some of which would currently prevent their development for new homes/employment but which in the longer term may not represent a constraint. Therefore, such policy constraints are not viewed as a constraint to the inclusion of a site in the SHELAA. For example, land currently identified as countryside or subject to another restrictive designation may not necessarily be carried forward in the Local Plan review.

Methodology

The process undertaken to complete the SHELAA has been guided by:

- a) The [Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment methodology](#) set out in Planning Practice Guidance; and
- b) The [Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Methodology Paper 2019](#).

The Local Planning Authorities of Leicester and Leicestershire have agreed a joint approach to the preparation of housing and economic land availability assessments through the Methodology Paper 2019 which provides detailed guidance in accordance with National Planning Practice Guidance. The authorities have also agreed common working arrangements in line with Duty to Cooperate requirements. This includes locally specific criteria as part of the methodology, and ensures that each authority's individual document will follow the same broad methodology and appear in a similar format (accepting that occasionally local circumstances may justify a change).

The approach set out in the methodology has been informed by the views of house builders, land agents and land owners gathered through consultation undertaken in early 2019.

Key Issues

A number of key issues have been identified when undertaking the SHELAA which are worth bearing in mind when considering individual sites/overall conclusions. These key issues are:

- i) Site Size** – In line with the Joint Methodology, only sites capable of delivering five or more dwellings or economic development on sites of 0.25ha (or 500sqm of floorspace) or above are considered for inclusion within the SHELAA.
- ii) Red Constraints & Flooding** – The Joint Methodology identifies four 'red' constraints that render a site undevelopable and unworthy of further consideration and assessment. In this district, we have used this approach for three of these constraints - Scheduled Monuments,

major hazardous facilities and Sites of Special Scientific Interest/Special Protection Areas (SSSIs/SPAs - with the exception of the River Mease Special Area of Conservation – see below).

However for the fourth, the functional floodplain, we have made the decision based on local circumstances (that the Environment Agency has previously supported development in the functional floodplain in the north of the district subject to implementing flood alleviation measures) not to automatically exclude sites that fall within these areas for employment use.

This does not mean that sites within these areas are automatically acceptable for economic development – but simply that any site promoter would need to work closely with the relevant authorities, including the Environment Agency, to see if any on or off site solutions to the flooding issue can be found before development can be considered. Given the time implications of this, it means that where sites have been assessed that fall within the functional floodplain, they are generally considered to be only achievable towards the end of the assessment period (usually 11 – 20 years).

iii) Timescale (11 – 20 Years) – In line with the Joint Methodology, each site has been classified based on its ability to come forward and grouped in to 5 year bands for the periods 0-5 years and 6-10 years. The third time period identified in the methodology is 11-15 years. However the Local Plan was only adopted in November 2017 and has an end date of 2031 (12 years from now), and the policy constraints on some of the assessed sites are so great that they are unlikely to be suitable in the current plan period. In addition, the end date of the Local Plan Review plan period will need to be more than 15 years in to the future. To take account of the sites that are not currently policy compliant and to ensure that the assessment runs at least until the end of the Plan Review period, we have therefore extended the final time period from 11-15 years to 11-20 years.

iv) Mixed Use Sites – Where a site has been put forward for a mix of residential and economic uses, it has been assessed in both the housing and economic sections of this document, and a note has been made in each assessment that a mix of uses is proposed.

In terms of a calculation of number of potential new dwellings/amount of new employment floorspace on mixed use sites an assumption has generally been made that half of the site area will be available for residential and half for employment uses. In reality the area split between residential and employment uses on mixed use sites will be different in every case - however in most instances the exact split is unknown at this present time. Using an assumption of half and half (rather than a maximum of 100% residential or 100% employment) at least guards against 'double counting' of land in both potential residential and employment categories. The exception to this method is on the larger sites (one west of Castle Donington and two near Isley Walton) where, if these sites come forward, it is more likely that housing will be the predominant use. For these, we have assessed a range of different housing amounts – from 50% of the developable area of the site to 100% of the site.

v) River Mease Special Area of Conservation – The River Mease SAC includes the River Mease and all its tributaries. This includes a large part of the south west of the district. Under the Habitats Directive we are responsible for ensuring that proposals for new development will have no significant adverse impact on the SAC, which already suffers from high levels of

phosphorous in the water. Currently, there is a Development Contribution Scheme (DCS) in place which requires any development within the SAC area to pay a financial contribution to be used to implement measures in the Water Quality Management Plan designed to reduce phosphorous levels.

The DCS estimates the amount of phosphorous likely to be generated by new development, which is used to create a 'development window' – the amount of development likely to be acceptable without adversely impacting the SAC. Once a development window is complete, then there may be restrictions on new development coming forward within the SAC area unless a) a new DCS can be agreed or b) a more long term, 'pumping out of catchment' solution has been implemented by Severn Trent.

Whilst we have not deemed any sites undevelopable, or pushed their estimated delivery timeframe back solely because a site is located within the SAC area, we have indicated on each individual assessment whether or not a site is within the SAC, and the current situation with regard to the SAC and development window capacity/progress with 'pumping out of catchment' will need to be taken into account when looking at an individual site.

vi) Potential Employment Floorspace – Where a planning permission exists, the potential employment floorspace figures have been calculated based on the amount of floorspace with permission. If no permission exists, then the standard plot ratio calculation outlined in the Joint Methodology has been used.

vii) Suitability of Housing Sites - A number of the housing sites assessed in the housing element of the SHELAA have previously been subject to planning applications that have been refused planning permission. The reasons for refusal may include conflicts with general policies such as being outside of the Limits to Development, but also more site specific issues such as access or an adverse impact upon interests of acknowledged importance such as heritage or ecology.

Such sites are generally considered to be potentially suitable in the context of the SHELAA - but in the longer term. This is reflected in such sites' timeframe for development taking into account that there would need to be a change in policy, or the other constraints which warranted a refusal would need to be addressed, for these sites to be considered suitable .

There are a number of SHELAA housing sites that are within the Limits to Development. For the purposes of the SHELAA these sites are considered suitable. Although it should be noted that there may be other reasons (that are not necessarily considered as part of the SHELAA) as to why such sites may not be appropriate for development and which would need to be addressed as part of any planning application.

Timescale

Initial work on this SHELAA began in Summer 2018. A Call for Sites consultation exercise was undertaken between 25 June and 28 August 2018 (although the 'window' for the submission

of new sites was still open via the Council's website until 31 March 2019). Officers then undertook assessments of all the sites submitted.

In addition, officers also undertook a search of recent planning application records and updated sites submitted through the previous SHELAA. As well as Planning Policy officers from the district council, specialist advice was also sought from Leicestershire County Council Highways and Ecology officers and from the district council's Business Focus Team Manager (relating to the economic sites).

All data in this SHELAA is correct up to 31 March 2019. The SHELAA was published in July 2019.

Format

The site assessments part of the SHELAA has been divided up into the following sections:

- [Part 1 – Assessment of Potential Housing Sites](#)
- [Part 2 – Assessment of Potential Employment Sites](#)