



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) Update - Topic Paper

March 2017

1. Introduction

1.1. This topic paper sets out the current position on Uttlesford District Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). The Paper sets out the requirements of a SLAA, the outcomes of the SLAA and implications for the Local Plan.

Key Evidence Studies

1.2. The following studies should be read alongside this topic paper:

- Call for Sites submissions (found on the Council's website at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/planningpolicy);
- SLAA 2015 Methodology;
- Councils assessment of Sites submitted as part of 2015 SLAA/ Call for sites exercise.

Key Issues

1.3. This Topic paper sets out:

- The Background to the Assessment;
- How the assessment has been undertaken;
- How New Settlements have been approached;
- How Employment Sites have been approached; and
- Next Steps.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council held a Call for Sites Exercise between 1st April 2015 and 1st July 2015. This provided an early opportunity for developers, landowners, individuals and other interested parties to suggest sites within Uttlesford District for all forms of development. The SLAA Assessment has informed the Local Plan process and indicated which sites could be allocated in the Local Plan.
- 2.2. The results of the 'Call for Sites' submission and the final 2015 SLAA Methodology were presented to Planning Policy Working Group on 16th December 2015. This paper explains the methodology for the assessment, which was undertaken for each individual site submitted. The Council undertook an assessment of the sites to determine those which were suitable, available and achievable.

3. 2017 SLAA Update

Need for Update

- 3.1. Since the publication of the 2015 SHMA and Call for Sites exercise, around 20 additional sites have been submitted for consideration. In addition, there have been changes in Flood Risk Data and other potential constraints data which could affect the suitability of a site. Additional information has also been submitted for some sites, as well as minor changes being made to some of the existing sites in the 2015 SLAA (such as amended access points), which will require the sites to be reconsidered as part of the SLAA process.
- 3.2. There is a need for the District Council to make sure that the SLAA is kept up to date to ensure enough housing supply is coming forward in the plan period.

Number of sites to assess

- 3.3. A total of 353 sites were submitted as part of the Call for Sites exercise for a range of uses, including housing, employment, a mix of housing and employment and other uses. Only sites which propose 5 or more dwellings are considered as part of the SLAA process; any smaller site is considered a windfall development proposal.

Employment Sites & New Settlements

- 3.4. For the purposes of this Topic Paper, only sites which were submitted for either housing or a mix of employment and housing will be discussed. Future versions of the Employment Topic Paper will focus on those sites which were submitted solely for employment purposes. It should also be noted that for the purposes of the SLAA assessment exercise, the 'New Settlement' sites have not yet been assessed as part of the process and are being dealt with as part of the 'Reasonable Alternatives' work. The outcomes of the 'Reasonable Alternatives' work will inform the classification of the SLAA 'New Settlement' submissions.
- 3.5. Once the 'New Settlement' and Employment sites have been subtracted, this leaves a total of 304 sites that have been put forward for either Housing or a Housing and Employment Mix.

4. Methodology and Site Classifications

4.1. The SLAA assessed each site on whether the site was deemed 'Suitable', 'Available' and 'Achievable' as follows:

Suitability

4.2. The suitability of each site has been assessed by considering its location against various factors. This is a factual assessment; Appendix 2 of the 2015 methodology provides a detailed breakdown of the potential constraints that each site was tested against, which included: Policy constraint, Flood risk, Noise, Pollution, Natural environment, Historic environment, Accessibility, Other land uses on the site.

Availability

4.3. A site is considered available if, on the best information available (confirmed by the call for sites and information from land owners), there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners.

4.4. The call for sites form requested information on the ownership of the site and evidence to demonstrate that the land is available (such as a signed statement from all the landowners). Any information on legal or ownership issues was also requested.

Achievability

4.5. A site is considered to be achievable if there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site within the plan period. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the developer to deliver the site and whether any other physical or other constraints can be overcome and delivered within the plan period.

4.6. Historically, viability has not been a significant barrier to housing delivery in Uttlesford District. This is underpinned by the high residential values achieved. The current housebuilding seen in the District indicates that the recent recession has not impacted on housebuilding.

Site Classifications

4.7. Once an assessment of the site against the suitability, availability and achievability tests had been undertaken, each site was given a Classification from **A** to **E** as indicated in the following table:

Classification	Explanation
A	These are sites which have planning permission and are generally considered suitable within the first five years of the plan period.
B	These are sites that are considered deliverable/ developable in years 1-15 but do not currently have planning permission or an allocation. These sites are largely free from major physical and infrastructure constraints and are broadly in line with National Planning Policy considerations (particularly in terms of delivering sustainable communities). They may not be immediately acceptable if an application was made under current Development Management policies, but if allowed or allocated there would be nothing to prevent or hinder their delivery in the plan period.
C1	These are sites where further work is needed to demonstrate the achievability of the site, or any issues that have been identified can be easily resolved. This can include issues such as achieving a suitable access, remediation of ground contamination, site preparation costs and viability of redevelopment.
C2	These are sites which need to demonstrate that the development can overcome more substantive suitability constraints, such as the impacts of noise or air pollution from the M11/A120/railway line; mitigate against small parts of the site being subject to flooding; or to minimise the impact on neighbouring uses or the landscape, historic or natural assets.
C3	These are sites where their suitability is dependent upon the council's development strategy and in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council's approach to strategic sites; • The role of key villages in meeting the housing strategy; • The role of the Type A villages and Type B villages in meeting housing strategy and whether there is community support.
C4	These are sites where the suitability of the site is dependent on the results of the Green Belt Review or Countryside Protection Zone (CPZ) Review.
D	Sites in this category are likely to be broadly developable but not deliverable within 15 years. This classification represents sites where it would not be robust to identify a realistic potential housing capacity with the 15 year period. This is likely to be due to infrastructure constraints being too severe to overcome within 15 years. Alternatively, the site may be so large that even if constraints could be overcome late in the 15 year period, the proportion of the site that could be brought forward would not represent meaningful delivery of the site as submitted. Physical constraints may also be too significant to be remedied in 15 years.
E	These sites are not considered developable and delivery will not be possible within 15 years. Departures from National Policy would be significant e.g. location in open countryside divorced from existing built-up settlement or development being of a vastly disproportionate scale for the adjacent village or settlement. Developability may only become realistic if other sites are built out so these sites represent future natural extensions, but this would require speculative consideration far beyond the 15 year period. In some cases infrastructure considerations alone could justify this classification, at least based on the proposal as submitted and knowledge about the scale of mitigation required. Insurmountable physical constraints on some sites covering a significant percentage of the total area, especially Flood Risk, can justify this category. In some cases sites listed in this classification could be broken down into smaller parcels and reconsidered but will always require significant departure from the submitted information and go beyond the scope of this assessment. A site with an E classification highlights it is currently unimaginable that capacity could be envisaged on a site as submitted, unlike Classification D where a path to resolution appears more achievable.

4.8. Those sites which fall within Classification A-C3 are likely to come forward during the plan period and therefore will contribute towards the overall housing supply in Uttlesford District.

5. Classification Figures

5.1. The following table sets out the number of homes that fall within each classification. These figures are based on what the developer has been put forward in their 'Call for Sites' form. Where a developer has not provided a figure, the council have estimated the site capacity based on the site size and average density for the district. Please note that this is subject to some change depending upon the outcome of a number of appeals on a number of sites.

Classification	Number of Homes
A	334
B	401
C1	813
C2	930
C3	1699
A-C3 Classification	4,177
C4	1,235
D	3,569
E	9,372
Awaiting Appeal Decision	315
Total	18,668

5.2. The table above shows that as of 7th March, it is likely that **4,177** homes could come forward on sites throughout the district by the end of the plan period.

5.3. It should be noted that whilst the vast majority of sites included within the 'C4' classification are highly unlikely to come forward due to being wholly within the Green Belt/ CPZ, a couple of sites are either partially within the Green Belt/ CPZ (A suitably designed scheme could therefore be appropriate in this locale) or part of the site is brownfield (development of this brownfield part of the site, if appropriately designed, could be deemed suitable). These sites could come forward within the plan period, but due to uncertainties with the availability/ achievability of the site, have not been included within the final housing contribution figure.

6. Conclusions and Next Steps

6.1. The SLAA provides a useful contribution to the overall level of housing supply for the Plan Period and provides a helpful guide to the amount of housing that could be provided on sites which do not form part of the 'New Settlement' proposals.

6.2. The SLAA will be published before the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation in the summer. This will show the summary of each site submitted and the reasoning behind the classifications given.

6.3. The council will continue to monitor the overall housing supply. If the sites falling within the A-C3 classification do not deliver the required housing, there may be a need to re-examine the C4 and D sites to see what potential supply could come from these sites and members will be updated accordingly.

6.4.