Melton Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2017

Melton Borough Council
Parkside, Station Approach,
Burton Street,
Melton Mowbray,
Leicestershire,
LE13 1GH

August 2017
The Melton SHLAA will not be regarded as planning policy. The inclusion of a potential site that is not allocated or does not have planning permission for housing will confirm only if it is suitable, available, achievable, developable and deliverable for development. The decision to allocate or grant planning permission will continue to be made by the Council under statutory planning legislation and with regard to current and emerging planning policy.
Introduction

1.1 This is the Council’s 9th Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s approach to housing and requires all local planning authorities to produce a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to evaluate the availability of land for housing within their area.

The primary role of a SHLAA is to:
- Identify sites with potential for housing;
- Assess their housing potential and capacity; and
- Assess when they are likely to be developed.

Completion of a SHLAA should enable local planning authorities to:
- Identify specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that accord with the NPPF;
- Identify specific, developable sites for years 6-10 and where possible years 11-15, 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; this may include large development opportunities such as urban extension or new settlements.

1.2 The guidance states that SHLAAs should be regularly kept up to date (at least annually) as part of the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) exercise to support the updating of the housing trajectory and the five years supply of specific deliverable sites. In Melton, the housing trajectory has been updated since the Pre-submission draft Melton Local Plan was published in November 2016; the AMR is produced annually and is currently being updated, SHLAA is updated annually. The main information to be recorded is for trajectory purpose is whether:
- sites under construction have now been developed, or individual stages have been developed;
- sites with planning permission are now 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; and
- the windfall allowance (where justified) is coming forward as expected, or may need to be adjusted.

1.3 The Melton SHLAA 2017 looks at all sites identified and submitted in 2016-17 in light of the latest evidence. These will be presented to anyone on request and will be appended to the report on the completion of the assessments in light of new evidence.
2 The purpose of a SHLAA

2.1 A SHLAA should enable local planning authorities to:

- Identify specific sites for the first 5 years of a development plan that are available and can be delivered; and
- Identify specific developable sites for years 6-10 and ideally years 11-15 to enable the 5 years housing supply to be topped up.

2.2 As a minimum an assessment should include:

- a list of potential sites, with maps showing locations and boundaries;
- an assessment of the deliverability of each site;
- the number of houses that could be built on each site;
- any constraints that could impede the delivery of housing at the site;
- recommendations on how identified constraints could be overcome.

3 Methodology

3.1 Melton Borough is in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area. The local planning authorities in the housing market area agreed to work together and follow a joint methodology when preparing their first SHLAA in 2008. The Leicester and Leicestershire joint methodology on housing and economic land availability assessments (Appendix 1) was updated in March 2017 and has been used to guide the SHLAA 2017 assessments.

3.2 The Joint Methodology follows closely the assessment process in the Government’s National Planning Practice Guidance. The flowchart below sets out the stages of the SHLAA assessment set out in NPPG. The guidance “indicates what inputs and processes should lead to a robust assessment of land availability. Plan makers should have regard to the guidance in preparing their assessments”.

3.3 A key aspect of the assessment is the inclusion of key external stakeholders.

3.4 Input from the stakeholders is critical as it ensures that a robust and credible evidence base is developed. In addition, Developer Panels are encouraged by each Local Planning Authority to gain further knowledge from developers, land agents and landowners in their area.

4 Planning the assessment - Stage 1
4.1 The Leicester and Leicestershire Planning Authorities carry out individual assessments. Each of which closely follow the following standardised methodology.
4.2 Although the Local Planning Authorities within Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area have agreed a joint approach to the SHLAA and agreed common working arrangements in line with Duty to Cooperate requirements, the majority of the assessment for the sites is carried out in house.

4.3 A SHLAA Developer Panel was held to discuss the sites submitted in 2016-17 in May this year. The site assessments include input from the Panel discussion. Please see notes attached (Appendix 2).

5 Sources of sites to be included in the assessment - Stage 2
5.1 The Joint Methodology reiterates the list of sources in part 4 of the guidance can be found in the joint methodology (Appendix 1).

6 Desktop review - Stage 3
6.1 Assessments have been done on the sites identified through the call for sites 2016-17, to establish any previous planning history, designations, ownership, constraints and other information relevant to the assessment of the site. The comments of relevant agencies / bodies have been sought on specific issues such as Highways, Environment and the land promoters to encourage positive stakeholder engagement.

7 Sites to be surveyed - Stage 4
7.1 Melton Borough is primarily rural in character and contains some 70 small villages and the single market town of Melton Mowbray. Taking into account the nature of the area and the housing challenge, the Joint Methodology establishes a threshold of 5 dwellings or more as a basis for identifying sites that will be assessed in Melton Borough.

7.2 The SHLAAs will be based on the need to bring forward sufficient sites, to ensure that Leicester and Leicestershire Planning Authorities can meet the identified housing provision set out in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA). For Melton Borough a housing requirement of 245 dwellings per annum is identified in the draft Melton Local Plan, derived from HEDNA and the accompanying ‘Towards the Housing Requirement for Melton’ report and its addendum.

8 The survey - Stage 5
8.1 The sites identified and their details are collected via the Potential Development Sites Proposal form, this is a standardised form. A copy of the form is attached as appendix (Appendix 3).

8.2 The surveys were undertaken according to a consistent approach to record information agreed under the Joint Methodology. The details recorded include:
- Site size, boundaries, and location;
- Current land use and character;
- Land uses and character of surrounding area;
- Physical constraints (e.g. access, contamination, steep slopes, flooding, natural features of significance, location of Infrastructure/ utilities);
- Potential environmental constraints;
- Initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for a particular type of use or as part of a mixed-use development.

8.3 The above have then been combined with further information obtained from a desktop review of each site.

8.4 The reviews have assessed a number of key factors for each site, in order to identify potential constraints on development, and how/ if they could be overcome. Key factors include:

- Planning policy;
- Previous planning history;
- Access/ highways;
- Landscape/ conservation;
- Flood risk
- Contaminated land; and
- Access to local services
- Mineral Safeguarding Areas

8.5 The vast majority of this work has been conducted by Melton Borough Council officers; however more technical issues such as highways and access arrangements have been discussed with the relevant agency/department and any comments fed back into subsequent site assessments.

8.6 In bringing together the information from the desktop review and surveys, the local planning authorities using the Joint Methodology have adopted assessment pro forma for each site. The completed pro forma for all sites considered are shown later in the report as Part ‘B’ together with location plans.

9 Estimating the housing potential of each site - Stage 6

9.1 The Assessing Land Availability Guidance sets out that:

“The estimation of the development potential of each identified site should be guided by the existing or emerging plan policy including local determined policies on density. Where plan policy is out of date or does not provide a sufficient basis to make local judgment then relevant existing development schemes can be used as the basis for assessment, adjusted for any individual site characteristics and physical constraints. The use of floor space densities for certain industries may also provide a useful guide. The development potential is a significant factor that affects economic viability of a site / broad location and its suitability for a particular use. Therefore, assessing achievability (including viability) and suitability can usefully be carried out in parallel with estimating the development potential”.
9.2 Throughout Leicester and Leicestershire HMA, the following gross to net development ratios have been agreed based on site size. These ratios have been drawn up from the joint methodology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Size</th>
<th>Gross to Net Development Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 0.4ha</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4 - 2ha</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 35ha</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 35ha</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.3 The assessment identifies the housing potential of each site by applying a relevant density target. Developments are required to look to achieve a minimum of 40 dwellings / hectare in Melton Mowbray town centre and 30 dwellings / hectare in other locations on sites of 0.3 hectares or more in area. However a suggestion has been made towards this in the Developer Panel 2016 that could consider having a lower density.

9.4 Evidence suggests that there has been no significant change in the density level anticipated for town centre schemes and until a new policy direction is established or new evidence is forthcoming we will continue to gauge density in the town for the purpose of monitoring these sites.

10 Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed - Stage 7

10.1 The guidance states that;

“Assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of sites including whether the site is economically viable will provide the information on which the judgement can be made in the plan-making context as to whether a site can be considered deliverable over the plan period”.

10.2 To be considered as:

**Deliverable** – To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that
schemes will not be implemented within five years, for example they will not be viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans.

**Developable** – To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.

Where it is unknown when a site could be developed, then it should be regarded as **not currently developable**. This may be, for example, because one of the constraints to development is severe, and it is not known when it might be overcome.

10.3 To assess a site’s deliverability and developability, Stage 7 of the assessment incorporates information gathered by the site assessments, a desktop review, and the views gained from key consultees. A final conclusion is drawn together, from the investigations as outlined within Stages 7a to 7d.

11 **Assessing suitability - Stage 7a**

11.1 According to the guidance;

“Plan makers should assess the suitability of the identified use or mix of uses of a particular site or broad location including consideration of the types that may meet the needs of the community. These may include, but are not limited to: market housing, private rented, affordable housing, people wishing to build their own homes, housing for older people, or for economic development uses.”

11.2 To assess a site’s suitability for housing development, the Council considers that a site is not suitable if:

- Satisfactory vehicular access cannot be provided
- It is significantly affected by flood zone 3b;
- It is a non-inert landfill site;
- It is an active mineral extraction site
- It is affected by a hazardous installation;
- It is significantly affected by a high pressure gas pipeline or 400kv (National Grid) overhead electricity line;
- It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest or Scheduled Monument;
- It is identified in the Councils Employment Land Study suitable for employment purpose;
- It is in a Safeguarded Waste Management Facility;
- It is in a Mineral Safeguarding Area.

However it will be important to note here that sites have not been excluded on the basis
some of the above. Sites have only been excluded if they have been affected by any of the red constraints (listed in Joint Methodology). For other reasons, sites have been considered suitable subject to appropriate mitigation measures.

12 Assessing availability - Stage 7b
12.1 The SHLAA guidance considers a site to be available for development;

“A site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available (confirmed by the call for sites and information from land owners and legal searches where appropriate), there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems”.

12.2 When assessing availability for housing, further information has been obtained from the stakeholders, who have submitted site suggestions as part of the assessment. Land ownership details for other sites, have obtained via desktop reviews, and discussions with external sources where necessary

13 Assessing achievability - Stage 7c

13.1 According to the guidance;

“A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development 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 development over a certain period”

13.2 The guidance goes on to state that:

“Where constraints have been identified, the assessment should consider what action would be needed to remove them (along with when and how this could be undertaken and the likelihood of sites/broad locations being delivered). Actions might include the need for investment in new infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement, or a need to review development plan policy, which is currently constraining development”.

14. Windfalls - Stage 8

14.1 The NPPF states that local planning authorities may make an allowance for windfall sites in the five – year supply if they have compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply.

14.2 Melton Borough is a largely rural area where historically a significant proportion of houses have been built on single plots or sites of less than 5 dwellings.
14.3 With regards to windfall sites, the guidance states that;

“A windfall allowance can be justified in the five-year supply if a local planning authority has compelling evidence as set out in paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Plan makers should not need to rely on windfall allowance in years 6-15. This is because local planning authorities have the ability to identify broad locations in years 6-15, allowing a degree of flexibility to meet development needs where specific sites cannot be identified”.

14.4 Windfall developments have made up a significant proportion of the developments completed in the last five years since the beginning of the plan period, due to the age of the previous Melton Local Plan and lack of allocated sites. Further detail on this can be found in the 5 year housing land supply June 2017 paper on our website on this link - https://www.meltonplan.co.uk/focused-changes-evidence

15. **Review of the Assessment- Stage 9**

15.1 “Once the sites and broad locations have been assessed, the development potential of all sites can be collected to produce an indicative trajectory. This should set out how much housing and the amount of economic development that can be provided, and at what point in the future. An overall risk assessment should be made as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated”.

15.2 If any shortfalls within the final projections are identified, then various elements of the scope of the assessment will be revisited.

15.3 An insufficient number of sites may require previously rejected sites and areas of investigation to be brought forward and include within the assessment. Any additional sites brought forward at this stage need to be assessed by the same procedure as the site originally included.

15.4 Following the survey and assessment of the expected deliverability/ developability of each site, the Practice Guidance expects local planning authorities to review the assessment to determine whether sufficient sites have been identified to meet the local authority’s housing requirement and to re-examine where necessary the assumptions made on deliverability/ developability.

15.5 The 2017 HEDNA and Melton Housing Requirement report provide the evidence base to suggest the housing requirement for the Borough. Based on these reports,
Melton housing requirement of 245 dwellings per annum for the plan period of 2011 to 2036.

16. Housing Supply – Stage 10
16.1 According to the guidance, the deliverability and developability impact on housing supply through;

“Assessing the suitability, availability and achievability (including the economic viability of a site) will provide the information as to whether a site can be considered deliverable, developable or not currently developable for housing. The definition of ‘deliverability’ and ‘developability’ in relation to housing supply is set out in footnote 11 and footnote 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework. All aspects of a Local Plan must be realistic and deliverable but there are specific requirements in the Framework in relation to planned housing land supply.”

17. Sites not considered suitable, available and achievable
17.1 The Practice Guidance says that a site is suitable for housing if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable mixed communities. When assessing the suitability of the sites accessibility, physical, environmental and ownership constraints were considered within the context of stage 7 of the process.

17.2 The preparation of a new Melton Local Plan will provide the opportunity to review local policies which currently prevent development and could see sites previously rejected for purely policy reasons, such as sites outside the settlement boundary or sites currently designated as Protection Open Areas or similar, being included in the SHLAA. This, however, will be dependent on revisions to planning policies and will be examined in full through the preparation and consultation on the Melton Local Plan.

18. Findings and Conclusions
18.1 Following the process outlined above sites are identified as deliverable or developable in the report. Sites from previous years are included in SHLAA 2016 and earlier reports.

18.3 The Borough Council is working towards submitting the Local Plan to the Government in Autumn 2017. As part of the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan, policy constraints that would have previously ruled previous sites as undevelopable have been reassessed in light of the new evidence as part of the new Local Plan.

18.4 Out of total 32 sites assessed in SHLAA 2017, a total number of 794 dwellings on 23 sites across the borough are deliverable, about 226 dwellings from 7 sites have been found to be developable (between 6-10 years). About a couple sites have not been
found suitable for development at this point. A lower number between the capacity calculated by MBC and that proposed on the potential site development form has been considered to arrive at this conclusion. However, this is only a preliminary level of assessment and only includes the 2017 sites, for detailed and overall capacity for the plan period, please see the June 2017 5YHLS and Trajectory paper.

19. Monitoring and Review

19.1 The SHLAA will be updated annually in accordance with the Practice Guidance to inform the Council’s Residential land availability statement (Or Authority Monitoring Report) and five years supply of specific deliverable sites.

20. Site Assessments

20.1 The assessments made within the 2017 SHLAA have utilised Melton Borough Council data in respect of contamination, unless evidence is provided to suggest otherwise.

20.2 In respect of landscape character, updated evidence base has been used for site assessments.

20.3 All assessments of achievability conclude that viability is not a constraint, unless evidence has been provided to state otherwise. This is on the basis of viability evidence for Melton Borough not identifying any significant viability constraints to development potential. MBC Viability Report can be found in our whole Plan evidence on our website - https://www.meltonplan.co.uk/whole-plan-evidence

20.4 In respect of market and development interest in all SHLAA sites – the feedback from the SHLAA Panels 2017 has been taken into account.

20.5 In addition further sites that were submitted as part of the Reg 19 consultation have been added to the report. All of these new sites submission assessments can be found in the proformas later in this report.

20.6 All maps are produced under Melton Borough Council License Number 100019651-(2017).