

FULL COUNCIL

25<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

MELTON LOCAL PLAN: STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT  
2014/15 UPDATE AND CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE SITES

**1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report summarises the findings and seeks approval of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2014/15 update. It also looks forward to the Local Plan Preferred Options (Draft Local Plan) and explains how the SHLAA will be used and developed to assist with the consideration of alternative development sites for allocation through the Local Plan process.

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 **It is recommended that Council:**

- i) **Note the information contained in the report.**
- ii **Approve the SHLAA 2014/15 update as technical evidence to inform the Melton Local Plan.**
- iii) **Inform interested parties about the new sites submitted and explain the role of the SHLAA 2014/15 in the Local Plan process.**
- iv) **Provides the strategic direction that officers follow the approach set out in section 6 of this report for the purposes of site selection.**

**3 BACKGROUND**

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) set out the Government's approach to housing and require all Local Planning Authorities to produce a SHLAA. The 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, and if so on what timetable.

3.2 The Melton SHLAA has been produced and reviewed every year since 2008. A SHLAA assesses the land available to deliver new homes in the area at any given time. This informs the sites that can be included in the Local Plan and once the plan is in place it will be a tool to understand and help manage the supply of housing land in the Borough, in terms of both quantity and timing. The SHLAA is also the tool that is used to measure housing land supply when considering planning applications.

3.3 The aim of the SHLAA is to assist the Borough Council in meeting the requirement to maintain a continuous rolling supply of housing land. The NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should:

- Identify specific sites for 5 years (with a 20% buffer where there is a record of persistent under delivery) 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.

Where it is not possible to identify specific sites for years 11-15, it states Local Planning Authorities may indicate broad locations for growth.

- 3.4 Melton Borough is in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA). The Local Planning Authorities in the HMA agreed to work together and follow a joint methodology when preparing their first SHLAA in 2008. This is within the requirements of the statutory Duty to Cooperate and this methodology is collectively, regularly reviewed to take account of best practice advice.
- 3.5 The SHLAA considers all sites that have been put forward by land owners and developers, as well as those which already have planning permission, for consideration through the Local Plan. All submitted sites which are above 0.3ha in size or with a potential capacity of 5 dwellings or more are included. This does not preclude smaller sites from being considered for development as these will continue to make a significant contribution to the Melton housing supply.
- 3.6 A 'call for sites' was undertaken alongside the consultation on the Melton Local Plan Issues and Options. In response 68 new sites have been submitted although some were revisions to previously known sites. All new sites and revisions to existing sites have now been included in the update and therefore will be considered through the next stages of the Local Plan process.

## **4 FINDINGS**

- 4.1 The SHLAA identifies those sites which have an existing planning permission and the remaining capacity of sites currently under construction, up until 31 January 2015 (this is an interim position, the assessment will be updated at the end of the financial year). From this source it has been identified that there is the capacity to deliver a supply of 823 new homes over the next 5 years. These sites form the Borough's current deliverable housing land supply.
- 4.2 The Objectively Assessed Need for housing in the Borough is 245 homes a year between 2011 and 2036. Between 2011 and 2014, 273 new homes were built. As a result the new five year target taking account of the 20% buffer and the shortfall in delivery since 2011 is 1,932 new homes. Therefore at the current time the SHLAA shows that the Borough can only demonstrate a 2.1 years supply of deliverable housing land.
- 4.3 One site in the SHLAA is a undeveloped saved allocation from the 1999 Local Plan (Swale Close), the suitability of the site for residential development is established by virtue of the allocation. However there are known ownership constraints preventing its development although these may be overcome in the future. This site is therefore classed as developable, although this site will need to be considered through the Local Plan process. The SHLAA identifies capacity for 33 dwellings from this site.
- 4.4 The SHLAA then identifies sites as undeliverable or developable subject to the outcome of the Local Plan process. However it is from these sites that the Local Plan allocations will be drawn. It is therefore beneficial to have a large pool of possible sites from which to identify the most sustainable and deliverable sites. From this source the 2014/15 SHLAA update identifies a possible theoretical capacity for a total of 40,930 dwellings. This far exceeds the Borough's objectively assessed housing need of 6,125 dwellings over 25 years between 2011 and 2036. For context, this

compares to 3,517 houses built in the preceding 20 years, of which 1943 (55%) were within Melton Mowbray and the remaining 1,574 distributed across the villages in the Borough.

- 4.5 The full SHLAA 2014/15 report, including recent site submissions, is available electronically and a copy is on display in the Members room at Parkside.

## **5 NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 It is suggested that the public are made aware of the new sites submitted to the SHLAA as a result of the call for sites, through publicity on the Melton Local Plan website and through other appropriate methods of communication.
- 5.2 The SHLAA 2014/15 update will form the basis for sites to be considered for inclusion in the Local Plan Preferred Options (Draft Plan) which is scheduled for consultation in June 2015.
- 5.3 The overall requirement for housing in Melton Borough identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is 6,125 new homes (245 per year between 2011 and 2036). When taking account of completions and commitments since 2011, the residual requirement will need to be met through the allocation of the most sustainable and deliverable sites through the Local Plan process. All options must be assessed in a robust and transparent manner.

## **6 CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE SITES**

- 6.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to subject 'reasonable' site options to Sustainability Appraisal. The first step is to identify the reasonable site options. To achieve this all SHLAA sites will be subject to a number of sieving exercises, these are broadly explained below.

### **Assessment 1 – Is the site large enough to be allocated in the Local Plan**

- 6.2 Sites that are unable to accommodate 10 dwellings or more, or are less than 0.4 hectares in size, will not normally be considered appropriate as housing allocations in a Local Plan. This does not mean that sites smaller than 5 units are unacceptable as they will continue to contribute a significant proportion of the Borough's housing supply and will be fully accounted for in the Local Plan.

### **Assessment 2 – Discounting unreasonable alternatives based on significant constraints**

- 6.3 Sites are discounted where there are constraints to development that cannot be overcome making the sites undeliverable. These constraints include:
- Flood Zone 3a and 3b;
  - Non-inert landfill sites;
  - Active mineral extraction sites;
  - Hazardous installations (e.g. industry involving explosives or micro-biological containment);
  - Oil and high pressure gas pipelines and 400kv overhead electricity lines;
  - SSSIs and Scheduled Monuments.
- 6.4 Sites should be discounted where they are wholly or largely covered by one or more of these constraints in some cases this will require discussion with the site

proponents and possible investigations. Other issues such as landscape quality, ecological interest or heritage form part of the Sustainability Appraisal, which is undertaken after these sieving stages.

### **Assessment 3 – Discounting the remaining alternatives based on ‘deliverability’ constraints**

- 6.5 The Local Plan should only seek to identify sites that are capable of being delivered i.e. built. The SHLAA 2014/15 update includes a high level assessment of the deliverability of each site. However between now and the summer further detailed analysis will be required as the direction of travel for the Local Plan Preferred Option (Draft Plan) becomes clearer and new evidence becomes available. The SHLAA methodology considers deliverability in the context of whether a site is ‘suitable’, ‘achievable’ and ‘available’.
- 6.6 Assessing suitability is the key test and will discount many further sites. The Vision and Objectives of the Local Plan received widespread support in the Issues and Options Consultation. Suitable sites are those sites that are in accordance with the emerging Local Plan Vision and Objectives and crucially the emerging spatial strategy. Suitable sites will be those which perform best when assessed against the Vision and Objectives and represent sustainable development in the terms of the NPPF, under which the entire Plan is guided.
- 6.7 Achievability and availability is concerned with assessing whether a site has a reasonable prospect of being delivered. This assessment is based on whether the site is constrained by factors such as the availability of or ability to provide appropriate infrastructure, ownership or tenancy, development viability and the willingness of a developer and landowner to develop.

### **Employment Sites**

- 6.8 The main source of data for identifying potential employment sites will be the Melton Borough Council Employment Land Study which is underway and scheduled for completion in April 2015. The alternative employment sites will be considered in a similar way to housing sites. The site size threshold for an employment allocation is likely to be 1 hectare in the main town and 0.25 hectares in all other locations.
- 6.9 Any employment sites will need to be attractive to the market and the Employment Land Study will set out broad criteria that will inform the choice of preferred locations for new employment development on the Borough.

### **Gypsy and Traveller sites**

- 6.10 Over the plan period there will be a need to find at least one site for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. Alternatives will need to be considered under a similar approach to considering housing and employment, but should also consider the principles set out in the ‘Planning Policy for Traveller sites’ Guidance 2012.

## **7 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This report is for information purposes and to seek the approval of the SHLAA 2014/15 update as evidence to inform the preparation of the Melton Local Plan and to agree the direction moving forward, in order to prepare for the Preferred Option (Draft Local Plan)

## 8 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no significant unknown financial or resource implications arising from this report.

## 9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

9.1 There are no direct legal implications of this report.

## 10 COMMUNITY SAFETY

10.1 There are no significant community safety implications arising from this report.

## 11 EQUALITIES

11.1 Each stage of preparation of the Melton Local Plan is supported by a Sustainability Appraisal. This Sustainability Appraisal is based upon a detailed framework which incorporates Equalities Impact Assessment.

11.2 Equalities impacts are addressed as a continued thread through the process of preparing the Melton Local Plan.

## 11 RISKS

Probability ↓					
Very High A					
High B					
Significant C		2			
Low D					
Very Low E			1		
Almost Impossible F					
		IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic
		→ Impact			

RiskNo.	Description
1	Insufficient appropriate land to meet development requirements
2	Challenge at the Local Plan Examination on the process of considering alternative sites for allocation

## 12 CLIMATE CHANGE

12.1 Part of the evidence base for the preparation of the Melton Local Plan will be relevant Climate Change Studies concerning appropriate Policies.

### **13 CONSULTATION**

13.1 Each stage of the process of preparing the Melton Local Plan is informed by extensive consultation.

### **14 WARDS AFFECTED**

14.1 This report refers to matters that affect the whole Borough.

Contact Officer: Luke Fleming (Local Plans Manager)

Date: 11 February 2015

Background Papers: Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2015 available at:  
[http://www.melton.gov.uk/directory\\_record/9242/strategic\\_housing\\_land\\_availability\\_assessment\\_shlaa\\_2015](http://www.melton.gov.uk/directory_record/9242/strategic_housing_land_availability_assessment_shlaa_2015)