

Warwick District Council

Strategic Housing Land Availability  
Assessment

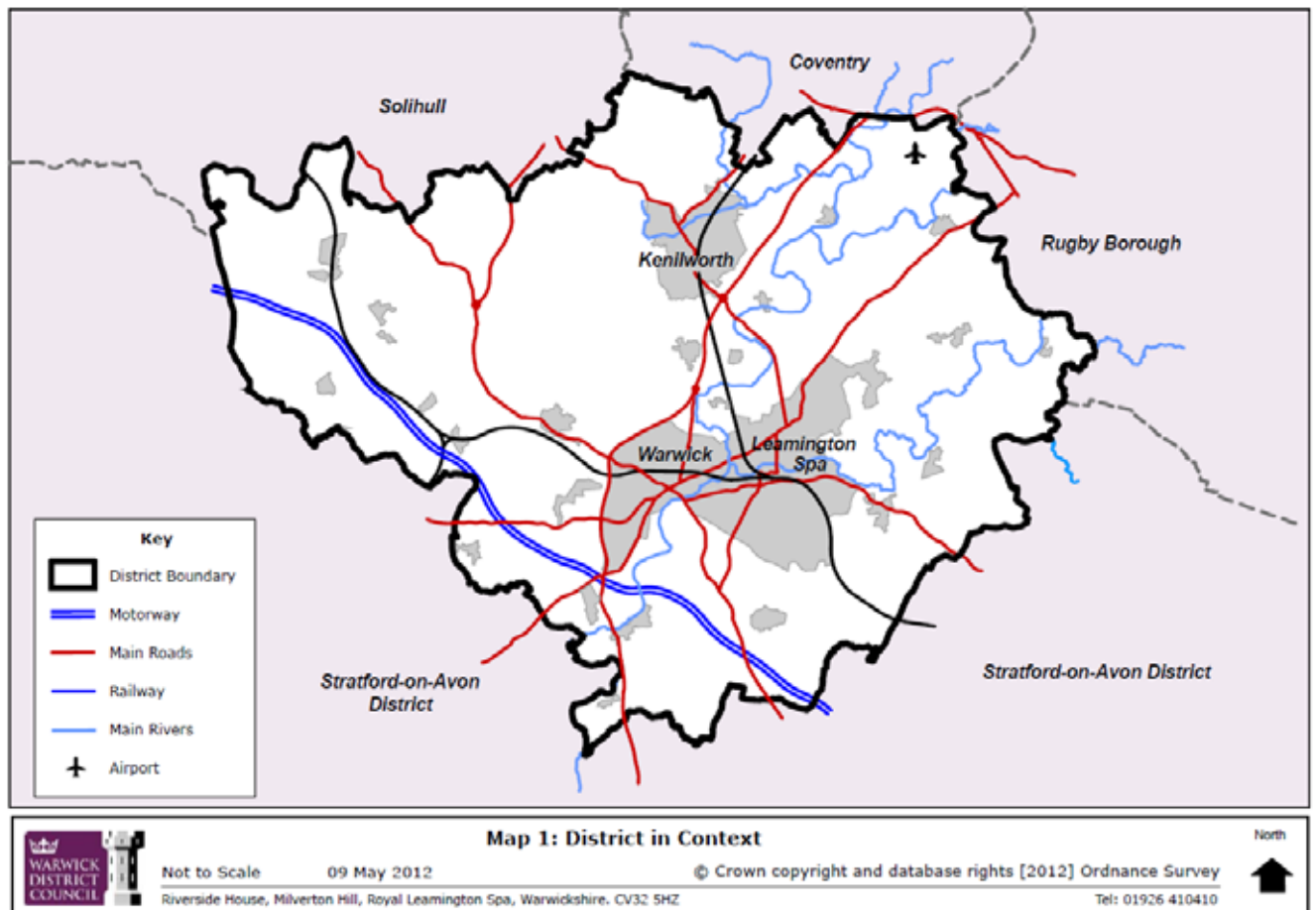
Methodology

2014

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# Warwick District



## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Government's planning policies for housing are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Framework considers that the purpose of the planning system in England is to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development<sup>1</sup>. The social dimension of sustainable development is set out as:

“supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being”

- 1.2 To achieve this, the Government is seeking to widen the choice of high quality homes; widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed

<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) Paragraph 6

communities. Local planning authorities are required to prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to establish the objectively assessed housing needs of the area and ensure that the Local Plan meets these needs in full. They are also required to prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period.

- 1.3 In order to significantly boost the supply of housing, local planning authorities are required to identify on an annual basis a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5%. For years 10-15 of the plan period, local planning authorities are required to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, where possible. The SHLAA will be the main vehicle for identifying sites and ensuring that they meet the requirements for deliverability and developability.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.4 It is important to note that **the SHLAA will not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for housing development**. This will be the role of a Development Plan Document (DPD). Warwick District has commenced the preparation of its Local Plan. This is a DPD which sets out the strategic framework for development in the District. It will allocate the strategic (i.e. major) housing sites and set out the broad locations for future housing development up until 2029. An implementation strategy will ensure that a continuous supply of housing sites is available throughout the period of the Local Plan.

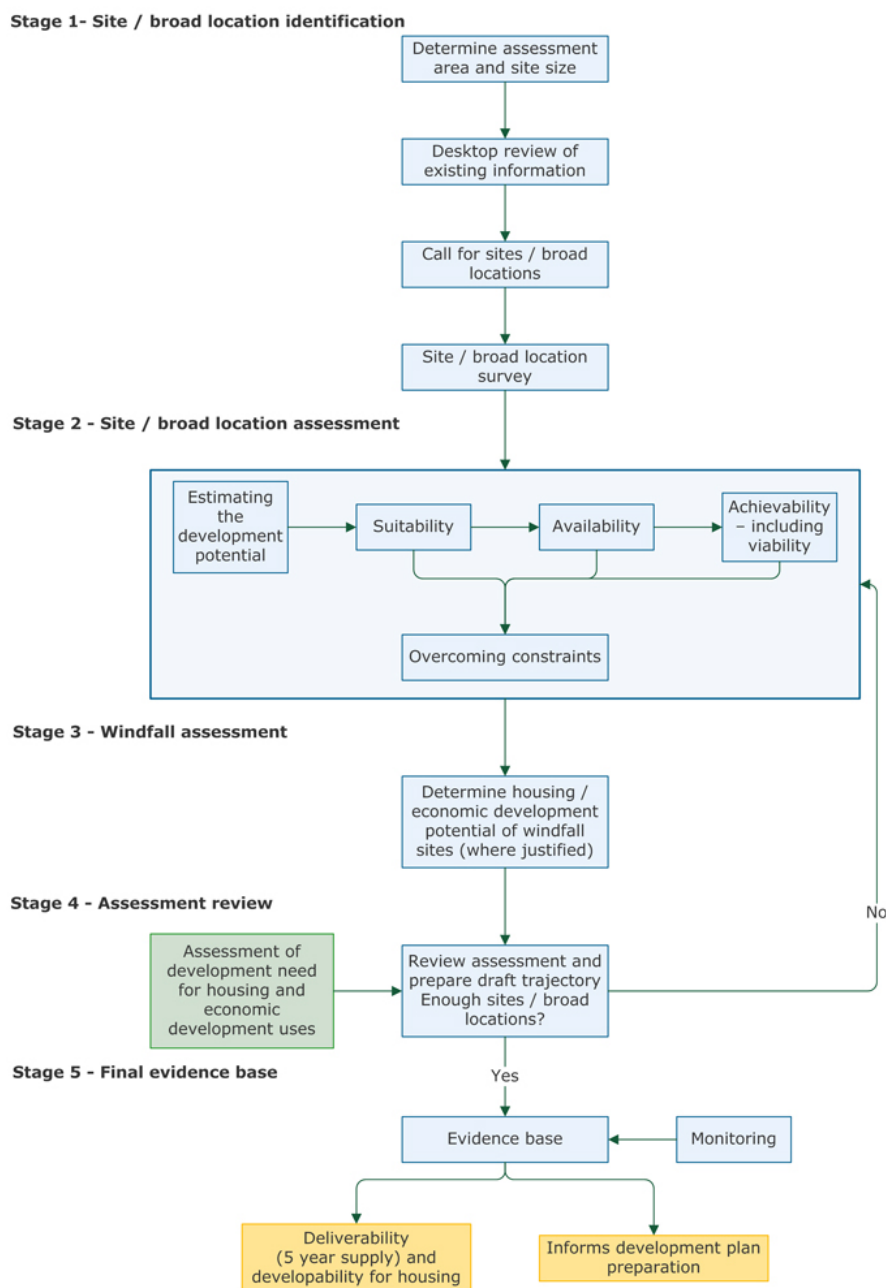
## 2 GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

- 2.1 In March 2014 the Government published its National Planning Practice Guidance. This includes a section on Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments. This can be found at the following web link:  
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment/>
- 2.2 The Government recommends a “joined-up and robust” approach to undertaking assessments, including working with other authorities across the Housing Market Area. This should also include working together with key stakeholders such as housing market partnerships where these exist. Partners, such as local property agents and house builders can provide expertise and knowledge to help the partnership take a view on the deliverability and developability of sites, and how market conditions may affect viability.
- 2.3 The guidance states that the SHLAA should identify a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable over the Plan Period as an important step in the preparation of Local Plans. Specifically it should:
  - identify sites and broad locations with potential for development;
  - assess their development potential;
  - assess their suitability for development and the likelihood of development coming forward (the availability and achievability).

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<sup>2</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) Paragraph 47

- 2.4 The SHLAA should aim to “identify as many sites with housing potential in and around as many settlements as possible in the study area.” As a minimum it should aim to identify “sufficient specific sites for at least the first 10 years of a plan, from the date of its adoption, and ideally for longer than the whole 15 year period. Where it is not possible to identify sufficient sites, it should provide the evidence base to support judgements around whether broad locations should be identified and/or whether there are genuine local circumstances that mean a windfall allowance may be justified in the first 10 years of the plan”.
- 2.5 The assessment is primarily an evidence source to inform plan making. The findings will identify the choices available to meet need and demand for more housing and provide a basis for making decisions about how to shape places in the future. Further, the assessment will identify whether any actions are required, including the provision of infrastructure, to ensure sites become deliverable and estimate the timescale for sites coming forward.
- 2.6 The guidance sets out the following as the methodology for the SHLAA:
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### 3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE DISTRICT

3.1 Warwick District covers an area of 28,266 hectares and has a population of approximately 137,700,<sup>2</sup> 90% of whom live within urban areas. It is one of five districts located within the county of Warwickshire.

3.2 The main centres of population are the four main towns of Royal Leamington Spa, Warwick, Kenilworth and Whitnash. The towns have a rich history with Warwick and, in

<sup>2</sup> Mid 2006 estimate Office for National Statistics.

particular the famous Castle, being a major tourist destination. The historical nature of the District is exemplified by the presence of over 1,500 listed buildings and 29 Conservation Areas.

- 3.3 Approximately 25,400 hectares within Warwick District lie outside of the urban areas. However, nowhere within the rural area is more than 5 miles from an urban area. The West Midlands Green Belt covers approximately 81% (20,545 hectares) of the rural area.
- 3.4 There is a well developed highway network linking the district to other settlements in the West Midlands. In particular the M40 passes through the district with access to Warwick and Leamington and the A46 provides the main north-south route intersecting with the motorway at junction15.
- 3.5 The historic environment, attractive countryside and good facilities together with its proximity to the West Midlands conurbation means that the district has an enviable reputation as a good place to live and work.
- 3.6 Warwick District has experienced particular pressure for housing development and has one of the highest rates of house building in Warwickshire.
- 3.7 The house price to earnings ratio (for a semi detached dwelling) has steadily increased since 2001 and is well above the County average. As a consequence the need for affordable housing is a significant issue.

## **4 METHODOLOGY FOR THE WARWICK SHLAA**

- 4.1 The SHLAA methodology as set above and as recommended by Government in the National Planning Practice Guidance was introduced in March 2014. There has been insufficient time, therefore, to alter the current (updated) SHLAA to reflect all the changes. However, changes have been made where at all possible to reflect the new methodology, or to explain how certain elements of the process are covered elsewhere in the planning process.

### **STAGE 1: SITE IDENTIFICATION**

#### **A Determine Assessment Area and Site Size**

- 4.2 The study area for this Assessment will be the Warwick District Council area. It has not been possible to carry out the Assessment by sub-regional Housing Market Area because a number of local authorities in the area, including our local authority neighbours, were at different stages in their Assessments. However the Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Committee at its meeting in March 2014, have agreed to ensure the methodologies used by each Council in the sub-region are consistent and can therefore be used to assess the Coventry & Warwickshire's Housing Market Area's site capacity.
  - 4.3 The Council has set up a Partnership to assist with developing the methodology and to share expertise and knowledge of the area. The Partnership includes representatives from 2 house builders who have experience of providing homes in the area, 2 of the Council's
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partner Registered Social Landlords, 1 local architectural practice, a local property agent and representatives from the Council's Planning and Housing Strategy departments (see Appendix 2).

- 4.4 Parish Councils and other local interest groups have been consulted about potential sites within and adjacent to villages.
- 4.5 At a sub-regional level the Local Enterprise Partnership, along with all the Local Planning Authorities have been involved in a call for sites to identify major employment sites in the sub-region.
- 4.6 At the site assessment stage it will also be necessary to engage with statutory undertakers and infrastructure providers in order to determine issues such as the provision of utility services, highway infrastructure, flooding, drainage, and the capacity of educational and health services.
- 4.7 The study focuses primarily on sites within or on the edge of settlements as these locations are supported by the NPPF and by the Council's strategy to bring forward development in the most sustainable locations. The NPPF paragraphs 54-55 set out the circumstances where development could be supported in rural areas. To align with this, table 1 below sets out those areas which are the primary focus of the SHLAA.

**TABLE 1 AREAS FOR INCLUSION IN THE STUDY**

<b>Urban Areas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The urban areas of Warwick, Leamington Spa, Whitnash and Kenilworth</li> </ul>
<b>Rural Areas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rural areas adjacent to Warwick, Leamington, Whitnash and Kenilworth</li> <li>• The rural areas adjacent to the edge of Coventry</li> <li>• The built-up areas of rural settlements</li> <li>• The areas adjacent to rural settlements</li> </ul>

- 4.8 The following Table lists the sources of sites which may be included in the Assessment.

**TABLE 2 SOURCES OF SITES WITH POTENTIAL FOR HOUSING**

<b>Sites in the planning process</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites with outstanding permission for housing</li> <li>• Sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan</li> <li>• Sites included within development briefs</li> <li>• Sites allocated for non-housing uses but no longer required for that purpose</li> <li>• Sites with permission for housing where the site is under construction</li> </ul>
<b>Sites not currently in the planning process</b>
Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites where permission has been refused</li> <li>• Sites which have been the subject of a lapsed permission</li> <li>• Vacant &amp; derelict land &amp; buildings</li> <li>• Surplus public sector land</li> </ul>



• Land in non-residential use which may be suitable for redevelopment (inc. mixed use development) e.g. commercial/ car parks
• Sites in existing residential areas e.g. under-used garage blocks
• Redevelopment or redesign of existing residential areas
• Sites within or adjacent to rural settlements
• Sites adjacent to the built up areas of Warwick, Leamington Spa, Whitnash, Kenilworth and Coventry

- 4.9 For the purposes of this study, a potential housing site can include land or buildings (for demolition or conversion) including buildings still in use. Housing is defined as self contained accommodation and excludes institutional establishments, such as student accommodation or care homes, where the accommodation is not self-contained.
- 4.10 In view of the shortage of affordable housing in the District, the Council will welcome the inclusion of sites suitable for affordable housing schemes. Site which can accommodate innovative and creative solutions to affordability will be considered.
- 4.11 It will not be possible or feasible, however, to include sites of all sizes in the Assessment. The Assessment, therefore, will adopt a site size threshold of 5 dwellings – sites incapable of accommodating 5 or more dwellings will be excluded. In addition, some sites have special local, national or international protection, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The Assessment will not consider sites where development would affect such a protected site. The adopted Local Plan allocates a number of sites for employment uses and these sites will be considered for alternative uses alongside the Employment Land Review that was undertaken separately.

**TABLE 3 SITES TO BE EXCLUDED**

Site	Reason for Exclusion
Small sites only capable of accommodating less than 5 units	To ensure the Assessment is manageable
Sites of environmental or historic importance	These sites are protected as being of national/international significance

## **B Desktop Review of Existing Information**

- 4.12 The following Table lists some of the data sources which can be used in a desktop review of information on potential sites.

**TABLE 4 SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Sites	Source of information	Comments
<b>Sites currently in the planning process</b>		
Sites with outstanding planning permission	Latest Housing Monitoring Database	Site surveys will be carried out in April
Sites under construction	Latest Housing Monitoring Database	Site surveys will be carried out in April
Sites allocated (no permission)	Opportunity Sites in Local Plan (1996-2011)	
Sites subject of Development Brief	Station Area Brief	
Land allocated (or with pp)	Desktop - Officer knowledge	

for non-housing uses & no longer required	Consultation exercise	
Sites the subject of a planning refusal or lapsed permission	Particularly refusals under SPD Managing Housing Supply (policy of housing restraint)	
<b>Sites not currently in the planning process</b>		
Urban Capacity Study sites	Urban Capacity Study 2002	
Housing Omission Sites	Sites put forward during consultation stages of emerging Local Plan (2011-2029)	
Vacant & Derelict land & buildings	Officer knowledge and surveys Empty Property Register House Condition Survey Valuation Office database Estate Agents commercial databases NLUD Survey Aerial photography Ordnance Survey Maps	
Surplus public sector land	LAA Survey of public sector bodies Consultation exercise Register of Surplus Public Sector Land	
Land in non-residential use which may be suitable for redevelopment (inc. mixed use development) e.g. commercial/ car parks	Officer knowledge and surveys Consultation exercise Aerial photography Ordnance Survey Maps	
Sites in existing residential areas e.g. under-used garage blocks	Officer knowledge and surveys Aerial photography Ordnance Survey Maps	
Large scale redevelopment or re-design of existing residential areas	Officer knowledge and surveys	Unlikely in WDC
Sites in larger rural settlements and potential rural exception sites	Officer knowledge and surveys Consultation exercise	
Urban extensions	Officer knowledge and surveys Review of Omission Sites Consultation exercise Aerial photography Ordnance Survey Maps	
Conversions and sub-division of existing dwellings	Identify broad locations in and around central Leamington Spa based on past trends	
Change of use of existing buildings to dwellings	As above	

## C Call for Sites / Identification of Sites

4.13 The SHLAA was initially undertaken in 2009 and has been updated on a number of occasions since then to take account of the changing circumstances, including the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance. In

order to encourage landowners or their agents to submit sites for assessment, the Council carried out a number of initiatives including:

- contacting all relevant parties on the Council's planning consultation database (this was the methodology initially adopted for the first version of the SHLAA)
- proactive identification of potential sites which fail to be promoted by a landowner/agent (e.g. land at Blackdown in 2012)
- a further request to landowners/interested parties through the website and by letter (2012 update)
- Local Plan consultation processes (Preferred Options 2012; Revised Development Strategy 2013; Village Sites and Settlement Boundaries 2013/14)
- a further request to landowners/interested parties through the website and by letter (2013 update)
- direct consultation with parish councils (including village walkabouts) 2013

4.14 At each SHLAA update the information for existing SHLAA sites is updated as appropriate. Site proposers are requested to complete an update form to ensure the information held about sites is up to date. This may include additional evidence to support the suitability, availability or achievability of a site.

## **D Site/Broad Location Survey**

4.15 Relevant information on all the sites is included in an Access Database and sites are mapped on a 1:1250 map base, where appropriate.

4.16 Sites are assessed against national policies and other designations to assess which have a reasonable prospect for development.

4.17 Sites are then surveyed through the following process:

- review of the information in the SHLAA forms submitted by landowners/agents
- review of planning history for each site
- review of the geographical information system to identify constraints and issues
- ariel photography and other mapping information
- discussions with landowners/agents where necessary to clarify data submitted

4.18 This information is brought together and recorded for each site to identify:

- 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;
- where relevant, development progress (e.g. ground works completed, number of units started, number of units completed);
- initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for a particular type of use or as part of a mixed-use development.

4.19 With regard to sites already in the planning system (and already on the housing monitoring database) additional survey work will not be necessary. For other sites the whole range of data will need to be collected and then supplemented by the site surveys where

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necessary. These site surveys are carried out as part of the annual monitoring survey work undertaken in April/May/June each year, or in specific circumstances one of site surveys are undertaken to ensure a complete and robust understanding of constraints and opportunities is achieved

4.20 A full list of information is contained in Appendix I

## **STAGE 2: SITE/BROAD LOCATION ASSESSMENT**

### **A Estimating the Housing Potential of each Site**

4.21 In the case of sites currently in the planning system, there is likely to be a layout scheme or a proposed number of dwellings.

4.22 In the case of other sites the SHLAA will use one of the proposed methods to estimate the capacity of sites:

- consider estimates presented by those promoting the site
- where appropriate, for example where the location, topography or setting of the site will restrain layout, use the urban design approach
- apply an appropriate density based on existing or emerging plan policies on densities

4.23 In all approaches, consideration will need to be given to existing Council policies which impact on the density of schemes:

- 2006-2011 Local Plan Policy DP5 (Density) (to be replaced by Policy BE2 in the emerging New Local Plan)
- 2006-2011 Local Plan Policy DP8 (Parking) and the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (to be replaced by Policy TR4 in the emerging New Local Plan)
- 2006-2011 Local Plan Policy SC1 (Securing a Greater Choice of Housing) and the Development Control Guidance on Achieving a Mix of Housing (to be replaced by Policy H4 in the emerging New Local Plan)
- New Local Plan Policy BE1 (Layout and Design)

4.24 At this stage in the process it will be necessary to assess sites according to their **suitability** for housing, **availability** for development and the **achievability** of the development.

### **B Assessing Suitability**

4.25 Assessing the suitability of sites or broad locations for development is guided by:

- National planning policy guidance in The Framework;
- market and industry requirements in the housing market.

4.26 In assessing a site's suitability for housing, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- existing permissions or allocations
- contribution towards sustainable and mixed communities

- policy designations, such as Green Belt and protected areas of acknowledged importance
- the potential impact upon nearby features including landscape features, nature and heritage conservation;
- physical problems or limitations, such as access, infrastructure, flood risk, contamination
- environmental conditions which would be experienced by prospective residents
- any adverse impacts of development on nearby land uses
- the consequences of the loss of existing uses on the site
- contribution to regeneration priority areas;

### **C Assessing Availability**

4.27 A site is available for development when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. The site should ideally be controlled by a housing developer who has expressed an intention to develop or by a landowner who has expressed the intention to sell. Where problems are identified, an assessment will need to be made as to how and when they can realistically be overcome. Consideration should also be given to the delivery record of the developers or landowners putting forward sites, and whether the planning background of a site shows a history of unimplemented permissions.

### **D Assessing Achievability, including viability**

4.28 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. Assessing achievability is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of the site, the availability of infrastructure and the ability of the developer to complete the development within a specific time period. Factors to be taken into account include development costs, the housing market, the ability to overcome constraints and issues of phasing. The expertise of the SHLAA Partnership will help inform this process.

### **E Overcoming Constraints**

4.29 Where constraints have been identified, the Assessment should consider what action would be needed to remove them. 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.

## **STAGE 3: WINDFALL ASSESSMENT**

4.30 The Windfall Assessment is updated annually. At the time of producing the SHLAA the latest windfall assessment will be used in preparing the report.

4.31 See report on “Estimating Windfall Allowance: Publication Stage – April 2014”

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## **STAGE 4: REVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT**

### **A Assessing the potential supply of housing land**

- 4.32 Following the assessment of sites in terms of deliverability and developability, sites are assigned to specific time periods. A further assessment will be made of the quantum of sites in each time period, or phase, in order to assess the ability to meet the 5 years housing land supply requirement. From the date of adoption of the Local Plan, there will need to be a supply of deliverable sites for the first 5 years and a further supply of developable sites for the following 5-15 years.
- 4.33 The emerging Warwick District Local Plan identifies a requirement of 12,860 new dwellings between 2011 and 2029 (714 per annum). However, work is on-going on cooperating with neighbouring authorities regarding their housing requirements and land availability. In assessing the adequacy of sites, therefore, there will need to be an element of flexibility to allow for a higher housing requirement.
- 4.34 If the Assessment concludes that there are insufficient deliverable and developable sites, there are two options for addressing the shortfall:
- identify broad locations for housing growth; or
  - through Duty to Cooperate, consider the potential for a part of the District's housing requirement to be met within a neighbouring authority

### **B Identifying and Assessing the Housing Potential of Broad Locations**

- 4.35 Broad locations are areas where housing development is considered feasible and will be encouraged, but where specific sites cannot yet be identified. The advantage of identifying broad locations is that the community will be clear about where future development will be directed and there will be greater certainty for developers about where development will be encouraged.
- 4.36 According to Government guidance, broad locations include areas within and adjoining settlements or areas outside settlements. Areas within settlements could include, for example, areas where housing development is or could be encouraged or small extensions to settlements. Outside settlements, broad locations could include major urban extensions, growth points, growth areas or new settlements.

## **STAGE 5: FINAL EVIDENCE BASE**

### **A Assessment Outputs**

- 4.37 The following outputs are produced from the assessment:
- a list of all sites or broad locations considered, cross-referenced to their locations on maps;
  - an assessment of each site or broad location, in terms of its suitability for development, availability and achievability including whether the site/broad location is viable) to determine whether a site is realistically expected to be developed and when;

- the potential type and quantity of development that could be delivered on each site/broad location, including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how any barriers to delivery could be overcome and when;
- an indicative trajectory of anticipated development in 5 year blocks.

4.38 The assessment is published on the Council's website.

## **B Using the Assessment**

4.39 The SHLAA is used to:

- a) identify the potential for development within the District and to inform the Council's Development Plan
- b) inform the selection of sites for allocation within the Local Plan
- c) inform the assessment of the 5 year housing land supply within Warwick District

## Appendix 1 Site Information

	<b>Examples</b>
Site Reference	
Site Name	
OS Reference	
Site Area	
Site Capacity (Dwellings)	
Suitable uses	Mixed use/ single use
Current Site Use	
Previous Uses	
Planning History	Including current permissions, progress on site
Greenfield/Brownfield	
Green Belt	
Conservation Area/ Listed Building	
Physical Constraints	Natural features, pylons, access, steep slopes
Flood Risk	
Known Contamination	
Agricultural Land Classification	
Surrounding Land Uses	
Impact on Protected Areas/Buildings/Trees	SSSIs, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas
Access to Public Transport	Bus, rail
Access to Primary Services	Primary Schools, shops, GP Practice
Access to Jobs	
Schools Capacity	
Owner	
Other Interested Parties	Developer, land agent
Ownership/ leasehold constraints	
Likely Time Frame for Development	5 yrs, 6-10 yrs, 11-15 yrs



## Appendix 2 SHLAA Partnership

Name	Company/Organisation
Sally Jones	Warwick DC (Planning)
Abigail Hay	Warwick DC (Housing)
Ken Bruno	Warwick DC (Housing)
Joanne Welch	Jephson Housing
Brian Bassett	Brian R Bassett Ltd
Reuben Bellamy	Cala Homes Ltd
Mike Hill	Bromford Housing Housing
Richard Hardy	Evans Hardy Bromwich
Julie Morgan	Miller Homes Ltd