

Warwick District Council

Strategic Housing Land Availability  
Assessment

Methodology

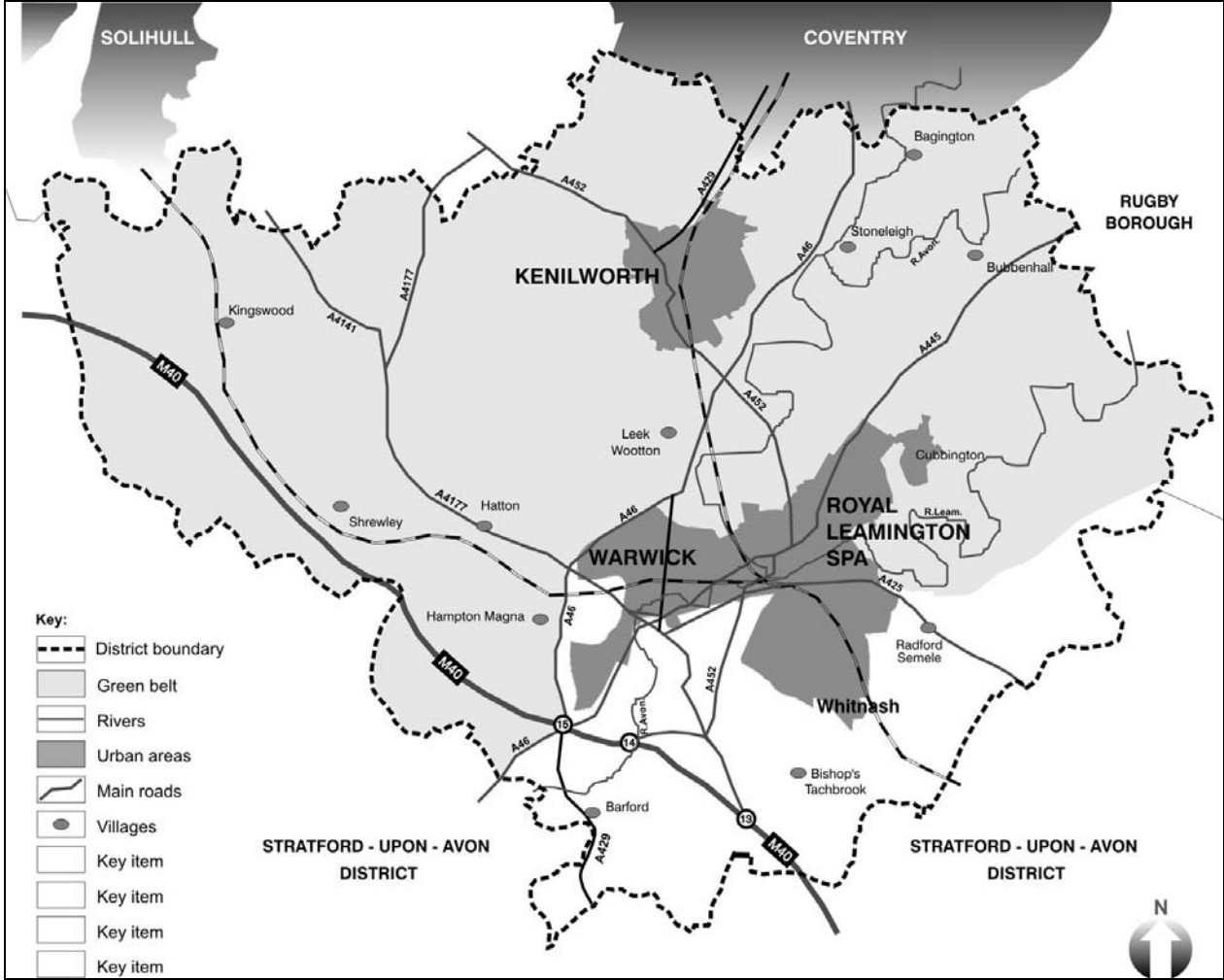


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# Warwick District





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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Government's key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To achieve this, the Government is seeking to achieve a wide choice of high quality market and affordable homes; widen opportunities for home ownership; improve affordability across the housing market (including by increasing the supply of housing) and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities in all areas<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 In order to achieve these objectives, the Government is seeking a more flexible and responsive approach to land supply at the local level in order to ensure that land availability is not a constraint on the delivery of new homes. Accordingly, it requires local planning authorities to identify specific "deliverable" sites for the first 5 years of a plan and "developable" sites for the following 6 to 10 (or 15) years of the plan<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.3 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) will be the means by which local planning authorities will identify land suitable, or potentially suitable, for housing. The findings will provide the evidence base which will inform Development Plan Documents.
- 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 Core Strategy. 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 2026. An implementation strategy will ensure that a continuous supply of housing sites is available throughout the period of the Core Strategy.

# 2 GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

- 2.1 In July 2007 the Government issued practice guidance on the preparation of SHLAAs. This can be found at the following web link:  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/landavailabilityassessment>
- 2.2 The Government recommends a "joined-up and robust" approach to undertaking assessments. This should 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 primary role of the SHLAA is to:
  - identify sites with potential for housing;
  - assess their housing potential; and

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (paragraph 9)

<sup>2</sup> Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (paragraphs 52-57)

- assess when they are likely to be developed.
- 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 a detailed list of core requirements of the assessment and outlines the eight stages, and a further 2 optional stages, of the assessment process. Where the methodology in the guidance is adhered to, it should not be necessary for the authority to justify the methodology, including at independent examination.

### **3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE DISTRICT**

- 3.1 Warwick District covers an area of 28,266 hectares and has a population of approximately 132,900,<sup>2</sup> 85% 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 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. In 2004/05 the District experienced nearly half

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



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of all population growth in the County and it continues to experience the greatest rate of growth. As such there is significant pressure for development. In 2006 alone over 2000 planning applications were submitted in the district.

- 3.6 Warwick District has experienced particular pressure for housing development and has one of the highest rates of house building in Warwickshire. Since 2001 the district has had the highest number of housing completions of any shire district in the West Midlands region.
- 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. The 2006 Housing Needs Assessment identified that 821 additional affordable dwellings are required per year to meet the housing need over the next five years.

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

- 4.1 The purpose of this paper is to put forward a draft methodology for the Warwick SHLAA for public consultation. In general, the methodology will follow the guidance in the Government's practice guidance "Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments" and, in particular, the 8 main stages of the process.

### **Stage 1: Planning the Assessment**

- 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, had already commenced their Assessments.
- 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 the Home Builders Federation (Midlands & South West), 2 house builders who have experience of providing homes in the area, 2 of the Council's partner Registered Social Landlords, 2 local architectural practices, a local property agent and representatives from the Council's Planning and Housing Strategy departments (see Appendix 2).
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 It is proposed that the Assessment will be completed by the end of 2008. This will allow much of the fieldwork to be carried out simultaneously with the annual housing land monitoring exercise (in April) and allow for some flexibility should the partnership decide to engage the services of independent consultants to assess sites in terms of deliverability and developability.

## Stage 2: Determining which Sources of Sites will be included in the Assessment

### Areas for Inclusion

- 4.6 Given the time and resources available for this study it is proposed that only those broad areas which conform with the overall strategy for housing development in the emerging review of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) be included.

**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 those villages with a reasonable level of services and public transport to the towns</li> <li>Potential rural exception sites for affordable housing i.e. small sites within or immediately adjacent to rural settlements</li> </ul>

- 4.7 The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) (Phase Two) Revision covers the period 2006-2026. The Preferred Option was submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2007. The Preferred Option, like the adopted WMRSS, seeks to retain a strong emphasis on urban regeneration and the “concentration of new housing development within the Major Urban Areas close to where demand arises.” At the same time, however, it states that new housing provision will need to be made in other parts of the region to meet housing demand and that this provision should be focused on named settlements, including Warwick and Leamington Spa, which are capable of balanced and sustainable growth. In addition, the Preferred Option recognises the fact that some of Coventry’s growth may need to be located adjacent to Coventry in Warwick District.
- 4.8 The Preferred Option states that, on a smaller scale, new housing development will also be accommodated within and adjacent to “other urban areas and market towns” of the region and that in villages development should support local needs and be prioritised in those villages which still have a range of services. The Preferred Option does not recognise a need for a new free standing settlement in the region.

### Sources of Sites for Inclusion

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

- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 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.
- 4.12 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 recently adopted Local Plan allocated a number of sites for employment uses and these sites will be considered for alternative uses alongside the Employment Land Review that is being 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

**Stage 3: Desktop Review of Existing Information**

4.13 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	Housing Monitoring Database 2008	Site surveys will be carried out in April
Sites under construction	Housing Monitoring Database 2008	Site surveys will be carried out in April
Sites allocated (no permission)	Opportunity Sites in Local Plan (1996-2011)	
Sites subject of Development Brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Station Area</li> <li>• Binswood Hall</li> </ul>	
Land allocated (or with pp) for non-housing uses & no longer required	Desktop - Officer knowledge 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 Local Plan (1996-2011) process	
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	

### Consultation Exercise

- 4.14 A consultation exercise was carried out whereby the Council invited those on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) consultation list (with an interest in housing) and other known interested bodies to submit sites for consideration in this SHLAA as well as any representations on the draft methodology. The draft methodology, along with the letter of invitation, was placed on the Council's web site and an email alert was sent out to subscribers.

### Assembly of Site Information and Mapping

- 4.15 Relevant information on all the sites will be assembled in an Access Database and sites will be mapped on a 1:1250 map base.

### Stage 4: Determining which Sites and Areas will be Surveyed

- 4.16 All sites on the Council's existing Housing Monitoring Database are surveyed by the Planning Policy Team every April. This provides an up-to-date view on the development progress of sites with permission. In 2008, the site survey will be used to visit other sites

identified above including those which emerge as a result of the consultation exercise. The survey itself may also lead to the identification of further sites.

### **Stage 5: Carrying out the Survey**

4.17 The surveys will largely be carried out in April in conjunction with the annual housing monitoring survey.

4.18 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.

4.19 A full list of information is contained in Appendix I

### **Stage 6: Estimating the Housing Potential of each Site**

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

4.21 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

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

- Local Plan Policy DP5 (Density)
- Local Plan Policy DP8 (Parking) and the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Local Plan Policy SC1 (Securing a Greater Choice of Housing) and the Development Control Guidance on Achieving a Mix of Housing

4.23 Policy DP5 (Density) requires development to make best use of land and to achieve net densities of no less than 50 dwellings per hectare in town centres (as well as near to public transport interchanges) and no less than 30 dwellings per hectare elsewhere.

4.24 The Parking Standards SPD reflects the high levels of car ownership in the District and the high existing levels of on street car parking in the urban areas. It aims to ensure that in most cases adequate car parking is provided on-site.

4.25 The DC Guidance on Achieving a Mix of Housing sets out the recommended mix of house types on large, medium and small developments in order to meet the specific housing needs of the District. The policy will impact on development densities as it will ensure that

a mix of houses and flats are provided and that the mix includes predominantly houses where practicable.

### Stage 7: Assessing when and whether Sites are Likely to be Developed

- 4.26 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.
- 4.27 Sites will be categorised according to whether they are suitable, available and developable and the timescale for the delivery of the dwellings.

**Deliverable Sites** Sites which are in a suitable location for housing; are available now and where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on site within 5 years of the adoption of the relevant plan<sup>3</sup>

**Developable Sites** Sites which are in a potentially suitable location for housing and where there is a reasonable prospect that the site could be available for, and developed at, a specific point in time (within 5-15 years of the adoption of the plan)

**Sites not Currently Developable** Sites which are in a potentially suitable location but it is not known when they could be developed

### Assessing Suitability for Housing

- 4.28 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 protected areas
  - Physical problems or limitations, such as access, infrastructure, flood risk, contamination
  - Potential impacts, such as the effect on areas of acknowledged importance
  - Environmental conditions which would be experienced by prospective residents

### Assessing Availability for Housing

- 4.29 A site is available for development when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, tenancies or operational

<sup>3</sup> The estimated date for the adoption of Warwick's Core Strategy is October 2010.

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.

### **Assessing Achievability for Housing**

4.30 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 Partnership will help inform this process.

### **Overcoming Constraints**

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

## **Stage 8: Review of the Assessment**

4.32 Following the assessment of sites in terms of deliverability and developability, sites will be 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 phasing requirements in the emerging West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS). From the date of adoption of the Core Strategy, there will need to be a supply of deliverable sites for the first 5 years following the adoption of the Core Strategy and a further supply of developable sites for the following 5-15 years.

4.33 The WMRSS Preferred Option was submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2007. It includes a housing figure for Warwick of 10,800 (net) dwellings between 2006 and 2026, an average of 540 per year. The Government, however, considers that the Preferred Option could restrain housing development in the region and commissioned further work to look at options which could deliver higher housing numbers. 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
- make use of a windfall allowance.

## **Stage 9: 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. However these would normally be signalled by the Regional Spatial Strategy.

### **Stage 10: Determining the Housing Potential of Windfalls (where justified)**

- 4.37 Government guidance in PPS3 recognises the fact that in some circumstances it will not be possible to identify specific sites or broad locations for new housing and that a windfall allowance could be used if justified.

- 4.38 In Warwick District, windfall housing development makes a significant contribution to the overall supply of housing – 60% of total completions between 2001 and 2007. A great deal of analysis has taken place on the nature of windfall development in the District and this will be assessed through this process.

- 4.39 The main sources of windfall development in Warwick District are:

- Redevelopment of existing housing
- Redevelopment of non-housing uses
- Conversions/subdivision of existing housing
- Conversion of non-housing uses
- Intensification of existing residential areas (garden land development)
- Flats over shops

- 4.40 An estimate of the number of dwellings likely to come forward from windfall sites will be made on a source by source basis. This will allow specific trends and policies to be fed into the projections of past trends. Factors affecting the projection of past trends on windfall housing numbers are likely to include:

- Market conditions
- Adopted Local Plan policies
- The effect of a greater supply of greenfield sites

## 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
Gary Stephens	Warwick DC (Planning)
Sally Jones	Warwick DC (Planning)
Alison Simmons	Warwick DC (Housing)
Charlotte Abbott (to September 2008)	Home Builders Federation
Brian Bassett	Brian R Bassett Ltd
Reuben Bellamy	Cala Homes Ltd
Paul Hanley	Jephson Housing
Richard Hardy	Evans Hardy Bromwich
Robert Hepwood	Miller Homes Ltd
Frances McConnell	Servite Houses
Adam Viner	Viner Associates