

Ribble Valley Borough
Council



Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment METHODOLOGY

Methodology Report
SEPTEMBER 2008



RibbleValley
Local Development Framework

1. INTRODUCTION:

What is a SHLAA?

This report sets out the methodology for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for Ribble Valley Borough Council. The SHLAA will form an important part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework (LDF).

The main aim of the SHLAA is to identify the amount and general locations of land for future development in the borough and to ensure the Government priority of delivering more homes is not constrained by the availability of housing land. The methodology used in the assessment follows the guidance contained in the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Practice Guide 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments' and Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) which advocates an evidence-based approach to housing policy formulation and states that if the SHLAA guidance is followed, then the assessment produced will be sound and therefore it will not be necessary for the assessment to be independently examined. If the SHLAA deviates away from the guidance then this must be justified. It is the aim of Ribble Valley Borough Council to follow the guidance in order to produce a SHLAA that will be sound.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

In 2004, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act was introduced. This Act overhauled the planning system and the way future plans were produced. It set out new regulations for Local Development Frameworks (LDF), part of which involves ensuring a strong and robust baseline is developed. This is to ensure that policies are formulated on a strong baseline of evidence regarding the local situation and that any changes in this situation can be easily reflected.

Part of this baseline is the Housing Market Assessment (HMA) for Ribble Valley. The HMA is comprised of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which provides details on type, tenure, need and affordability in the local housing markets (available from www.ribblevalley.gov.uk), and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which looks at future potential housing development locations. The HMA needs to be updated annually in order to effectively reflect changes in national, regional and local policy and circumstance.

Policy context: National

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) underpins the delivery of the Government's strategic housing policy objectives and works towards the aim of ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home, which they can afford in a community where they want to live. PPS3 reflects the Government's commitment to improving the affordability and supply of housing in all communities, including rural areas, as informed by the findings of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission. The delivery of housing in rural areas should respect the key principles underpinning this PPS, providing high quality housing that contributes to the creation and maintenance of sustainable rural communities in market towns and villages. As stated within PPS3, local planning authorities should consider the extent to which emerging Local Development Documents and Regional Spatial Strategies can have regard to the policies in this statement whilst maintaining plan-making programmes. The Core Strategy of the LDF will be fundamental in setting out the direction which the borough will be moving in, in terms of housing development and from which the specific Housing Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document will be developed.

Policy context: Regional

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is currently being revised. It will replace the current RSS known as RPG13, and will cover a range of strategic issues and targets including the economy, the environment, transport, infrastructure and housing. The RSS also sets out the housing figures for each region within the north west. The published draft figures have been through extensive formulation and examination and sets the Ribble Valley figure at 161 residential units per year to be provided.

The RSS also promotes the inclusion of data in the SHLAA from sub-regional housing assessments, such as that completed by Nevin-Leather Associates on behalf of the NWRA, which brought together information on all north west SHMAs, as well as data from urban capacity/ potential studies. This study identified Ribble Valley as a single housing market area and as a result, the SHLAA is being undertaken by Ribble Valley only. However, consultation with key stakeholders will be undertaken as part of the SHLAA to ensure that an element of partnership working has been undertaken.

Policy context: Local

The adopted Districtwide Local Plan is to be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF) under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. As part of creating the LDF, the policies included within this need to be strong, robust and built on credible and up to date evidence. As discussed above, a series of LDF evidence base documents are therefore required. The SHLAA is one of such documents. The main aim of the SHLAA in this context is:

- to ensure there is adequate housing supply in the borough for the first 5 years and if possible years 6-15 years,
- to ensure that the requirement set out in the RSS can be provided in suitable locations.

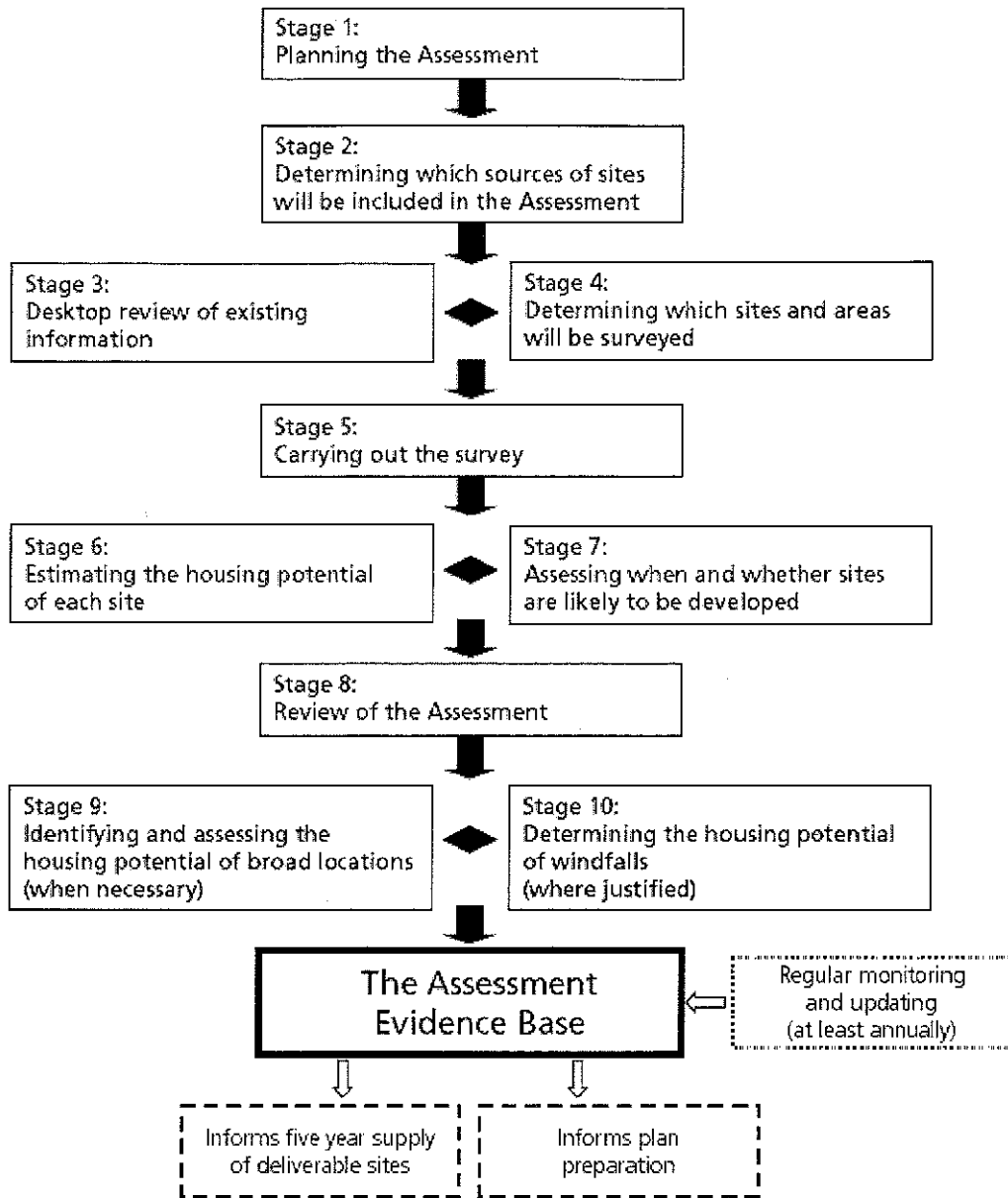
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**AIMS OF THE SHLAA STUDY**

- To identify land and buildings that have development potential for housing
- To assess the potential level of housing provision on the identified land/buildings
- To assess developability of the sites by identifying constraints and sustainability issues that may make the sites unavailable or unsuitable for future development. In other words, the SHLAA will assess when they are likely to be developed if at all.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To provide a robust evidence base to assist in the production of the Core Strategy
- To assess the sites in terms of their developability in order to establish whether they are suitable for inclusion as available land within the first five years of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)
- CLG guidance states that as a minimum such studies should aim to identify sufficient specific sites for at least the first 10 years of a plan from the anticipated date of its adoption, and ideally for longer than the whole 15-year plan period. This study will make provision for these longer range forecasts.

DIAGRAMMATIC STAGES OF THE ASSESSMENT



Source: CLG SHLAA guidance (2007)

4. SOURCES OF SUPPLY AND SURVEY AREA

IDENTIFYING THE SURVEY AREA

The CLG SHLAA Practice Guidance states that a study should aim to identify as many sites with housing potential in and around as many settlements as possible within a study area. For the purpose of this study, the survey area is defined as the borough of Ribble Valley with focus being on identifying sites within or immediately adjacent to settlements identified within the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan.

The following list identifies those settlements in order of settlement hierarchy as they appear within that document.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Wilpshire | 18. Hurst Green |
| 2. Clitheroe | 19. Langho |
| 3. Longridge | 20. Mellor |
| 4. Whalley | 21. Newton |
| 5. Billington | 22. Osbaldeston |
| 6. Mellor Brook | 23. Pendleton |
| 7. Read and Simmonstone | 24. Ribchester |
| 8. Barrow | 25. Rimington |
| 9. Bolton By Bowland | 26. Sabden |
| 10. Copster Green | 27. Sawley |
| 11. Chatburn | 28. Slaidburn |
| 12. Chipping | 29. Tosside |
| 13. Downham | 30. Waddington |
| 14. Dunsop Bridge | 31. West Bradford |
| 15. Gisburn | 32. Wiswell |
| 16. Grindleton | 33. Worston |
| 17. Holden | |

Whilst the Council is aware of the replacement of the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan (JLSP) with RSS, the above settlement hierarchy has been 'saved' and the settlements of Clitheroe, Whalley, Longridge are identified as key service areas in the JLSP. It is possible that this hierarchy will change; however if this does occur, this will be highlighted in future SHLAAs. Wilpshire is in a unique position in that it is seen as part of the main development location of Blackburn and these factors will be given weight in the site appraisal work explained in section 5 and appendix one of this methodology report.

CONSIDERING THE SOURCES OF SUPPLY

The Practice guidance outlines potential sources of sites to be included within the assessment as having potential for housing. These can be subdivided into those with existing permissions/ allocations for residential development i.e. already within the planning process and those not currently in the planning process. The Council does not have any land that is allocated for residential use. There is an allocated site in Longridge for employment use, which the owners have requested be looked at for residential purposes but an assessment will need to be made as to whether there remains a need for employment land. This is considered in another LDF baseline document, the Employment and Retail study that has been undertaken by the Be Group consultants. Although the final report of this study has not yet been published, the information included in the study will be considered in the later stages of the SHLAA where necessary and appropriate. This will need to be factored into those investigations. In terms of unimplemented/ outstanding planning permissions for housing, and those sites that are under construction, this information is readily available from the Council's Housing Land Availability Schedule, which is updated biannually.

In respect of sites not currently in the planning process these would cover sites such as vacant and derelict land and buildings, land in non-residential use which may be suitable for re-development in planning/land use terms for housing such as commercial buildings, additional housing opportunities in established residential areas such as under used garage blocks, sites in rural settlements, rural exceptions sites and urban extensions to the existing key settlement areas.

5. SITE SURVEY

Prior to site visits being completed, an initial desktop site survey will be undertaken to identify a comprehensive list of all possible sites and as a minimum it was decided that all these will be visited. This is particularly important to identify any possible constraints on development. For example, the desktop survey will not allow for issues such as topography to be identified.

A consistent approach will be applied in surveying and evaluating the sites and a standard assessment form has been devised to ensure that the same evaluation criteria are applied to each site.

Key aspects include:

- Site area and boundaries (all sites will be recorded on a 1:1250 map base)
- Current Land Use(s)
- Landscape/Topography
- Visual Prominence
- Highway Issues
- Neighbouring Uses

In order to get an initial indication of potential constraints to development a desktop review of factors such as Conservation Area status, Listed Building or other protective/ restrictive designations will be carried out at this stage. Relevant planning histories will also be explored to examine whether there have been any historic restraints on development. In addition to this, aerial photographs will be obtained for each area and the site's boundary drawn. These will prove useful prior to the site visits to give some context to the suggested site, but also when out on site to confirm the location of sites.

Those considered suitable for housing will be subject to more detailed evaluation to assess their potential yield and whether they are likely to be developed in the short, medium or longer term. The identification of a site at this stage does not in any way prejudice what may happen should a planning application be submitted. The purpose of this study is to identify potential areas of development which will then still need to be explored fully throughout the development control process.

Initial site filtering: Sustainability suitability criteria

Once the closing date for site submissions has passed, the site visits will be undertaken and all the information for each site will be collated. Following this an initial filtering process will take place with the primary intention of removing those sites that are not suitable to be taken forward. In order to ensure that this is done in a consistent and transparent way, a set of sustainability suitability criteria have been created (these can be found in appendix 1).

Sites will also be excluded at this stage where an existing employment use (operational at time of site visit) is evident. In the key service centres, this means that strategic employers will be excluded and in the villages, businesses that were operational at time of survey will be excluded. This ensures that the delivery of housing land in the borough will not compromise the economic development of the borough.

Sites will also be excluded where development has started or is newly completed on sites as these become unavailable for residential development. It is anticipated that this will occur on a number of sites as development through the planning application process is coming forward quicker than the completion of this SHLAA exercise. This is due to the changes in the RSS and the revised housing figures associated with this (wherein Ribble Valley's housing supply figure has doubled and therefore the

restraint policy revised). As a result, sites are being brought forward for housing before they can go through the SHLAA process.

In addition to the exclusion of the operational businesses and strategic employers in the key service centres, sites in the key service centres of less than 0.2ha or 6 dwellings or less will be excluded from the assessment. The decision has also been taken to exclude garden sites (as is compliant with SHLAA best practice/ other sound examples). This approach may be revisited in future SHLAAs depending on the level of housing supply. Proposed sites that fall within the green belt will also be excluded as this national designation (under PPS2¹) prevents development from taking place within green belt land.

Following on from this initial assessment, any sites with obvious constraints will be excluded from the study.

PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the SHLAA at this stage will be published for consultation with information on all sites available for public scrutiny. This will bring together the sites to be taken forward following the initial site filtering process and it will be possible to view the scoring and justification as to why certain potential sites are being progressed. Although it will be possible to request to arrange to view all of the sites that were submitted but then excluded it is envisaged that only the sites being taken forward to the next stage of the assessment will be published at this stage.

If any interested parties wish to submit further sites for the SHLAA it will be possible to do so however these will be considered in the next SHLAA. Details regarding the consultation will be published on the website, and all parties who submitted sites or have requested to be kept informed about progress on the LDF will be contacted. The information will be available to view at planning reception and as far as is possible, information will also be published on the Ribble Valley website. It will also be possible to submit comments on the consultation via the website and by post.

Once the four-week consultation exercise has taken place, the following stages of the assessment must take place to fully complete the SHLAA.

¹ Planning Policy Statement 2: Green Belts

6. ESTIMATING THE HOUSING POTENTIAL OF EACH SITE

To accurately calculate the amount of potential housing land across the borough, it will be necessary to estimate the potential yield of each of the sites. In doing this for each identified site, the following factors will be taken into account:

- Physical constraints
- Major policy constraints
- Neighbouring uses
- Design issues/area character
- Density – to estimate development potential a density of 35 dwellings per hectare will be used as a basis for an outline scheme. This will also form the basis of discussions with highways over detailed access matters. This is compliant with Government guidance
- Accessibility to infrastructure/facilities (main road network, shops, schools, doctors)

The actual suitability scoring criteria used in the assessment is set out in the appendix of this report. Using the same criteria for every site ensures that a comprehensive and consistent approach is taken to the study.

7. ASSESSING WHEN AND WHETHER SITES ARE LIKELY TO BE DEVELOPED

The potential housing sites will need to be assessed against the requirements of PPS3 to establish whether they are deliverable, developable or not currently developable for housing development.

To be considered **deliverable** a site must fulfil the following criteria:

Be **available** – the site must be available for development now. To properly assess this, information will be required on land ownership and there will need to be a confidence that there are no legal or ownership issues that may delay development e.g. ransom strips, multiple tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. In some instances persons putting forward potential sites will have provided this but in others further investigation will be required. This level of detail may prove difficult to obtain and where the information is not known it may be necessary to contact the Land Registry or request further details from persons/ individuals known to have an interest in the site.

Be **suitable** – the site must offer a suitable location for development now and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities. This level of detail will have been gathered through the desktop and site surveys already undertaken for each potential site. It requires an assessment against both physical and policy restraints to development.

Be **achievable** – if a site is considered to be achievable for development there must be a reasonable prospect that housing 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 housing over a certain period of time. Factors which may affect this are marketability, development costs and costs associated with the delivery of housing. It is envisaged that an element of specialist input will be required to undertake this part of the assessment and that expert advice from members of the Housing forum (and sub-committees of this) and the Housing and Employment Market Partnership (HEMP), which consists of estate agents as well as planning consultants and housing association representatives, will be sought.

Sites considered to meet all the above tests will therefore be considered to be deliverable – that is sites which will deliver housing within the first five years from the land use allocation in the RSS.

To be considered **developable** a site should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available for, and could be developed at a specific point in time. PPS3 states that in addition to the deliverable sites Local Planning Authorities should identify a further supply of specific developable sites for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15

Where the study identifies constraints to development the guidance says that Local Authorities should consider what action would be required to remove them. Actions might include the need for investment in new infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement or a need to amend planning policy that is currently constraining development.

Table illustrating potential sources of supply for potential housing sites.

Source of supply	Data collection methods	Comment	Suitable role
Settlement Audit	Audit of the borough. Desk top and on-foot exploration of the borough.	The Settlement Audit was undertaken in 2005/2006 and identified potential parcels of land for future development. The audit did not go as far as to suggest potential uses for the land or to investigate ownership of sites, however it did provide a way of quickly identifying a large number of potential sites for future development.	Potential allocation Five- year land supply
Safeguarded land in the Districtwide Local Plan	Check proposals map for safeguarded land sites	There are two areas of safeguarded land in the Districtwide Local Plan. One of these borders Ribbles Valley and Blackburn with Darwen. This site should be re-assessed as part of the SHLAA to assess the general suitability of the site for housing in the long term.	Potential allocation Five- year land supply
Previous refusals or withdrawals	Check the Council's MVM system	The sites of applications for planning that may have previously been refused or withdrawn on the grounds of prematurity (particularly in light of the Housing Restraint Policy) could be considered for inclusion in the SHLAA.	Five- year land supply
Call for sites	Through local newspaper articles, I&O leaflet and evidence gathering leaflet. Also through the Ribbles Valley website site submission form.	Anyone wishing to submit a site for inclusion in the SHLAA could be invited to do so as part of the overall call for sites exercise. This ensures that all parties are offered a public opportunity to get involved with the SHLAA.	Potential allocation Five- year land supply
Unimplemented/ outstanding planning permissions for housing	Bi-Annual Housing Land Availability Assessment and MVM	A search could be undertaken of the MVM system and through looking in the HLA report for planning permissions on sites that have not yet been implemented.	Five- year land supply
Unimplemented/ outstanding planning permissions for housing that are under construction	Bi-Annual Housing Land Availability Assessment and MVM	A search could be undertaken in the HLA report to find out which sites are under construction. These sites are still classified as available and shall be included in the overall potential.	Five- year land supply
Previous developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non housing)	NLUD	NLUD is the National Land Use Database which brings together information on pdl in the borough. It has the potential to identify sites when it is up to date. There is a potential problem of keeping the information up to date due to database compatibility problems.	Potential allocation Five- year land supply

The Practice guidance states that particular types of land may be excluded from the assessment on condition that sufficient justification is provided. However, it guards against constraining development unnecessarily due to existing policies thereby recognising that the Local planning authority needs to exercise discretion in deciding its strategy for delivering its long term housing objectives.

METHODOLOGY FOR IDENTIFYING THE SUPPLY

The Council have decided that the following sources of information should be used to identify potential housing sites:

- Sites identified via a settlement audit carried out by planning officers: Ending in October 2006
- Sites promoted by developers/ landowners/ planning agents as part of the LDF process: Ending in February 2007
- Press release calling for site Identification: Ending in March 2008
- Request form from Council website (site identification survey): Ending in March 2008
- Sites refused for residential development within the last three years on the grounds of pre-maturity
- Discussions with development control officers
- Any other sites noted during site visits/ aerial photograph analysis of wider area

As the guidance states that 'particular types of land or areas may be excluded from the assessment' the following will not be considered.

- National Land Use Database (NLUD)
- Unimplemented/ outstanding planning permissions for housing

JUSTIFICATION: The guidance stipulates that where sources are being excluded from the assessment, this will 'need to be justified'. The NLUD information will not be used in this year's assessment, as the database is not up to date. When the detail of the database was pursued, it was discovered that the consultants that collate the information for the database take their information from completed SHLAAs and new sites that have come forward. As this is the first SHLAA, information from NLUD will not be relevant and therefore out of date. Any sites that have come forward will be picked up through the MVM system.

Unimplemented/ outstanding planning permissions for housing will not be used to identify potential sites in the first SHLAA as these are already in the planning process and as a result have already been proven as suitable for housing. It is likely that these will not have begun to be constructed or completed prior to the adoption of the SHLAA. These sites are already counted towards the five-year land supply.

8. IMPLICATIONS

In accurately assessing the implications of delivering housing on the sites and whether these will be developable, it is necessary to undertake some residual valuations. Broken down, this ultimately involves applying the following formula

$$\text{Price} - \text{Costs} = \text{Viability}$$

This formula is based on predicted yields, construction costs and sale values and gives an indication of whether the development is realistically achievable. The 4NW² guidance on undertaking urban potential studies will be used to assist with this task. This guidance is proven to be a successful and robust method of calculating the deliverability of the sites. From this, it will then be possible to produce a completions projection model as required by the CLG guidance, which links the SHLAA with the SHMA and highlights the implications for the LDF.

9. REVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT

This stage is where the findings of the overall study are drawn together to devise a housing trajectory that sets out how much housing can be provided and at what point in the future. In the Practice guidance it states that an overall risk assessment should be made as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated.

The housing trajectory will indicate whether there are sufficient sites identified in line with housing targets. If not there are two options open to the Council – the identification of broad locations for future housing growth or the use of a windfall allowance

² The guidance was originally published by the North West Regional Assembly which was dissolved and became 4NW in July 2008

Appendix

RESIDENTIAL SITES SUITABILITY SCORING CRITERIA

POLICY RESTRICTIONS

1. Is the site within a main development location?
Yes = 5 (Wilpshire, Clitheroe, Longridge, Whalley)
Immediately adjacent to = 3
Within other settlements identified in DWLP = 2
Open countryside = 1
2. Is the site previously developed land?
Yes = 5
No = 1
3. Is the site covered by an essential open space designation (G6)?
Yes = 1
No = 5
4. Would development lead to the loss of employment land or buildings (EMP11)?
Yes = 1
No = 5
5. Can car parking be provided at the minimum level?
Yes = 5
No = 1
6. Is the site within designated Green Belt?
Yes = 1
No = 5

NB in relation to Q5 taken that on sites within main centres they will be of such a size that parking is ok. In villages smaller sites so closer assessment will need to be made of site provision for parking

PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS

7. Does the site have suitable infrastructure (highways & utilities)?
Yes = 5
No = 1

8. Is the related infrastructure able to cope/capable of being adapted to accommodate further development?
Yes = 5
Partially = 3
No = 1

9. Is the site within a landfill gas consultation zone?
Yes = 1
Partially/immediately adjacent to = 3
No = 5

10. Is the site constrained by topography?
Level/flat = 5
Gentle slope = 3
Steep slope/drop = 1

11. Is the site at risk of flooding?
Yes (flood zone 3) = 1
Yes (flood zone 2) = 3
No = 5

NB in relation to Q7 & Q8 this is an informal view to be taken by officers prior to detailed discussions with highway engineer at LCC

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

12. Is the development within or would it affect the setting of a Conservation Area?
Yes = 1
No = 5
13. Would the development have an impact on a Listed Building or its setting?
Yes = 1
No = 5
14. Would the development have an impact on a Scheduled Ancient Monument or its setting?
Yes = 1
No = 5
15. Is the site within an archaeological hazard area?
Yes = 1
No = 5
16. Does the site contain a Tree Preservation Order?
Yes = 1
No = 5
17. Is the site covered by a nature conservation designation?
Yes (designation on site) = 1
Site within 250m buffer of a designation = 3
No = 5
18. Would the development adversely impact on surrounding uses?
Yes = 1
Partially = 3 (e.g. if a public footpath runs through the site)
No = 5
19. Does the site have any bad neighbour land uses e.g. heavy industry, school, major road, railway?
Yes (heavy industry) = 1
Moderate (school, railway, church) = 3
No (mainly residential) = 5
20. Is the site within the consultation zone for high pressure pipelines?
Yes = 1
No = 5
21. Are there any other reasons why the site is unsuitable for residential development?