

EXPLANATORY NOTE: SHLAA AND CONTRIBUTION OF SITES TO SUSTAINABLE/MIXED COMMUNITIES

This note seeks to clarify matters in relation to the suitability criterion used in the SHLAA: contribution to sustainable/mixed communities. It particularly addresses the notion that arose during the hearing sessions of the Examination of the Core Strategy on Wednesday 15th January 2014 that certain settlements were not considered sustainable by reference to a particular element of the SHLAA methodology set out at 8.16 to 8.24 of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Report August 2013 (*Post 7.15*).

The methodology for preparing the SHLAA is set out clearly within the document *Post 7.15*. It has been prepared in accordance with CLG Guidance¹

The SHLAA assesses the deliverability of sites in relation to three criteria: suitability, availability and achievability.

The SHLAA assesses suitability in relation to nine criteria as set out at 8.8ff of the SHLAA 2013 report (*Post 7.15*).

The nine criteria include one criterion which considers the site's "contribution to sustainable/mixed communities" in accordance with para. 37 of the CLG Guidance. The Council's approach to assessing this criterion is set out at 8.16ff of Post 7.15. This approach uses eight indicators of settlement sustainability.

The overall judgement regarding the suitability of a site is in relation to the consideration of all nine criteria, of which "contribution to sustainable/mixed communities" is one factor. The factors are not weighted.

The overall judgement on suitability feeds into the assessment of the deliverability/developability of the site in combination with the outcomes in relation to availability and achievability.

In assessing overall deliverability, consideration was given to whether a site passed all nine tests of suitability (see 9.1 of Post 7.15). Any site which is included in the 0-5 supply of deliverable sites would need to pass all tests of suitability.

For the purposes of assessing the suitability of sites in accordance with the SHLAA methodology, eleven settlements were considered not to contribute to the creation of sustainable/mixed communities (note that Great Mitton is not included in the Settlement Hierarchy - see 8.23 of Post 7.15 nor the 32 "other settlements" referred to in policy DS1 of the Core Strategy as proposed to be amended - see Proposed Change 02 of *Post 5.20*). Therefore they would have failed this particular test of suitability and would not be included in the 0-5 year supply. On this basis alone they would appear in the later 6-10 and 11-15 tranches of supply.

Using information from the SHLAA in relation to the ten settlements identified as not contributing to sustainable mixed communities:

- Two (Tosside and Sawley) have no potential identified in the SHLAA;

¹ Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance , CLG 2007

- The remaining eight settlements have potential for 477 dwellings out of a total of 14694 (0.03%);
- Of the 477, 40 are in the 0-5 year phase (0.64% of the total 0-5 year potential); 290 in the 6-10 year phase (5.0% of the total 6-10 year potential), and 147 in the 11-15 year phase (6.4% of the total 11-15 year potential).

This demonstrates that the contribution of these settlements to overall housing potential is small.

Matters arising from the SHLAA

The SHLAA was undertaken largely at a high level to identify the potential of housing in the Borough, to provide key evidence to support the Core Strategy. It provides information on the choice and range of sites which may be taken forward at site allocations stage to meet outstanding requirements. It is a matter for the site allocations stage, not the SHLAA itself to determine which of the sites are most suitable. This reflects the draft National Planning Practice Guidance at ID3-003-230727.

The criterion, “contribution to sustainable/mixed communities” does not equate to a full sustainability assessment of the settlement or site. A fuller assessment of sites will be undertaken at the subsequent site allocations stage and might include matters such as: availability of services, accessibility to services, environmental constraints (heritage, visual, landscape etc.), scale/form, mix and type of housing, need to sustain services and viable communities, regeneration needs, infrastructure needs etc.

The SHLAA demonstrates that there is more than adequate housing potential to meet future housing needs in the borough in terms of quantum and distribution in accordance with the Core Strategy development strategy. It indicates further that there will be the opportunity to identify from a choice of sites those which are most suitable. The SHLAA in itself does not provide a comparative analysis of the sites in terms of a) identifying which sites best meet the Core Strategy objectives/strategy; and b) which sites are more suitable where they are generally in the same phase of delivery.

The Council consider that its SHLAA methodology is sound and that the criterion “contribution to sustainable/mixed communities” needs to be considered in the wider context of the SHLAA methodology of which it forms a part. Neither does the Council consider that this criterion alone is a definitive statement of the overall sustainability of sites or settlements.

POSTSCRIPT (at 26th February 2014)

Since this note was prepared, the Core Strategy Inspector has written to the Council², requiring that further work be undertaken to produce a more refined differentiation between the settlements in the second tier of the settlement hierarchy and identify the level of housing anticipated in the 32 settlements in that tier in a more finely grained manner (see Inspector’s letter, page 2). Work is being undertaken to address this matter and is likely to result in main modification(s) to the plan, which will be formally consulted on in due course.

²Letter from Mr Simon Berkeley to Colin Hirst at RVBC dated 31st January 2014