



1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)

Guidance

Housing and economic land availability assessment

Guides councils in identifying appropriate land to meet development needs.

Published 6 March 2014

From:

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government>)

Contents

- What is the purpose of the assessment of land availability?
- About the assessment
- Methodology – flowchart
- Methodology – Stage 1: Identification of sites and broad locations
- Methodology – Stage 2: Site/broad location assessment
- Methodology – Stage 3: Windfall assessment (where justified)
- Methodology – Stage 4: Assessment review
- Methodology – Stage 5: Final evidence base

What is the purpose of the assessment of land availability?

An assessment of land availability identifies a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period. The assessment of land availability includes the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment requirement as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The assessment of land availability is an important step in the preparation of Local Plans (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans--2>). The National Planning Policy Framework identifies the advantages of carrying out land assessments for housing and economic development as part of the same exercise, in order that sites may be allocated for the use which is most appropriate.

An assessment 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).

This approach ensures that all land is assessed together as part of plan preparation to identify which sites or broad locations are the most suitable and deliverable for a particular use.

See related policy:

- paragraph 159 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/plan-making#para159>)
- annex 2: glossary (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>)

Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 3-001-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

About the assessment

How does the assessment relate to the development plan process?

The assessment forms a key component of the evidence base to underpin policies in development plans for housing and economic development, including supporting the delivery of land to meet identified need for these uses.

From the assessment, plan makers will then be able to plan proactively by choosing sites to go forward into their development plan documents to meet objectively assessed needs.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with separate guidance on the application of town centre planning policy, which includes the sequential test for locating town centre (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres>) uses.

See related policy: annex 2: glossary (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>)

Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 3-002-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Does the assessment allocate land in development plans?

The assessment is an important evidence source to inform plan making but does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development. This is because not all sites considered in the assessment will be suitable for development (eg because of policy constraints or if they are unviable). It is the role of the assessment to provide information on the range of sites which are available to meet need, but it is for the development plan itself to determine which of those sites are the most suitable to meet those needs.

Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 3-003-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Can designated neighbourhood forums and parish/town councils use the guidance?

Designated neighbourhood forums and parish/town councils may use the methodology to assess sites but any assessment should be proportionate. Neighbourhood forums and parish councils may also refer to existing site assessments prepared by the local planning authority as a starting point when identifying sites to allocate within a neighbourhood plan (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>).

Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 3-004-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Can plan makers use a different methodology?

This guidance indicates what inputs and processes should lead to a robust assessment of land availability. Plan makers should have regard to the guidance in preparing their assessments. Where they depart from the guidance, plan makers will have to set out reasons for doing so. The assessment should be thorough but proportionate, building where possible on existing information sources outlined within the guidance.

Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 3-005-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Methodology – flowchart

Methodology - flowchart (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578755/land-availability.pdf)

PDF, 220KB, 1 page

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 3-006-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Methodology – Stage 1: Identification of sites and broad locations

Determine assessment area and site size

What geographical area should the assessment cover?

The area selected for the assessment should be the housing market area and functional economic market area (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>). This could be the local planning authority area or a different area such as 2 or more local authority areas or areas covered by the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 3-007-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Who should plan makers work with?

The assessment should be undertaken and regularly reviewed working with other local planning authorities in the relevant housing market area or functional economic market area, in line with the duty to cooperate (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-cooperate>).

The following should be involved from the earliest stages of plan preparation, which includes the evidence base in relation to land availability: developers; those with land interests; land promoters; local property agents; local communities; partner organisations; Local Enterprise Partnerships; businesses and business representative organisations; parish and town councils; neighbourhood forums preparing neighbourhood plans (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>).

Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 3-008-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Should the assessment be constrained by the need for development?

The assessment should identify all sites and broad locations regardless of the amount of development needed to provide an audit of available land. The process of the assessment will, however, provide the information to enable an identification of sites and locations suitable for the required development in the Local Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans--2>).

Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 3-009-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What site/broad location size should be considered for assessment?

Plan makers will need to assess a range of different site sizes from small-scale sites to opportunities for large-scale developments such as village and town extensions and new settlements where appropriate.

The assessment should consider all sites and broad locations capable of delivering 5 or more dwellings or economic development on sites of 0.25 hectares (or 500 square metres of floor space) and above. Where appropriate, plan makers may wish to consider alternative site size thresholds.

Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 3-010-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How should sites/broad locations be identified?

When carrying out a desk top review, plan makers should be proactive in identifying as wide a range as possible of sites and broad locations for development (including those existing sites that could be improved, intensified or changed). Sites, which have particular policy constraints, should be included in the assessment for the sake of comprehensiveness but these constraints must be set out clearly, including where they severely restrict development. An important part of the desktop review, however, is to test again the appropriateness of other previously defined constraints, rather than simply to accept them.

Plan makers should not simply rely on sites that they have been informed about but actively identify sites through the desktop review process that may have a part to play in meeting the development needs of an area.

Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 3-011-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What types of sites and sources of data should be used?

Plan makers should consider all available types of sites and sources of data that may be relevant in the assessment process but the following may be particularly relevant:

Type of site and potential data source

(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575032/Type_of_site_and_potential_data_source.pdf)

PDF, 69.5KB, 2 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 3-012-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Should plan makers issue a call for potential sites and broad locations for development?

Plan makers should issue a call for potential sites and broad locations for development, which should be aimed at as wide an audience as is practicable so that those not normally involved in property development have the opportunity to contribute. This should include parish councils and neighbourhood forums, landowners, developers, businesses and relevant local interest groups, and local notification/publicity. It may be possible to include notification of a call for sites in other local authority documentation (such as notification of local elections) to minimise costs.

Plan makers should also set out key information sought from respondents. This could include:

- site location;
- suggested potential type of development (eg economic development uses – retail, leisure, cultural, office, warehousing etc; residential – by different tenures, types and needs of different groups such as older people housing, private rented housing and people wishing to build or commission their own homes);
- the scale of development;
- constraints to development.

Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 3-013-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What should be included in the site and broad location survey?

The comprehensive list of sites and broad locations derived from data sources and the call for sites should be assessed against national policies and designations to establish which have reasonable potential for development and should be included in the site survey.

Plan makers should then assess potential sites and broad locations via more detailed site surveys to:

- ratify inconsistent information gathered through the call for sites and desk assessment;
- get an up to date view on development progress (where sites have planning permission);
- a better understanding of what type and scale of development may be appropriate;
- gain a more detailed understanding of deliverability, any barriers and how they could be overcome;
- identify further sites with potential for development that were not identified through data sources or the call for sites.

Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 3-014-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How detailed should the survey be?

Site surveys should be proportionate to the detail required for a robust appraisal. For example, the assessment will need to be more detailed where sites are considered to be realistic candidates for development.

Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 3-015-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What characteristics should be recorded during the survey?

During the site survey the following characteristics should be recorded (or checked if they were previously identified through the data sources and call for sites):

- site size, boundaries, and location;
- current land use and character;
- land uses and character of surrounding area;
- physical constraints (eg access, contamination, steep slopes, flooding, natural features of significance, location of infrastructure/utilities);
- potential environmental constraints;
- where relevant, development progress (eg 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.

Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 3-016-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Methodology – Stage 2: Site/broad location assessment

Estimating the development potential of each site/broad location

How should the development potential be calculated?

The estimation of the development potential of each identified site should be guided by the existing or emerging plan policy including locally determined policies on density.

Where the plan policy is out of date or does not provide a sufficient basis to make a judgement then relevant existing development schemes can be used as the basis for assessment, adjusted for any individual site characteristics and physical constraints. The use of floor space densities for certain industries may also provide a useful guide.

The development potential is a significant factor that affects economic viability of a site/broad location and its suitability for a particular use. Therefore, assessing achievability (including viability) and suitability can usefully be carried out in parallel with estimating the development potential.

Paragraph: 017 Reference ID: 3-017-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What factors should be considered for when and whether sites/broad locations are likely to be developed?

Assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of sites including whether the site is economically viable will provide the information on which the judgement can be made in the plan-making context as to whether a site can be considered deliverable over the plan period.

Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 3-018-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What factors should be considered when assessing the suitability of sites/broad locations for development?

Plan makers should assess the suitability of the identified use or mix of uses of a particular site or broad location including consideration of the types of development that may meet the needs of the community. These may include, but are not limited to: market housing, private rented, affordable housing, people wishing to build or commission their own homes, housing for older people, or for economic development uses.

Assessing the suitability of sites or broad locations for development should be guided by:

- the development plan, emerging plan policy and national policy;
- market and industry requirements in that housing market or functional economic market area.

When assessing the sites against the adopted development plan, plan makers will need to take account of how up to date the plan policies are and consider the appropriateness of identified constraints on sites/broad location and whether such constraints may be overcome.

Sites in existing development plans or with planning permission will generally be considered suitable for development although it may be necessary to assess whether circumstances have changed which would alter their suitability. This will include a re-appraisal of the suitability of previously allocated land and the potential to designate allocated land for different or a wider range of uses. This should be informed by a range of factors including the suitability of the land for different uses and by market signals, which will be useful in identifying the most appropriate use.

In addition to the above considerations, the following factors should be considered to assess a site's suitability for development now or in the future:

- physical limitations or problems such as access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination;
- potential impacts including the effect upon landscapes including landscape features, nature and heritage conservation;
- appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed;
- contribution to regeneration priority areas;
- environmental/amenity impacts experienced by would be occupiers and neighbouring areas.

Paragraph: 019 Reference ID: 3-019-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What factors should be considered when assessing availability?

A site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available (confirmed by the call for sites and information from land owners and legal searches where appropriate), there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. This will often mean that the land is controlled by a developer or landowner who has expressed an intention to develop, or the landowner has expressed an intention to sell. Because persons do not need to have an interest in the land to make planning applications, the existence of a planning permission does not necessarily mean that the site is available. Where potential problems have been identified, then 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.

Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 3-020-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What factors should be considered when assessing achievability including whether the development of the site is viable?

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. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/viability>), and the capacity of the developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period.

Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 3-021-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What happens when constraints are identified that impact on the suitability, availability and achievability?

Where constraints have been identified, the assessment should consider what action would be needed to remove them (along with when and how this could be undertaken and the likelihood of sites/broad locations being delivered). 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.

Paragraph: 022 Reference ID: 3-022-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How should the timescale and rate of development be assessed and presented?

The local planning authority should use the information on suitability, availability, achievability and constraints to assess the timescale within which each site is capable of development. This may include indicative lead-in times and build-out rates for the development of different scales of sites. On the largest sites allowance should be made for several developers to be involved. The advice of developers and local agents will be important in assessing lead-in times and build-out rates by year.

Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 3-023-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Methodology – Stage 3: Windfall assessment (where justified)

Determining the housing potential of windfall sites (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>) where justified

How should a windfall allowance be determined in relation to housing?

A windfall allowance may be justified in the 5-year supply if a local planning authority has compelling evidence as set out in paragraph 48 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes#para048>) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Local planning authorities have the ability to identify broad locations in years 6-15, which could include a windfall allowance based on a geographical area (using the same criteria as set out in paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

Paragraph: 24 Reference ID: 3-24-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Methodology – Stage 4: Assessment review

How should the assessment be reviewed?

Once the sites and broad locations have been assessed, the development potential of all sites can be collected to produce an indicative trajectory. This should set out how much housing and the amount of economic development that can be provided, and at what point in the future. An overall risk assessment should be made as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated.

Paragraph: 025 Reference ID: 3-025-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What happens if the trajectory indicates that there are insufficient sites/broad locations to meet the objectively assessed need?

It may be concluded that insufficient sites/broad locations have been identified against objectively assessed needs. Plan makers will need to revisit the assessment, for example changing the assumptions on the development potential on particular sites (including physical and policy constraints) including sites for possible new settlements.

If, following this review there are still insufficient sites, then it will be necessary to investigate how this shortfall should best be planned for. If there is clear evidence that the needs cannot be met locally, it will be necessary to consider how needs might be met in adjoining areas in accordance with the duty to cooperate (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-cooperate>).

Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 3-026-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Is it essential to identify specific developable sites or broad locations for housing growth for years 11-15?

As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, local planning authorities should identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, where possible, for years 11-15. Local Plans can pass the test of soundness where local planning authorities have not been able to identify sites or broad locations for growth in years 11-15.

See related policy:

- paragraph 47 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes>)
- paragraph 157 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/plan-making#para157>)

Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 3-027-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Methodology – Stage 5: Final evidence base

What are the core outputs?

The following set of standard outputs should be produced from the assessment to ensure consistency, accessibility and transparency:

- 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;
- contain more detail for those sites which are considered to be realistic candidates for development, where others have been discounted for clearly evidenced and justified reasons;
- 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 and consideration of associated risks.

The assessment should also be made publicly available in an accessible form.

Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 3-028-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Do housing and economic needs override constraints on the use of land, such as Green Belt?

The National Planning Policy Framework should be read as a whole: need alone is not the only factor to be considered when drawing up a Local Plan.

The Framework is clear that local planning authorities should, through their Local Plans, meet objectively assessed needs unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. Such policies include those relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives, and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast or within a National Park or the Broads; designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

The Framework makes clear that, once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan.

Related policy:

- paragraph 14 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/achieving-sustainable-development#para014>)
- paragraph 83 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/9-protecting-green-belt-land#para083>)

Paragraph: 044 Reference ID: 3-044-20141006

Revision date: 06 10 2014

Do local planning authorities have to meet in full housing needs identified in needs assessments?

Local authorities should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs.

However, assessing need is just the first stage in developing a Local Plan. Once need has been assessed, the local planning authority should prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 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, and in so doing take account of any constraints such as Green Belt, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need.

See related policy: paragraph 159 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/plan-making#para159>).

Paragraph: 045 Reference ID: 3-045-20141006

Revision date: 06 10 2014

How is deliverability (1-5 years) and developability (6-15 years) determined in relation to housing supply?

Assessing the suitability, availability and achievability (including the economic viability of a site) will provide the information as to whether a site can be considered deliverable, developable or not currently developable for housing. The definition of 'deliverability' and 'developability' in relation to housing supply is set out in footnote 1 and footnote 2 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes#footnotes>) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

All aspects of a Local Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-cooperate>) must be realistic and deliverable but there are specific requirements in the Framework in

relation to planned housing land supply.

See related policy: paragraph 47 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes>) bullets 2 and 3.

Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 3-029-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What is the starting point for the 5-year housing supply?

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of housing against their housing requirements. Therefore local planning authorities should have an identified 5-year housing supply at all points during the plan period. Housing requirement figures in up-to-date adopted Local Plans should be used as the starting point for calculating the 5 year supply. Considerable weight should be given to the housing requirement figures in adopted Local Plans, which have successfully passed through the examination process, unless significant new evidence comes to light. It should be borne in mind that evidence which dates back several years, such as that drawn from revoked regional strategies, may not adequately reflect current needs.

Where evidence in Local Plans has become outdated and policies in emerging plans are not yet capable of carrying sufficient weight, information provided in the latest full assessment of housing needs should be considered. But the weight given to these assessments should take account of the fact they have not been tested or moderated against relevant constraints. Where there is no robust recent assessment of full housing needs, the household projections published by the Department for Communities and Local Government should be used as the starting point, but the weight given to these should take account of the fact that they have not been tested (which could evidence a different housing requirement to the projection, for example because past events that affect the projection are unlikely to occur again or because of market signals) or moderated against relevant constraints (for example environmental or infrastructure).

Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 3-030-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What constitutes a 'deliverable site' in the context of housing policy?

Deliverable sites for housing could include those that are allocated for housing in the development plan and sites with planning permission (outline or full that have not been implemented) unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within 5 years.

However, planning permission or allocation in a development plan is not a prerequisite for a site being deliverable in terms of the 5-year supply. Local planning authorities will need to provide robust, up to date evidence to support the deliverability of sites, ensuring that their judgements on deliverability are clearly and transparently set out. If there are no significant constraints (eg infrastructure) to overcome such as infrastructure sites not allocated within a development plan or without planning permission can be considered capable of being delivered within a 5-year timeframe.

The size of sites will also be an important factor in identifying whether a housing site is deliverable within the first 5 years. Plan makers will need to consider the time it will take to commence development on site and build out rates to ensure a robust 5-year housing supply.

See related policy: footnote 1 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes#footnotes>).

Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 3-031-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What constitutes a 'developable site' in the context of housing policy?

The National Planning Policy Framework asks local planning authorities to identify a supply of specific developable sites or broad locations for growth in years 6-10 and where possible for years 11-15.

Developable sites or broad locations are areas that are in a suitable location for housing development and have a reasonable prospect that the site or broad location is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged. Local planning authorities will need to consider when in the plan period such sites or broad locations will come forward so that they can be identified on the development trajectory. These sites or broad locations may include large development opportunities such as urban extension or new settlements.

See related policy: footnote 2 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes#footnotes>).

Paragraph: 032 Reference ID: 3-032-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Updating evidence on the supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years worth of housing against housing requirements

Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The examination of Local Plans (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans--2>) is intended to ensure that up-to-date housing requirements and the deliverability of sites to meet a 5 year supply will have been thoroughly considered and examined prior to adoption, in a way that cannot be replicated in the course of determining individual applications and appeals where only the applicant's/appellant's evidence is likely to be presented to contest an authority's position.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of housing. As part of this, local planning authorities should consider both the delivery of sites against the forecast trajectory and also the deliverability of all the sites in the 5 year supply.

Local planning authorities should ensure that they carry out their annual assessment in a robust and timely fashion, based on up-to-date and sound evidence, taking into account the anticipated trajectory of housing delivery, and consideration of associated risks, and an assessment of the local delivery record. Such assessment, including the evidence used, should be realistic and made publicly available in an accessible format. Once published, such assessments should normally not need to be updated for a full 12 months unless significant new evidence comes to light or the local authority wishes to update its assessment earlier.

By taking a thorough approach on an annual basis, local planning authorities will be in a strong position to demonstrate a robust 5 year supply of sites. Demonstration of a 5 year supply is a key material consideration when determining housing applications and appeals. As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, a 5 year supply is also central to demonstrating that relevant policies for the supply of housing are up-to-date in applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph: 033 Reference ID: 3-033-20150327

Revision date: 27 03 2015 See previous version

(http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140310225838/http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment/stage-5-final-evidence-base/#paragraph_033)

In decision taking, can unmet need for housing outweigh Green Belt protection?

Unmet housing need (including for traveller sites) is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the “very special circumstances” justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt.

Paragraph: 034 Reference ID: 3-034-20141006

Revision date: 06 10 2014 See previous version

(http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140310225838/http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment/stage-5-final-evidence-base/#paragraph_034)

How should local planning authorities deal with past under-supply?

The approach to identifying a record of persistent under delivery of housing involves questions of judgment for the decision maker in order to determine whether or not a particular degree of under delivery of housing triggers the requirement to bring forward an additional supply of housing.

The factors behind persistent under delivery may vary from place to place and, therefore, there can be no universally applicable test or definition of the term. It is legitimate to consider a range of issues, such as the effect of imposed housing moratoriums and the delivery rate before and after any such moratoriums.

The assessment of a local delivery record is likely to be more robust if a longer term view is taken, since this is likely to take account of the peaks and troughs of the housing market cycle.

Local planning authorities should aim to deal with any undersupply within the first 5 years of the plan period where possible. Where this cannot be met in the first 5 years, local planning authorities will need to work with neighbouring authorities under the duty to cooperate (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-cooperate>).

See related policy: paragraph 47 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes>).

Paragraph: 035 Reference ID: 3-035-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Can previous over-supply of housing be considered when determining the objectively assessed need for housing?

The housing requirement is set at the starting point of the plan, which can be earlier than the date the plan is adopted. For a plan to be found sound it would have to be based on an objectively assessed need for housing. In assessing this need, consideration can be given to evidence that the council has delivered over and above its housing need in previous years.

Household projections are based on past trends. If a council has robust evidence that past high delivery rates that inform the projections are no longer realistic – for example they relied on a particular set of circumstances that could not be expected to occur again – they can adjust their projections down accordingly.

Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 3-036-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How should local planning authorities deal with housing for older people?

Older people have a wide range of different housing needs, ranging from suitable and appropriately located market housing through to residential institutions (Use Class C2). Local planning authorities should count housing provided for older people, including residential institutions in Use Class C2, against their housing requirement. The approach taken, which may include site allocations, should be clearly set out in the Local Plan.

In decision-taking, evidence that development proposals for accessible and manageable homes specifically for older people will free up under-occupied local housing for other population groups is likely to demonstrate a market need that supports the approval of such homes.

Paragraph: 037 Reference ID: 3-037-20150320

Revision date: 20 03 2015 See previous version

(http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140310225838/http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment/stage-5-final-evidence-base/#paragraph_037)

How should local planning authorities deal with student housing?

All student accommodation, whether it consists of communal halls of residence or self-contained dwellings, and whether or not it is on campus, can be included towards the housing requirement, based on the amount of accommodation it releases in the housing market. Notwithstanding, local authorities should take steps to avoid double-counting.

Paragraph: 038 Reference ID: 3-038-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How should local planning authorities deal with empty housing and buildings?

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages local authorities to bring empty housing and buildings back into residential use. Empty homes can help to contribute towards meeting housing need but it would be for individual local authorities to identify and implement an empty homes strategy. Any approach to bringing empty homes back into use and counting these against housing need would have to be robustly evidenced by the local planning authority at the independent examination of the draft Local Plan, for example to test the deliverability of the strategy and to avoid double counting (local planning authorities would need to demonstrate that empty homes had not been counted within their existing stock of dwellings when calculating their overall need for additional dwellings in their local plans).

See related policy: paragraph 51 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes#para051>).

Paragraph: 039 Reference ID: 3-039-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How does the 5-year housing supply relate to neighbourhood planning?

Local planning authorities need to be able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable sites in order to comply with national policies. The National Planning Policy Framework asks local planning authorities to use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing, identifies key sites that are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy and identifies and updates annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a 5-year supply.

Neighbourhood plans (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change#flood-risk-in-neighbourhood-plans>) set out policies that relate to the development and use of land and can be used to allocate sites for development but the plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. Where a neighbourhood plan comes forward before an up to date Local Plan is in place, the local planning authority should work constructively with a qualifying body to enable a neighbourhood plan to make timely progress and to share evidence used to prepare their plan. Neighbourhood plans (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning-2#neighbourhood-plan-relating-to-Local-Plan>) should deliver against the objectively assessed evidence of needs.

Related policy: see About the National Planning Policy Framework

(<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160512102633/http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/about/>).

Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 3-040-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How often should an assessment be updated?

The assessment of sites should be kept up-to-date as part of local authorities' monitoring report (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans-2#local-plans-adoption>) and should be updated yearly.

It should only be necessary to carry out a full re-survey of the sites/broad locations when development plans have to be reviewed or other significant changes make this necessary (eg if a local planning authority is no longer able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of specific deliverable sites for housing).

Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 3-041-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Is an annual update required for allocated employment sites?

Although there is no formal requirement for an annual update of employment (including retail, office, manufacturing) site allocations, they should be regularly reviewed.

See related policy (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/1-building-a-strong-competitive-economy#para022>).

Paragraph: 042 Reference ID: 3-042-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What information should be recorded when monitoring?

The main information to record is:

- progress with delivery of development on allocated and sites with planning permission;
- planning applications that have been submitted or approved on sites and broad locations identified by the assessment;
- progress that has been made in removing constraints on development and whether a site is now considered to be deliverable or developable;
- unforeseen constraints that have emerged which now mean a site is no longer deliverable or developable, and how these could be addressed;
- whether the windfall allowance (where justified) is coming forward as expected, or may need to be adjusted.

Paragraph: 043 Reference ID: 3-043-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

Published 6 March 2014

Related content

Collection

- Planning practice guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>)

Policy

- Planning system (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/planning-system>)