



Brighton & Hove City Council

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

PROJECT BRIEF

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the work to produce the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Brighton & Hove, the Council is required to produce a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This will form part of the evidence base and background information to inform the Council's 'Core Strategy' and other Development Plan Documents (DPDs).
- 1.2 The SHLAA is required by national planning policy set out in 'Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing' (PPS3, CLG November 2006). The 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance' note published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG July 2007), provides guidance to local planning authorities on how to carry out such assessments in order to identify land for housing and assess the deliverability and developability of sites. It is against this background that this project brief has been developed.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Brighton and Hove is a compact city of 8,267 hectares built on rolling hills and valleys and constrained between the South Downs and the sea. 251,900 people live in the built-up area that comprises roughly half of the city's extent.
- 2.2 The SHLAA is one of several studies already underway or about to be launched to inform the LDF for Brighton & Hove. The city needs to grow in terms of meeting housing and economic needs but growth outside the existing built up area is highly constrained. Delivering sustainable development in terms of encouraging a healthy local economy and promoting social inclusion is a key issue, and future growth needs to focus primarily on the existing built up area and the efficient use of existing brown-field land.

3.0 Planning Policy Background

- 3.1 PPS3 seeks to ensure a more responsive approach to land supply at the local level. It requires local authorities to identify specific, developable sites for at least the first ten year period of the development plan. PPS3 requires local planning authorities to:
- identify specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that are ready for development, and to keep this topped up over-time in response to market information;
 - identify specific, developable sites for years 6–10, and ideally years 11–15, in plans to enable the five year supply to be topped up;
 - where it is not possible to identify specific sites for years 11–15 of the plan, indicate broad locations for future growth; and
 - not include an allowance for windfalls in the first 10 years of the plan unless there are justifiable local circumstances that prevent specific sites being identified.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

- 3.2 The regional context for housing delivery is the South East Plan. This is a spatial planning document that sets out changes needed to improve the quality of life in the South East region over the next 20 years. The full Plan was approved by the Assembly on 1 March 2006 and was submitted to Government on 31 March 2006. The Government published an independent Inspectors' Report in August 2007. It is expected that the final Plan will receive Government approval in 2008. Brighton & Hove falls within the Sussex Coast sub regional area. The Plan sets out that an additional 11,060 homes are required in the City between 2006 and 2026. The Inspectors Report for the Plan recommended that this figure be increased by an additional 400 units over the 20 year period (11,460 units) but this figure is yet to be confirmed.
- 3.3 The East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011 contains strategic planning policies relevant to the City. Policy H1 states that the housing provision for Brighton & Hove from 1991 to 2011 should be 9,400 units. As at 1st April 2006 Brighton & Hove had exceeded this target, having produced 9,590 additional residential units.
- 3.4 The Brighton & Hove Local Plan adopted July 2005, identifies housing sites in Policy HO1. The policy reflects a sequential approach to releasing housing sites whereby the highest priority is attached to the use of previously developed sites.

4.0 Purpose of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

- 4.1 SHLAAs are a key component of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing to meet the community's need for more homes. The purpose of the proposed study is to provide a comprehensive review of potential housing sites in Brighton & Hove and to assess the suitability of sites in order to inform the LDF.
- 4.2 The primary role of the SHLAA is to identify sites with potential for housing development, assess their housing potential and estimate when they are likely to be developed. Although the Assessment is an important evidence source to inform plan-making, it does not, in itself, determine whether a site should be allocated for housing development. The SHLAA will aim to identify as many sites with housing potential as possible in the study area to meet regional requirements for a minimum of 10 years. The study area will comprise the extent of Brighton & Hove.
- 4.3 Once completed, the SHLAA will be regularly kept up to date as part of the Annual Monitoring Report process. Practice Guidance recommends a comprehensive first study and notes that thereafter it should be only necessary to carry out a full resurvey when plans have to be reviewed and rolled forward to a longer time horizon, or some other significant change makes it necessary – e.g. where a five year supply of sites cannot be demonstrated.
- 4.3 Consultation and involvement will be an important element of the SHLAA process. Practice Guidance advocates that local authorities work together with key stakeholders to ensure a robust and joined up approach. Consultation must meet the requirements of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for the LDF.

- 4.4 For information, the table below sets out the required ‘Core Outputs’ of the SHLAA¹.

Table I: Core Outputs of the SHLAA

Core Outputs of the SHLAA	
1	A list of sites, cross-referenced to maps showing locations and boundaries of specific sites (and showing broad locations, where necessary)
2	Assessment of the deliverability/developability of each identified site (i.e. in terms of its suitability, availability and achievability) to determine if and when an identified site is realistically expected to be developed
3	Potential quantity of housing that could be delivered on each identified site or within each identified broad location (where necessary) or on windfall sites (where justified)
4	Constraints on the delivery of identified sites
5	Recommendations on how these constraints could be overcome and when

5.0 Scope of Work and Proposed Methodology

Stage I - Planning the Assessment

- 5.1 Practice guidance encourages local planning authorities to work together at sub-regional level and undertake joint Assessments wherever feasible. Unfortunately, following discussions with adjacent local authorities in this area, it has been concluded that this will not be possible for the Brighton & Hove SHLAA. This is due to the differing Local Development Framework timescales affecting the different local authorities.
- 5.2 The guidance also encourages the use of ‘Housing Market Partnerships’ (where established) to use as a forum to take forward the SHLAA process. ‘Housing Market Partnerships’ should include house builders, social landlords, local property agents, local communities and other agencies as appropriate (for example English Partnerships where there is a recognised interest in the area).
- 5.3 Within Brighton and Hove some partnerships already exist namely the ‘Strategic Housing Partnership’ (a sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership) and the ‘Brighton & Hove Housing Partnership’ (comprising the development arm of Registered Social Landlords operating in the City).
- 5.4 It is intended to use the membership of these groups and also to identify other key stakeholders to involve in the SHLAA process. It is recognised that house builders and local property agents can provide expertise and knowledge regarding the deliverability and developability of housing sites and how market conditions may affect economic viability.

Stage One: Key Tasks

¹ CLG Practice Guidance, Figure I.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

- Identify key stakeholders who may wish to be involved in the SHLAA process;
- Send draft Project Brief and Site Identification Form to stakeholders for early consultation (December 2007);
- Place Project Brief and Site Identification Form on the Council's website (from December 2007);
- Invite stakeholders to identify sites that may become available in the period to 2026;
- Consult with stakeholders at all relevant project milestones (e.g. on proposed methodology, for site evaluation and assessment via specific stakeholder event, and at interim and final report stages)

Stage 2 – Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment

5.5 The table below indicates the range of potential site 'sources' or types of site that will be included in the Brighton & Hove SHLAA. For monitoring purposes, the SHLAA will have a base date of 1. 4. 2007.

Table 2: Proposed Sources of Sites with Potential for Housing

Sites in the planning process (capable of producing 6 or more residential units)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing local plan housing allocations and sites identified within planning development briefs • Sites and/or broad locations provisionally identified as part of the Core Strategy Development Area Assessment. • Unimplemented /outstanding planning permissions for housing (not started) • Planning permissions for housing that are currently under construction 	
Sites not currently in the planning process (capable of producing 6 or more residential units)	
Examples;	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant and derelict land and buildings • Surplus public sector land • Land in non residential use which may be suitable for redevelopment for housing such as commercial buildings or car parks, including as part of a mixed use development • Additional housing opportunities in established residential areas, such as under-used garage blocks • Any other Urban Capacity Study Sites (not already identified above) without planning permission • Urban fringe sites (those south of the A27 bypass) 	

5.6 It will not be appropriate or practically feasible to include all land areas within the Assessment. It is proposed therefore that the following categories of land are specifically excluded from the SHLAA:

Table 3: Areas of land to be excluded from the SHLAA:

Excluded Area	Reason
SSSIs	Highly protected areas/policy designations with national or international significance. Residential development will not generally be permitted within this level of designation.
SACs, SPAs, Ramsar Sites	
Other areas with internationally recognised designations	

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

Open Space (to include playing fields, Parks and Public gardens, Allotments)	Open space in Brighton & Hove is a highly valued resource and the Council's Open Space Study ² has not identified surpluses.
Proposed National Park land designations north of the A27 bypass as indicated in the Inspector's Report (July 2007)	These designations are considered unlikely to change. Residential development will not generally be permitted within this level of designation.
Empty Homes	When homes are considered for redevelopment the majority do not yield more than 6 units. These will be considered as part of the city's windfall supply.
Employment Land Allocations	The council's Employment Land Study recommends that employment land/premises currently allocated in the local plan should not be released for other uses.
Flats above Shops	These will be considered as part of the city's windfall supply.
Sites capable of producing less than 6 units (other than those which already have planning permission).	These will be considered as part of the city's potential windfall supply.

5.7 The SHLAA will not attempt to identify sites capable of producing less than 6 units (small sites). This is to ensure manageability in the work programme and to ensure consistency with historic monitoring of housing capacity. Small sites will be included as part of a windfall supply assessment.

Stage 2 – Key Tasks

- Record site information on individual site assessment forms for all SHLAA identified sites (see 5.8 below).
- Construct spreadsheets recording data for all known housing potential sites falling within the categories as listed in the table above.

Stage 3 – Desktop review of existing information

5.8 The following data sources will be used to inform the Assessment.

Table 4: Sources of information

Sites in the planning process	Purpose
Site allocations not yet the subject of planning permission	To identify sites
Planning permissions/sites under construction (particularly those being developed in phases)	To identify sites
Site specific development briefs	To identify sites and any constraints to delivery

² Brighton & Hove Draft Open Space Study – ongoing.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

Sites/Locations provisionally identified as having housing potential in the Core Strategy (Preferred Options).	To identify sites/locations and any constraints to delivery.
Planning application refusals and 'lapsed' consents	To identify potential sites – particularly any applications rejected on grounds of prematurity. Identify potential sites where there was an 'in principle' acceptance for housing development and where reasons for refusal may be overcome by subsequent application.
Dwelling starts and completion records	To identify the current development progress on sites with planning permission
Other sources of information that may help to identify sites	
Local planning authority Urban Housing Capacity Study	To identify buildings and land with housing potential and any constraints to delivery
National Land Use Database	To identify buildings and land with housing potential and any constraints to delivery
Register of Surplus Public Sector Land	To identify buildings and land with housing potential
Commercial Property Database	To identify vacant land/buildings with housing potential.
Sites submitted by stakeholders via the SHLAA consultation process	To identify buildings and land with housing potential

5.9 All sites and site information will be recorded on an individual Site Assessment Form. Sites will also be mapped on a 1:1250 map base. There may well be inconsistencies between the different sources of information (e.g. duplicates) and these will need to be resolved. Landowner(s) and / or developer(s) and their contact details should be recorded and they may need to be followed up where information is missing or inconsistent.

Stage 3 Key tasks:

- i) Use data sources indicated in Table 4 to construct and further add to site lists/spreadsheets as indicated at Stage 2.
- ii) Map all sites ideally on 1:1250 map base for use in site survey and to help identify duplicates.
- iii) Resolve inconsistencies between different sources of information.

Stage 4 – Areas / Locations to be surveyed

5.10 Any 'new' sites or 'broad locations' to emerge as part of the Assessment (including any submitted as part of the consultation process) will be visited. It is not proposed to re-visit those sites identified as already within the planning process. This is because up to date site visits occur systematically as part of the local planning authority's statutory monitoring of planning permissions and as part of annual retail health check

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

surveys. Similarly, sites identified by the council's Urban Housing Capacity Study³ will not generally be re-visited as it is considered that such sites have already undergone a rigorous assessment of housing potential. The SHLAA will however review assumptions on these sites where necessary.

Stage 5: Carrying out the Survey

5.11 It is intended that the following characteristics and information will be recorded for each site / broad location to be surveyed:

- Site size;
- Site boundaries;
- Current use;
- Surrounding land use(s);
- Character of surrounding area;
- Physical constraints, e.g. access, steep slopes, flood potential, significant natural features and location of pylons;
- Initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for housing or housing as part of a mixed use development.

Stages 5 and 6 – Key tasks:

- Visit newly identified sites and broad locations and record site/location characteristics.
- Estimate housing potential for all sites.
- Review assumptions regarding housing potential for previously identified sites/ sites already within planning process.

Stage 6 – Estimating the housing potential of each site

5.12 Estimates of housing potential will be guided by the existing (adopted local plan for Brighton & Hove) and emerging (Core Strategy DPD) planning policy framework particularly with regard to housing density issues.

5.13 Sites may also be compared with 'sample' schemes which represent a form of development considered acceptable/desirable in a particular area. Sources used to inform this process will be the council's Urban Characterisation Study and also the Urban Housing Capacity Study.

Stage 7 – Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed

5.14 Assessing the 'suitability', 'availability' and 'achievability' of a site will provide information on which a judgement can be made as to whether a site can be considered deliverable, developable or not currently developable for housing

³ Urban Housing Capacity Study, Update 2005

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

development. PPS3 and the Practice Guidance on SHLAAs advises that to be considered:

- **‘Deliverable’** – a site should be available now and offer a suitable location for housing and a good prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within the next five years (see para. 54, PPS3).
- **‘Developable’** – a site should be in a suitable location for housing and there should be a reasonable prospect that it will be available for and could be developed at a specific point in time (see para. 56, PPS3).

5.15 It is proposed that an assessment of deliverability and developability will be made for all sites considered in the SHLAA irrespective of the level of housing provision that is actually needed over the plan period.

5.16 This part of the assessment will be undertaken, in the first instance, by the local planning authority to arrive at an ‘informed’ view of housing potential to guide consultation for the Refreshed Preferred Options Core Strategy (May 2008). A stakeholder event will be held at this point to engage with the Housing Partnerships referred to above and other key stakeholders to utilise their expertise and ensure the assessment is realistic and reflects current market conditions. The role of stakeholders will be to provide ‘validation’ of the SHLAA results and help to amend/make changes to the assessment where necessary (see SHLAA timetable for further information).

Assessing Suitability

5.17 A site is considered ‘suitable’ for housing development if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities.

5.18 Allocated sites in existing plans or sites with planning permission for housing will generally be suitable – although circumstances may have changed which would alter their suitability.

5.19 For other sites, the following factors will be used to assess site suitability now or in future:

- **Policy restrictions** – e.g. designations, protected areas, planning policy, corporate or community strategy policy;
- **Physical problems / limitations** – access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, pollution, contamination, etc.
- **Potential impacts** – effects upon landscape features and conservation
- **Environmental conditions** – which would be experienced by prospective residents.

Assessing availability for housing

5.20 A site is considered ‘available’ for development when on the best information available there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems such as

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. In effect this will mean that the site is controlled by a housing developer who has expressed an intention to develop or the landowner has expressed an intention to sell.

- 5.21 Where problems are identified the assessment will need to consider how and when problems can realistically be overcome.

Assessing the Achievability for Housing

- 5.22 A site is considered 'achievable' for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement to be made regarding the economic viability of the site and how it might be affected by:

- **Market factors** – such as adjacent uses, economic viability of existing, proposed and alternative uses in terms of land values, locality, market demand and projected rate sales;
- **Cost factors** – to include site preparation costs, any exceptional works necessary, planning standards and obligations, prospect of funding or investment to address identified constraints;
- **Delivery factors** – including developer phasing, build-out rates, whether there is a single or several developers offering different housing products and the size and capacity of the developer.

Overcoming Constraints

- 5.23 Where constraints have been identified, the SHLAA will also need to consider what action would be needed to remove them e.g. new infrastructure requirements, how to deal with fragmented ownership, environmental improvements, amending planning policy. Stakeholder involvement will be key in helping to determine the actions required to overcome constraints on 'difficult' sites.

Stages 6 and 7: Key tasks for site assessment and estimates of housing potential

- Initial site assessment and estimates of housing potential by planning officers.
- Consultation with stakeholders to further inform/amend initial site assessment and also to identify how to overcome constraints.
- Produce final site assessments and estimates of housing potential

Stage 8 – Review of Assessment

- 5.24 Following the assessment of site deliverability/developability as outlined above, the housing potential of all sites will be collated to produce an indicative housing trajectory that sets out how much housing can be provided and at what point in the

future. This is in accordance with national planning policy as set out in PPS3 (see paragraph 3.1 as set out).

Stage 8: key tasks

- Construct indicative housing trajectory for Core Strategy plan period.

Stage 9 – Identify and assess the housing potential of ‘broad locations’

5.25 The Practice Guidance describes ‘broad locations’ as areas where housing development is considered feasible and will be encouraged, but where specific sites cannot as yet be identified. The guidance accepts that options for, and the potential of, broad locations may be considered as part of the Assessment. An advantage of identifying broad locations is that it allows the community to be clearer about where future development may be directed and offers greater certainty for developers about where development may be encouraged.

5.26 In terms of Brighton & Hove, the following areas have been identified as ‘broad locations’ with potential for further housing development:

- Shoreham Harbour Development Area (identified in the council’s Core Strategy, Refreshed Preferred Options);
- Brighton Marina Development Area (identified in the council’s Core Strategy Refreshed Preferred Options).

5.27 Estimates of the potential housing supply will be developed for these broad locations having regard to:

- Any evidence underpinning the Regional Spatial Strategy – The South East Plan;
- The nature and scale of potential opportunities within the broad location; and
- Market conditions.

Stage 9: Key tasks

- Undertake assessment of housing potential for identified broad locations.

Stage 10 – Determining the housing potential of windfall development

5.28 Residential monitoring, including the analysis of past residential completion trends in the City, demonstrates that it would be appropriate to include an assessment of the likely contribution to the city’s future housing supply from ‘windfall’ sites⁴. It is worth noting, for example, that completions on small windfall sites (sites of less than 6 units) over the period 2002 – 2007 accounted for approximately 40% of the total amount of housing development within the City. A constrained settlement boundary

⁴ Windfall Site – sites which come forward for development that have not been previously identified.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

together with a highly pressured urban area presents substantial practical difficulties in terms of predicting the emergence of sites and the identification of deliverable sites. These are genuine 'local circumstances' that the council believes justify the retention of an element of windfall provision in the overall housing trajectory.

5.29 Common 'sources' of windfall development sites include:

- Subdivision of existing housing;
- Flats over shops;
- Empty homes;
- Intensification of existing areas;
- Redevelopment of existing housing;
- Conversion of commercial land/premises

5.30 In light of the significance of windfall development in Brighton & Hove it is proposed to demonstrate within the SHLAA the impact of including appropriate allowances for windfall development both on small windfall and large windfall sites. The allowances will need to take account of the following factors:

- Whether annual rates of windfall development within the city are likely to increase or decrease;
- Whether the patterns of windfall development are likely to remain the same, grow or decline; and
- Whether current market conditions are likely to stay the same, worsen or improve in the future.

Stage 10 – key tasks:

- Devise appropriate allowances for windfall development likely to contribute to and supplement housing supply in the period to 2026.
- Include allowances in overall Assessment in accordance with PPS3.

6.0 Outputs and Timetable

6.1 The total length of the study will be approximately 8 months using the following milestones:

Stages of SHLAA Work	Main Tasks/Output	Timetable
Stage 1 – Planning SHLAA	Stakeholder Consultation on Project Brief and Invite to suggest Sites	November/December 07
Stages 2 and 3	Deck Top Reviews, Data Sources and Mapping of Sites	December 07 – January 08
Stages 4 and 5	Site Survey Work	Jan 08 – End Feb 08
Stages 6 , 7, 9, 10	Estimates of Housing Potential and Initial Site Assessment Work	Jan 08 – End Feb 08

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Project Brief

Stage 8 – Initial Findings	Collation of Findings and Interim Informed Report	March – April 08
Stages 6, 7, 9, 10	Stakeholder Input/Validation of Results	May 08
Stage 8 – Final Report	Final Report	June 08