

Appendix 2 Stage 2 Suitability Criteria

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

September 2017

Suitability Assessment

1.1 Constraints are factors which affect the suitability of a site in terms of limiting or restricting the ability of a site to be developed. In some instances constraints will prevent development, whilst in others might limit or influence the type, form or capacity of a site. The assessment of constraints has considered factors within the following themes:

- Landscape & Natural Beauty
- Access to local amenities and community integration
- Flooding
- Biodiversity and Ecology
- Heritage and Archaeology
- Land Use (Agricultural land, Minerals and Waste, Open Space, Public Rights of Way, and Utilities)
- Pollution – Noise, Air and Odour
- Topography
- Transport & Infrastructure

1.2 The section below sets out these factors in detail, which will be considered through a combination of desktop studies and site visits. Appendix 4 identifies the proforma for how the criteria will be used.

Landscape & Natural Beauty

1.3 The impact on the AONB is one of the most significant constraints to consider for developing sites within the AONB. The analysis of each site will take into account the character, sensitivity and value of the existing landscape and the potential impacts of development, such as; physical impacts on topography and landscape features; visibility and appearance in public and private views; visibility and appearance in views of heritage assets; relationship with existing urban built form; impacts on the perceived separation of settlements; result in loss of tranquillity through the introduction of lighting, noise, or traffic movement and whether development would result in an abrupt change of landscape character. A site visit will be used to determine as initial assessment for Part 1 of the assessment. If the site passes Part 1 then a more detailed landscape assessment will be carried out as Part 2 of the assessment.

Access to local amenities and community integration

1.4 Access to local amenities and integrating new development into the existing community is an important one in ensure future development is sustainable. Development should encourage walking rather than the use of a car to local amenities. Walking routes should provide safe and

attractive routes for pedestrians, such as footpaths which are overlooked. The location of new development should be well connected to the existing community to ensure it can be integrated into the existing environment.

Flooding - fluvial or surface water

- 1.5 Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. Where development is necessary mitigation measures should be used to ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere¹. The Council will consult with the Environment Agency in relation to areas identified as being at risk of flooding. The assessment will consider fluvial flooding and surface water flooding. As well as considering the present flood risk, the potential for development to add to flood risk due to its impermeable surfaces will also be taken into account.

Biodiversity and Ecology

- 1.6 The impacts of built development on biodiversity are complex and may potentially have effects on individual species, habitats, landscape permeability and species dispersal. Similarly impacts may be direct and physical or indirect through effects such as pollution, disturbance or incidental through secondary works such as supporting infrastructure.
- 1.7 The analysis will consider whether protected species and habitats are found in or nearby a site. The following designations will be considered:
 - Ancient Woodland
 - Local and National Nature Reserve
 - Local Geological Site
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats
 - Biodiversity Opportunity Areas
 - Biological Notification Sites

Heritage and Archaeology

- 1.8 Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Significant harm can be caused through loss or alterations to heritage assets, including the setting of heritage asset. Plans should have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.

¹ In accordance with paragraph 100 of the NPPF

1.9 Heritage and archaeological features of a site will be assessed by identifying if the following features are present within or nearby to the site:

- Schedule Ancient Monuments;
- Historic Parks and Gardens;
- Listed Buildings (grade I,II* and II);
- Setting of Nationally Listed Building;
- Locally Listed Building;
- Conservation Areas;
- Geological Notification Area; and
- Archaeological Notification Areas.

Land Use

1.10 As a starting point, relevant planning histories will be reviewed to identify whether any development has been permitted in the past. A site visit will be used to determine the sites current use.

Agricultural Land

1.11 The best and most versatile agricultural land is defined as that land lying with Grades 1, 2 and 3a. NPPF (paragraph 112) recommends that the value of best and most versatile agricultural land should be taken into account and priority should be to use poorer quality land in preference to high quality land.

Minerals and Waste

1.12 Buckinghamshire County Council is the authority responsible for allocating land for the provision of minerals and the disposal of waste. Where a site is identified within an existing allocation for minerals and waste or safeguarded for future use for minerals and waste extraction, the site will not normally be found suitable.

Open Space

1.13 Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Existing green space designations (policy DM12 of the Delivery Site Allocations, 2013), sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields will not normally be built on unless it can be

demonstrated to be surplus to requirement, be replaced elsewhere or needs for the development clearly outweigh the loss².

- 1.14 Local Green Space Designations are areas of special protection which rule out new development other than in very special circumstances³ although currently there are no Local Green Space designations within Wycombe District.

Public Rights of Way

- 1.15 The NPPF encourages the protection and enhancement of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) (paragraph 75). Development not precluded in area traversed by PRoW but would need to be accommodated within the site design.

Utilities

- 1.16 The availability of utilities, including water and sewerage, gas and electric infrastructure will need to be taken into account. The following matters will be considered, some of which may preclude development depending on the extent to which the utility covers a site and its potential impact:

- High pressure gas and oil pipelines
- Water and sewerage pipelines
- National grid transmission lines
- Immovable electronic communication links, such as high speed fibre optic cables

- 1.17 Infrastructure providers will be consulted to identify whether there are any potential capacity issues or immovable infrastructure which could prevent development.

Land Contamination

- 1.18 The previous use of a site will be considered to identify whether there is likely to be any land contamination. Should this be raised as an issue, further assessment will be required to identify whether land contamination is an issue before a site is considered suitable.

Pollution – Noise, Air, Odour

² In accordance with paragraph 74 of the NPPF

³ In accordance with paragraph 77 of the NPPF

- 1.19 Pollution is anything that affects the quality of land, air, water or soils, which might lead to an adverse impact on human health, the natural environment or general amenity. Pollution can arise from a range of emissions, including smoke, fumes, gases, dust, steam, odour, noise and light.
- 1.20 The effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, the natural environment or general amenity, and the potential sensitivity of the area or proposed development to adverse effects from pollution, should be taken into account (NPPF, paragraph 120). The impact of pollution will vary depending on the nature of the pollution. Where this is considered to be an issue this may prevent future development.

Topography

- 1.21 Sites will be assessed to consider their topography. Sites which have steep sloping slope may not be considered suitable for development, particularly for employment which typically requires areas of flat land for larger units, or for example, walkways of a very steep gradients will not be accessible to people with disabilities.

Transport and Infrastructure

- 1.22 Sustainable transport has an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel, however recognising different communities will have different opportunities to maximise sustainable transport, varying from urban to rural areas.
- 1.23 All the sites in the assessment are likely to add to the traffic levels on roads and therefore it is essential that these impacts are identified to ensure appropriate mitigation measures can be put in place. The following will be considered for each site:
- Existing land use
 - Are there opportunities for sustainable transport modes
 - Is there safe and suitable access to and from the site
 - Can any improvements be made to the wider transport network
 - Are there opportunities for pedestrian and cycle movements
 - What are the cumulative impacts if the site was developed
- 1.24 Sites which meet the previous stages of assessment will be fed into transport modelling as part of a wider county and district wide transport modelling exercise. Comments will be sought from the Highway Authority

(Bucks County Council) on the potential impact of the sites including on whether a proposed development is likely to lead to a requirement for additional transport infrastructure.

Suitability Proforma

1.25 The below sets out a proforma for how each constraint is considered and the level of constraint for each issue:

Constraint	Detail	Commentary
Location		
Tier of settlement within Settlement Hierarchy	Sites at tier 4 and above are considered as the more sustainable settlements to consider future development allocations	Aligns with paragraph 151 of the NPPF, which emphasises that Local Plans must be prepared with the objective of contribution to the achievement of sustainable development. NPPF paragraph 84 identifies development should be channelled towards urban areas for towns and villages within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Note that the relative sustainability of each settlement will vary and this will need to be taken into account in the overall conclusions on sites.
Flooding		
Flood Zone 3a and 3b	All land within Flood Zone 3b to be discounted.	Significant constraint. NPPF (paragraph 100) emphasises that the sequential test should be applied to avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood risk. A high probability of flooding within Flood Zone 3b and 3a, therefore not suitable for residential or employment development.
Flood zones 1 and 2	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Minor constraint. Land has low to medium probability of flooding and therefore in accordance with sequential approach more suitable for development than land classified as flood zone 3a or 3b.
Biodiversity and Ecology		
Ancient Woodland	All land designated as Ancient Woodland to be discounted.	Aligns with (paragraph 118), which accords a high level of protection to Ancient Woodland unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.
Local and National Nature Reserve	All land within National or Local Nature Reserves to be discounted.	Aligns with NPPF (118), which states nationally and locally important nature sites are unlikely to be desirable due to ecological interests.
Local Geological Site	All land within the LGS to be discounted	Aligns with NPPF (paragraph 118), which states that Locally important nature sites are unlikely to be desirable due to geological interests.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	All land within SSSI to be discounted.	Aligns with NPPF (paragraph 118), which states that development within SSSIs would not normally be permitted unless exceptional circumstances could be demonstrated. SSSIs protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Given their role in nature conservation, high unlikely to be suitable for development.
Special Area of Conservation	All land within SAC to be discounted.	Area accorded high level of protection under the European Union's Habitat Directive. Development within a SAC considered inappropriate for development.

(SAC)		
BAP Priority Habitats	All land with Priority Habitat to be discounted.	Legally-protected species, UK BAP Priority species and species defined by S41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).
Biodiversity Opportunity Areas	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) are the most important areas for biodiversity in the county for biodiversity. They identify where the greatest opportunities for habitat creation and restoration lie.
Biological notification sites	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	These are local designations which need to be tested further to identify whether there are any biodiversity implications for the area.
Landscape		
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	All land within an AONB if 'major development' to be discounted.	Aligns with NPPF (paragraph 116 and 115), which states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONB. Development within these areas should be exceptional.
Local Landscape Area or Area of Attractive Landscape	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Moderate constraint as new residential development would need to consider the sensitivity of the landscape to change. Valued landscapes should be protected and enhanced (NPPF paragraph 109).
Topography	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Topography may be a constraint depending on the steepness of the slope, for example, walkways at these gradients will not be accessible to people with disabilities or may not be suitable for larger employment units.
Heritage and Archaeology		
Scheduled ancient Monument	All Scheduled Monuments discounted.	Aligns with NPPF (paragraph 132), which states substantial harm or loss to Scheduled Monuments should be wholly exceptional. Therefore considered inappropriate for development.
Historic Parks and Garden	All land within designation to be discounted.	Aligns with NPPF (paragraph 132), which states great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Therefore considered inappropriate for development.
Grade I and Grade II* Listed Building	Land within Grade I and Grade II* Listed Building to be discounted	Significant constraint. Statutory protection is provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990. Harm or loss of a Grade II* or Grade I building should be wholly exceptional (NPPF paragraph 132).
Grade II Listed Building	Land within Grade II Listed Building to be discounted	Moderate constraint. Statutory protection is provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990. Harm or loss of a Grade II building should be exceptional (NPPF paragraph 132).
Setting of Nationally	To be assessed on a site by site	Moderate constraint as new residential development would need to consider the sensitivity of the Listed Building setting

Listed Building	basis.	to change.
Locally Listed Building	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Minor constraint as new residential development would need to consider the sensitivity of the locally listed building to change.
Conservation Area	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Moderate constraint. Statutory protection is provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990. Development not precluded within Conservation Area but unlikely to offer significant development potential.
Geological notification sites	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Moderate constraint. Locally important areas of potential archaeological heritage. Development is not precluded but likely to require the implementation of the archaeological assessment and mitigation measures set out within the NPPF (paragraphs 128 and 129).
Archaeological Notification Sites	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Moderate constraint. Locally important areas of potential archaeological heritage. Development is not precluded but likely to require the implementation of the archaeological assessment and mitigation measures set out within the NPPF (paragraphs 128 and 129).
Land Use		
Agricultural Land	Grades 1 and 2	Significant constraint, as NPPF (paragraph 112) recommends that the value of best and most versatile agricultural land should be taken into account and priority should be to use poorer quality land in preference to high quality land.
	Grade 3	Moderate constraint in line with NPPF (paragraph 112), as summarised above.
	Grade 4 and 5	No constraint. This is the poorest quality agricultural land and therefore most suitable for development in line with NPPF (paragraph 112) as summarised above.
Minerals and Waste	Minerals Safeguarded Area	Significant constraint. Site unlikely to be available for development until minerals have been worked. NPPF encourages the prior extraction of minerals, where non-minerals development must take place (paragraph 143).
	Area of Search	
Open Space	Local Green Space Designation	Significant constraint. Paragraph 78 of the NPPF identifies a Local Green Space designation should be consistent with policies for Green Belt.
	Green Space Designation	Moderate to significant constraint unless it can be demonstrated the site is surplus to requirement or the provision could be replaced elsewhere (NPPF paragraph 74). To be assessed on a site by site basis.
	Green Infrastructure corridor	
	Natural and semi-natural green space	
	Amenity green space	

	River Thames corridor and water course buffer	Significant constraint. Rivers makes a unique contribution to the environment and is one of the key landscape features in the district. The opportunities for public access to this resource should be maintained.
Public Rights of Way	Footpath, bridleway or cycle path.	Minor constraint. NPPF encourages the protection and enhancement of public rights of way (paragraph 75). Development not precluded in area traversed by PRoW but would need to be accommodated in site design.
Utilities	High pressure gas and oil Pipeline	Moderate constraint. The allowable proximity of new development to high pressure gas pipelines, oil water or sewerage pipelines varies according to the size, depth, material and condition of the pipe. There are no definitive distances for such pipelines as each is assessed on an individual basis. Land within the consultation zone for a pipeline may be unsuitable for development.
	Water and sewerage pipelines	
	National grid transmission lines	Significant constraint. National grid transmission lines, immovable communications links or land safeguarded for HS2 are likely to result in the land being unsuitable for development.
	Immovable electronic communication	
	Land safeguarded for High Speed 2	
Pollution		
Noise, Air and Odour	To be assessed on a site by site basis.	Moderate constraint. The NPPF paragraph 120 identifies the effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, the natural environment or general amenity, and the potential sensitivity of the area or proposed development to adverse effects from pollution, should be taken into account.

