
WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN 2021 - 2037 SUBMISSION DRAFT



STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT 2021

FEBRUARY 2022

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND POLICY BACKGROUND

1.1 This report presents the findings of the latest update to the Wirral Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, using a base date of 1 April 2021 (SHLAA 2021). It supersedes the published 2019 assessment by reviewing the status and conclusions previously reached for sites already within the SHLAA process and assessing new sites which have emerged.

1.2 This SHLAA 2021 report is structured around the following sections:

- **Introduction and Policy Background** - Explains what the SHLAA is and references the national and local policy context for the preparation of this report.
- **Assessment Methodology** - Explains the methodology which has guided the assessment, including the assumptions which have been applied as part of individual site assessments, where relevant.
- **Assessment Review** - Presents a summary of the core outputs and the wider findings from the assessment.
- **Appendices** - Presents further supplementary information related to the principal findings of this report.

Policy Background

1.3 This SHLAA 2021 has been produced in accordance with paragraphs 68 and 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ regarding identifying land for homes and maintaining supply and delivery and in accordance with National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) on housing and economic land availability assessments².

1.4 The NPPF indicates that local planning authorities should prepare a SHLAA in order to identify and update annually a supply of specific, deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their local housing need, and to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, 11-15 years, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability.

1.5 The NPPF also states that: *“To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without necessary delay.”* (NPPF paragraph 60).

1.6 The core outputs of this SHLAA update for Wirral therefore include:

- A list of all sites considered, cross-referenced to their locations on maps.
- An assessment of each site in terms of its suitability for development, availability, and potential deliverability and when a site can be realistically expected to be developed.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, July, 2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

² National Planning Practice Guidance on housing and economic land availability assessment - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment> (last updated July 2019)

- The potential quantity of development that could be delivered on each site, including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how any barriers to delivery could be overcome and when.

1.7 The findings of this assessment has been used to inform the local housing supply to be included in the Council's emerging Local Plan. The NPPF requires local planning authorities to include a trajectory illustrating the expected rate of housing delivery over the Plan period, and all plans should consider whether it is appropriate to set out the anticipated rate of development for specific sites. The supply of specific deliverable sites should, in addition, include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:

- A. 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; or
- B. 10% where the local planning authority wishes to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites through an annual position statement or recently adopted plan, to account for any fluctuations in the market during that year; or
- C. 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply, from November 2018 measured against the Housing Delivery Test (NPPF Paragraph 74).

Status of the SHLAA

1.8 The SHLAA does not allocate sites for development. It assesses whether sites are likely to be suitable for housing; identifies any potential constraints to development and considers how they might be overcome; and provides, alongside other studies, information to inform the land allocations to be included in the emerging Wirral Local Plan.

1.9 The inclusion or exclusion of a site in the SHLAA should not therefore be taken as an endorsement or rejection of any future development, which will need to be determined through the policies to be included in the Council's emerging Local Plan or through the determination of individual planning applications.

2.0 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

2.1 The structure of this SHLAA update report has been prepared in line with the SHLAA process set out in NPPG as set out in Figure 1.

Stage 1: Site Identification

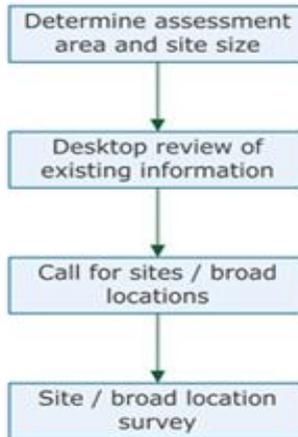
2.2 The purpose of this stage is to identify and set down the geographic area of study and the types of sites that will be assessed.

2.3 National guidance states that plan makers should assess a range of different site sizes; from small scale sites to opportunities for larger scale developments. All sites capable of delivering 5 or more dwellings should be assessed, but plan makers may also wish to consider even smaller sites where appropriate (NPPG, Paragraph 010 Reference ID: 3-010-20140306 refers).

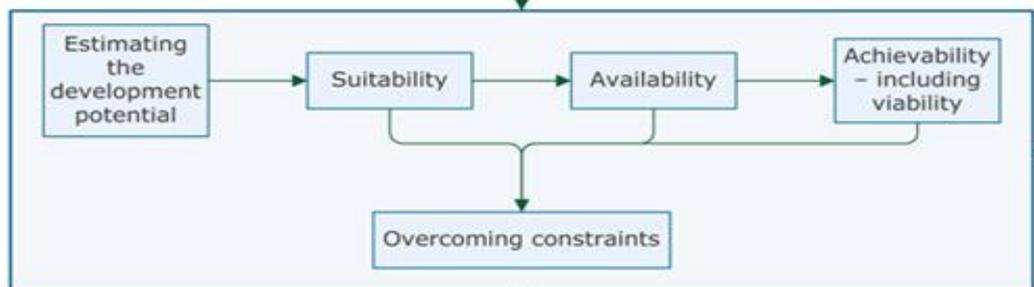
2.4 The geographical area of this assessment is land within the boundaries of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral.

Figure 1 – The SHLAA Process³

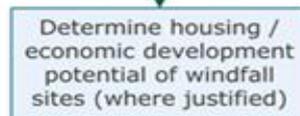
Stage 1 - Site / broad location identification



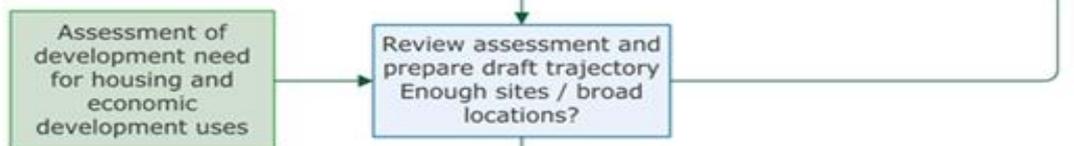
Stage 2 - Site / broad location assessment



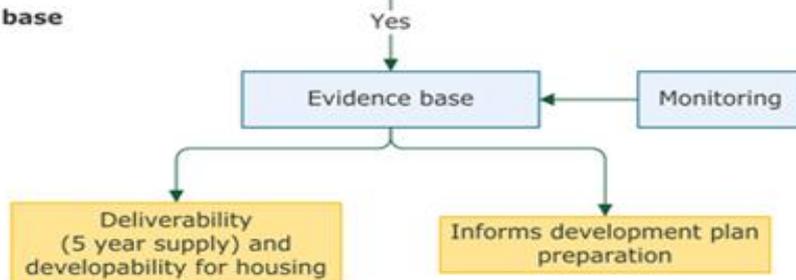
Stage 3 - Windfall assessment



Stage 4 - Assessment review



Stage 5 - Final evidence base



³ National Planning Practice Guidance 005 Reference ID: 3-005-20190722

- 2.5 Small sites make a significant contribution to Wirral's housing land supply; therefore, a minimum site size threshold has not been applied in the SHLAA 2021 and sites of all sizes have been assessed.
- 2.6 Sites have been identified from the following sources of supply, to ensure that as wide a range as possible of potential sites has been identified for assessment.
- Relevant sites contained in previous versions of the SHLAA (2008, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016) the draft SHLAA 2018 (unpublished) and SHLAA 2019.
 - Sites already subject to the planning process including refused, lapsed or withdrawn applications.
 - Sites submitted for consideration by landowners, developers, or by members of the public as part of the preparation of the Wirral Local Plan, including a 'Call for Sites' exercise conducted as part of the Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation.
 - Other sites proposed to be included on the statutory Register of Brownfield Land.
 - Vacant sites currently allocated or designated for employment or commercial development in the existing Unitary Development Plan for Wirral.
 - Sites identified by the Council or by its public sector partners for potential future disposal.
 - Urban open space not in active use for recreation or subject to a designation for protection from development.
 - Any additional available sites made known to the Council through other partnership working, development management and site disposal processes.
- 2.7 Sites that benefit from a current planning permission have not been included within the site-specific assessments set out within this report, as it has already been determined that they are capable of delivering residential development. Deliverable sites with planning permission have however been included in the final calculation of the future land supply.

Site Surveys

- 2.8 Site assessments have been carried out in line with the advice provided in NPPG, by checking and recording the following characteristics:
- Site size, boundaries, and location.
 - Current land use and character.
 - Land uses and character of surrounding area.
 - Physical constraints such as access, contamination, land contours, flood risk, natural features of significance, location of infrastructure and utilities.
 - Potential environmental constraints.
 - Consistency with existing Development Plan or emerging Local Plan policies and proposals.
 - Proximity to services and other social infrastructure, such as public transport.
 - Initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for a particular type of use or as part of a mixed-use development.
- 2.9 Site analysis was a predominantly desk-based exercise, using the most current GIS base maps available, google maps and street view photography. These desk-based exercises were

supplemented with local knowledge from officers, councillors and site visits for selected sites to establish any additional detail needed.

- 2.10 Each site identified has been individually mapped and assigned a unique SHLAA reference number. Those rolled forward from a previous SHLAA have retained their SHLAA reference for continuity unless there has been a change in the site boundary.

Green Belt

- 2.11 Just under half (45%, 7,317 hectares) of the land area of Wirral is currently designated as Green Belt in the Council's existing Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Proposed sites that are located within the Green Belt have not been assessed for their residential capacity as development on these sites is restricted by national policy and exceptional circumstances must be fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans, including the full examination of all other reasonable, before Green Belt boundaries can be altered (NPPF, paragraphs 140 and 141 refer).
- 2.12 Sites in the Green Belt have therefore been identified as "unsuitable" and have not been subject to any further site-specific assessment. A list of the sites affected is provided in Appendix 6.

Broad Locations for Growth

- 2.13 The emerging Wirral Local Plan proposes to include a number of broad locations for growth, in line with NPPF paragraph 68b.
- 2.14 These broad locations reflect the focus of emerging proposals for future comprehensive regeneration.
- 2.15 Regeneration Areas identified as part of the emerging Birkenhead 2040 Regeneration Framework⁴ or as part of the emerging Local Plan, together with their area codes, currently include:
- **Seacombe Corridor Regeneration Area (RA1):** Land to the North of the Wallasey Docks and between the main route to New Brighton and Seacombe Promenade.
 - **Scotts Quay Regeneration Area (RA2):** Land to the south of Seacombe Ferry Terminal and to the East of Birkenhead Road, between Birkenhead Road and the Twelve Quays Ferry Terminal.
 - **Birkenhead Waterfront Regeneration Area (RA3):** Land within the Mersey waterfront area stretching from Cammell Lairds in the south through to Egerton Dock and Tower Road in the north.
 - **Birkenhead Central Regeneration Area (RA4):** Land in and around Birkenhead Town Centre, including Birkenhead Market, Europa Boulevard, Hamilton Square.
 - **Hind Street & St Werburgh's Regeneration Area (RA5):** An area of cleared, vacant land and/or under-utilised land to the south-east of Birkenhead Town Centre.

⁴ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-report-68>

- **Wirral Waters Regeneration Area (RA6):** A long term private-led regeneration project within the Birkenhead docklands, where major re-development has already been approved as part of a series of outline and detailed planning applications;
- **Hamilton Park Regeneration Area (RA7):** The area between Birkenhead Park and Wirral Waters, previously identified as one of the 'partnership areas' for Wirral Waters;
- **Northside Regeneration Area (RA8):** The main employment areas in southern Wallasey, to the north of the Dock Road at Poulton and Seacombe.
- **Liscard Regeneration Area (RA9):** Land in and around Liscard Town Centre.
- **New Brighton Regeneration Area (RA10):** Land in and around the resort of New Brighton including its waterfront promenade.
- **New Ferry Regeneration Area (RA11):** Land in and around the existing town centre, including sites that were affected by a previous gas explosion.

2.16 The estimated capacity of these broad locations will be identified in the emerging Local Plan, subject to the preparation of a series of neighbourhood frameworks and master plans, which will consider the future of each of the identified areas in more detail.

2.17 It has not therefore been considered appropriate to consider sites within these areas in any further detail in this current SHLAA, until more detailed site and area specific proposals are available, particularly as some of these areas are currently designated for alternative uses.

2.18 A list of the sites that have been affected by these proposals is provided in Appendix 3 but no further analysis has been undertaken for the purpose of identifying their potential contribution to the future land supply. Sites within these areas will also be excluded from the calculation of the windfall allowance for the Local Plan, to avoid any double counting.

2.19 The contribution from broad locations will therefore be in addition to any capacity identified within this current SHLAA update. Once approved, any emerging new build proposals will be considered in future SHLAA updates, in the normal way.

2.20 Further information will be included within the Housing Delivery Strategy, which will accompany the publication of the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

Re-designation of Employment Land

2.21 The Council appointed Avison Young to consider the potential to re-designate land currently designated for employment uses to accommodate new housing development, while ensuring the appropriate provision of land for employment.

2.22 An updated Employment Land and Premises Study was completed in February 2021⁵ and its conclusions have also been used to guide decisions on individual sites within this SHLAA update.

⁵ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-report-65>

Open Space

- 2.23 Up-to-date assessments of the need for land to be retained as open space have also been undertaken and the emerging conclusions of the Wirral Open Space Assessment 2021; Wirral Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy; and Local Green Space Designations: Review of Sites have also been used to guide the findings of this SHLAA update.

Flood Risk

- 2.24 The Wirral Level One Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2021 has been used to inform decisions related to flood risk, where relevant.

Emerging Local Plan Allocations

- 2.25 Sites that have been identified as having the greatest potential for delivery in line with the Council's preferred spatial strategy have been considered for potential allocation in the Local Plan and an up-to-date assessment of the potential contribution of these sites towards the future land supply is set out within this SHLAA update.
- 2.26 Further information will be included within the Housing Delivery Strategy, which will accompany the publication of the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

Stage 2: Site Assessment

- 2.27 The purpose of stage 2 of a SHLAA is to estimate the development potential of each site or broad location. This stage considers the numbers of homes that can be accommodated on a site, and the point in time when they might be completed.

Estimating the Development Potential

- 2.28 National guidance states that when assessing development potential, plan makers should seek to make the most efficient use of land in line with policies set out in the NPPF. Development potential is a significant factor that affects the 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 (PPG, Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 3-016-20190722).

Site Assessment & Surveys

- 2.29 Each site has been assessed for 'suitability', 'availability' and 'achievability' including whether the site is likely to be economically viable. This provides the information on which a judgement

can be made as to whether a site can be considered 'deliverable' within the next five years⁶ or 'developable' over a longer period⁷.

2.30 The technical evidence used for the site assessments can be found in Appendix 1, which have been used alongside a range of secondary data sources, including local and national mapping data, updates from relevant Council Officers and information obtained through site visits.

Assessment of 'Suitability'

2.31 A site is deemed suitable for housing development, if it offers a suitable location for development, now or in the future and would contribute towards the creation of a sustainable mixed community. When assessing a site's suitability for residential development, policy, physical and environmental constraints have been considered. NPPG also refers to the following factors:

- *national policy;*
- *appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed;*
- *contribution to regeneration priority areas;*
- *potential impacts including the effect upon landscapes including landscape features, nature and heritage conservation.*

(Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 3-018-20190722)

2.32 Table 2.1 lists some of the more likely constraints, impacts and issues, with an explanation as to how these have been considered for the purposes of this SHLAA update.

2.33 Where appropriate, Table 2.1 also provides an explanation of how such constraints and impacts could be typically overcome. As the current UDP is due to be replaced by the emerging Local Plan, the opportunity to review development plan policy has also been considered when making a judgement about the potential likelihood of being able to overcome an existing policy constraint. Particular focus has been given to emerging policies for employment, open space and flood risk, which now benefit from more recently prepared evidence.

2.34 Each site has been assessed to identify its overall 'suitability' for new housing development based on the information collected in accordance with paragraph .

2.35 Only sites with no apparent constraints or with constraints that are likely to be easily overcome have been deemed 'suitable' and added to the future housing trajectory. Sites where further

⁶ Deliverable: To be considered deliverable, sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. In particular: a) sites which do not involve major development and have planning permission, and all sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (for example because they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans). b) where a site has outline planning permission for major development, has been allocated in a development plan, has a grant of permission in principle, or is identified on a brownfield register, it should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years (NPPF Annex 2: Glossary).

⁷ Developable: To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged (NPPF Annex 2: Glossary).

investigation would be required before the principle of development can be accepted have been deemed 'uncertain' and have not been added to the calculation of the future housing land supply.

Table 2.1 Typical Constraints

Constraint	Solution
Physical Constraints	
<p>Access Sites which are subject to ransom strips or land-locked sites where no vehicular access can be gained have normally been discounted on the basis that they are unlikely to be deliverable. Other sites that maybe constrained by limited or difficult access have been considered on their merits.</p>	<p>Where there was evidence or a reasonable likelihood that a solution to an access constraint could be achieved then a site has been considered suitable, but this could also affect the suitability, viability or timing of delivery of the site.</p>
<p>Infrastructure Infrastructure covers a wide array of issues. Within a relatively compact built area, most areas /sites are well served in infrastructure terms, but some sites may need special consideration before they can be confirmed as suitable within a particular time period.</p>	<p>Larger and more complex sites and proposals will require further investigation, such as the preparation of a wider masterplan in consultation with relevant agencies, which could affect the viability or timing of delivery of the site.</p>
<p>Drainage and Flood Risk Sites located within Flood Zones 3 or which are subject to surface water flooding (based on the latest SFRA) will need a more detailed site assessment. Any flood risk would need to be properly assessed and mitigated before the site could be deemed suitable for housing development.</p>	<p>Most types of flood risk can potentially be addressed through design and engineering solutions in consultation with relevant statutory agencies but may impact upon the suitability, viability or developable area of a site and could affect the timing of delivery. A site-specific flood risk assessment and appropriate mitigation would normally be required before development could be permitted.</p>
<p>Hazards and Risk Sites within a Health and Safety Executive consultation zone for development near notifiable hazards have been deemed unsuitable due to the likelihood of placing the safety of future occupiers at unacceptable risk.</p>	<p>Further site investigation or hazard mitigation, in consultation with relevant statutory agencies would be needed before the site could be considered suitable.</p>
<p>Ground Conditions Pollution or poor ground quality can affect all or a very small part of the site and is often related to a previous land use. The identification of this as a constraint does not automatically mean ground quality issues are present but indicates the need for potential further assessment.</p>	<p>If ground quality issues do exist, remedial measures are normally possible although this could affect the suitability, viability or timing of delivery of a site. Where relevant this has been considered as part of individual site assessments alongside any known proposals for any necessary remediation.</p>

Constraint	Solution
<p>Trees and Woodlands</p> <p>The presence of trees or Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on a site does not necessarily mean a site would be discounted. Small clusters of trees and individual TPOs can often have development successfully designed around them and the trees themselves can often form the basis of landscaped boundaries or open space within a site.</p> <p>Ancient Woodland is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600AD. The NPPF (paragraph 180c) states that planning permission should normally be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees, so all such sites have been deemed unsuitable.</p>	<p>A site is unlikely to be discounted unless there is significant TPO coverage, which could reduce the developable area of a site and affect its suitability. A detailed tree survey is normally required to assess the potential impact of any future development before development could be permitted.</p>
<p>Heritage Assets</p> <p>Sites likely to affect an identified heritage asset have normally been deemed unsuitable due to the unknown impact of development. The presence of a heritage asset does not always prevent development, but the type or nature of the constraint would need to be addressed and mitigated before the site could be deemed suitable for housing development.</p>	<p>A Heritage Impact Assessment would be required, prepared in consultation with relevant agencies, to assess the potential impact of any future development before development could be permitted.</p>
<p>Biodiversity and Geology Assets</p> <p>Sites likely to affect identified biodiversity or geological assets have normally been deemed unsuitable due to the unknown impact of development. The presence of a biodiversity or geological asset does not always prevent development, but the type or nature of the constraint would need to be addressed and mitigated before the site could be deemed suitable for housing development.</p>	<p>A specialist site survey and assessment would be required, to assess the potential impact of any future development before development could be permitted.</p>
<p>Agricultural Land</p> <p>The NPPF (Paragraph 174b) states that planning policies and decisions should recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The latest evidence suggests that the majority of Wirral's agricultural land is capable of being best and most versatile land⁸.</p>	<p>A soil survey and economic impact assessment would be required before development could be permitted.</p>

⁸ Wirral Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019 <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-report-54>

Constraint	Solution
Other Constraints	
<p>Designated Green Belt Sites within the Green Belt are normally considered unsuitable as they conflict with national planning policy (NPPF, paragraph 147) and their suitability would need to take account of wider considerations.</p>	<p>Green Belt boundaries can only be altered through the Local Plan, where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified and all other reasonable options have been fully examined. Proposals on previously developed land would need additional assessment under NPPF paragraph 149g before development could be permitted.</p>
<p>Designated Employment Land Sites designated for commercial or employment uses have normally been considered unsuitable, as their suitability would need to be established through re-designation in the Local Plan or through a planning application.</p>	<p>Re-designation through the Local Plan process or following an appropriate employment land assessment would be required before development could be permitted.</p>
<p>Designated Recreational Land Sites designated for protection for recreation or open space have normally been considered unsuitable, as their suitability would need to be established through re-designation in the Local Plan or through a planning application.</p>	<p>Re-designation through the Local Plan process or following an appropriate needs assessment would be required before development could be permitted.</p>
<p>Regeneration Projects Suitability of sites that have been identified as part of emerging or approved regeneration proposals have been assessed on the merits of the site and its broader location and policy context. Progress of the initiative and the timing and likelihood of delivery have also been taken into account.</p>	<p>Re-designation through the Local Plan process or following appropriate assessments or studies would be required before development could be permitted, if the land was not already identified for residential development.</p>

Overcoming Constraints

- 2.36 NPPG states “*where constraints have been identified, the assessment will need to consider what action could be taken to overcome them. Examples of constraints include policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted or emerging development plan, which may affect the suitability of the site, and unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips tenancies or operational requirements of landowners, which may affect the availability of the site.*” (Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 3-021-20190722)
- 2.37 Sites which are highly constrained, where constraints are unlikely to be easily lifted or where new housing development is unlikely to be accepted have been deemed as ‘unsuitable’ or “Uncertain” and have not been identified as ‘deliverable’ or ‘developable’ or added to the future housing land supply.

Assessment of 'Availability'

2.38 To be considered 'available' for development NPPG indicates that a site should be free of legal or ownership problems and that a willing landowner or developer should be in control of the site (Paragraph: 019 Reference ID: 3-019-20190722).

2.39 The decision on whether a site was considered 'available' has been based on the following factors:

- Whether the site was vacant or in active use.
- Whether the site required some sort of prior treatment or assessment or decision or could be developed now.
- Whether the site was free of any legal, ownership and tenancy constraints.

2.40 As a detailed assessment of legal and ownership issues is outside the scope of a SHLAA, land ownership constraints have been examined in the following ways:

- Information submitted in response to public consultation or through 'call for sites' exercises.
- Determining whether a site is in active use and how likely it is that this will cease, and whether the site is likely to be available for other uses.
- Identifying the likely disposal date and decision-making process for any Council or other public sector land.
- Ownership information from planning application forms.
- Whether a site is owned by a developer, has had developer interest or has been marketed for sale.
- By contacting landowners to establish whether they are interested in the possibility of development and when their site is likely to become available for development.

2.41 Where potential problems have been identified, sites have been deemed 'uncertain' or 'unavailable', depending on the nature of the information available and their likely implications for the future availability of the site.

2.42 The availability of sites where the intentions of the landowner are unknown or no further information has been able to be obtained has been deemed 'uncertain' and the site has not been included in the future housing land supply.

Assessment of 'Achievability'

2.43 NPPG advises that a site can be considered achievable where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. It identifies that achievability is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of a developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period (Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 3-020-20190722).

2.44 The assessment of viability has been updated from the Local Plan Baseline Viability Study undertaken by Keppie Massie in November 2018. As not all the results of the emerging Wirral Local Plan CIL and Viability Assessment, prepared by AspinallVerdi, were available at the time of assessment, a slightly modified approach has been taken based on a synthesis of the initial Keppie Massie Baseline and the emerging viability zones prepared by AspinallVerdi based on

the latest market evidence. Where AspinallVerdi have also been preparing site specific viability assessments for strategic sites, these have also been used.

2.45 Further information will be included within the Housing Delivery Strategy and within the final Wirral Local Plan CIL and Viability Assessment 2022, which will accompany the publication of the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

2.46 The findings of the initial Keppie Massie Baseline and emerging AspinallVerdi viability zones, have been used to guide the judgements made regarding achievability of SHLAA sites, in conjunction with the following considerations:

- Whether there is active developer interest in the site.
- Whether similar sites have been successfully developed in recent years.
- Whether there are any known abnormal development costs.
- Whether any active regeneration activity is expected to take place within the area.
- Whether the site has any known grant funding or financial support to make it viable.

2.47 The planning background of a site, such as a history of unimplemented or refused permissions has also been considered.

Estimating Potential Yield/Capacity

2.48 The potential number of dwellings that can be delivered on a site is influenced by the site size, the net developable area and the potential density of development.

2.49 In most cases, a desk-based assumption about the potential amount of development that can realistically be accommodated on a site has been added, based on its general nature and location.

2.50 Where available, housing figures that have been provided by a landowner or developer or which have been established as acceptable in a previous planning application, have also been used. All figures are, however, indicative and should not be taken as either a maximum or minimum figure, as any final acceptable capacity will need to be determined through a site-specific planning application.

Developable Area Assumptions

2.51 Where no additional information has been provided or is available from a relevant planning application, the following gross to net ratios have been applied:

Table 2.2 - Adopted Gross to Net Ratio Application

Gross site area (ha)	Percentage net
Less than 0.4ha	100%
0.4ha to 2.0ha	90%
Greater than 2.0ha	75%
Greater than 10.0ha	60%

- 2.52 The ratios assumed recognise that larger sites will potentially need to provide additional areas for open space, landscaping and other on-site infrastructure and supporting facilities, which are likely to combine to reduce the final developable area⁹.
- 2.53 Where there is specific evidence of an additional constraint on part of the site or where housing would form part of a wider mixed-use development, the developable area has been assumed to be further reduced, as appropriate and the gross to net ratio has been applied to the residual available area.

Density Assumptions

- 2.54 NPPF paragraphs 124 and 125 focus on the importance of making efficient use of land by achieving appropriate densities and where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, the importance of avoiding homes being built at low densities and ensuring that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.
- 2.55 The Wirral Density Study 2021¹⁰ concluded that the efficient use of land was not currently being encouraged in Wirral, particularly within urban areas and that the density assumptions and the capacity of some sites were being under-stated in the calculation of future land supply. It stated the previous approach was too cautious, did not marry with the aims of national policy and that a step change was required in the traditional model of replicating densities. It recommended that a more robust approach was needed, which would allow higher densities to be targeted upon specific locations in line with the local context.
- 2.56 The Density Study identified four distinct urban density zones, within which higher densities should be assumed when assessing the capacity of a site. In some cases, on larger sites, densities higher than the overall minimum for each area should also be sought, as set out below:

Table 2.3: Wirral Urban Density Zones

Urban Density Zone/Location	Recommended Minimum Densities per hectare (dph)
Birkenhead Waterfront: Sites within 800m (10-minute walk) of the Birkenhead docks and waterfront, with access to high frequency public transport.	Overall minimum - 70 dph Sites above 2ha - 90 dph
Urban Core & Town Centres: Sites within 800m (10-minute walk) of Birkenhead Town Centre or within 400m (5-minute walk) of other designated centres, which are well served by public transport and other community facilities.	Overall minimum - 60 dph Sites above 2ha - 70 dph
Transit Areas: Sites within 800m (10-minute walk) of a railway station or high frequency bus route.	Overall minimum - 50 dph (within a density range of 50-75 dph)

⁹ The figures are based upon the assumptions contained in the Councils Development Viability Baseline Report 2018.

¹⁰ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-report-45>

Urban Density Zone/Location	Recommended Minimum Densities per hectare (dph)
Suburban Areas: Sites within 1200m (20-minute walk) of a railway station and within 400m (5-minute walk) of multiple community services and facilities, including district centres, schools and open spaces.	Overall minimum - 40 dph
Other urban areas: Sites not covered by a specific density zone	Sites above 1ha - minimum 30 dph Sites below 1ha - subject to local character

2.57 The boundaries to the final density zones will be shown on the emerging Local Plan Policies Map.

2.58 In practice, the true potential of a site can only be determined by a more detailed assessment of context and character which falls outside the scope of this report. While the recommended densities within each density zone are considered to provide a robust assessment of their likely potential, it should be noted that the dwelling capacity of sites in this report is currently indicative only. It should not, therefore, be assumed that planning permission will automatically be granted for the number of dwellings identified in the SHLAA, when more detailed, site-specific proposals are being considered.

Estimating Lead-In-Times

2.59 The information gathered from assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of each site has also been used to determine the likely timescales within which each site is capable of being brought to development. Lead-in times and build-out rates have however only been calculated for sites that have been identified as 'deliverable' or 'developable'.

2.60 A review of the average time taken for sites to be delivered has found that the average lead-in time between commencement on site to first completion was approximately 23 months and that an average of 50 dwellings per year were capable of being completed on each site, equivalent to a rate of 4 dwellings each month.

2.61 While lead-in times from the submission of different types of planning application were found to vary considerably, they have been calculated on the following basis, derived from an analysis of completed planning permissions.

Table 2.4: Lead In Time Assumptions

Status	Calendar Months
Decision date for outline application (O) to commencement	37
Decision date for full permission (F) to commencement	18
Decision date for reserved matters (RM) to commencement	13
Time from O Approval to RM Approval	30
Time from O received to approval	10
Time from O approved to RM received	27

Status	Calendar Months
Time from RM received to approval	6
Time from F received to approval	6
Time from commencement to first completion	23

- 2.62 To be 'deliverable' and included in the housing trajectory, sites must be 'suitable' and 'available' with evidence that completions would be achievable within five years. Sites in this category generally already have planning permission, have previously been identified as a housing site, with a developer partner or development programme identified, have or are already going through pre-application or planning application processes or are subject to very limited constraints.
- 2.63 To be 'developable' and included in the housing trajectory, sites must be 'suitable' with evidence that they are likely to be 'available' to a developer and 'achievable' in terms of being likely to deliver completions within the specified time period.
- 2.64 The timings applied within this SHLAA update have been informed through liaison with developers and have been based on the typical build out rate pre Covid-19. At the time of completing the SHLAA, it is too early to understand the immediate and longer-term implications that Covid-19 will have or has had on the delivery of new homes across Wirral. Therefore no amendments to delivery rates have been made in this study as a result of Covid-19, as it is assumed that build out rates will revert back to the same lead in time assumptions as pre Covid-19.

Planning Permissions

- 2.65 As part of the SHLAA update the Council wrote to relevant landowners, agents and promoters of existing planning permissions requesting completion and projected delivery information.
- 2.66 Progress on implementation has been monitored, including site visits where necessary, where other information was not available, to ascertain whether development has commenced or been completed.
- 2.67 The Council considers information on delivery provided by the landowner / developer as the most robust source and uses this as the starting point for considering what might reasonably be delivered within the five-year period. In all instances, the Council scrutinises the information, comparing it to historic delivery rates within Wirral; its knowledge of the developer; its knowledge of the proposed development; and the specific information regarding the individual site. Where necessary, the Council will adjust the projected delivery to remove any overly optimistic view, to ensure that the figures relied on within the first five-year period are realistic and robust.
- 2.68 Where a developer / landowner has not responded, the Council has assessed the future delivery of the site using the information set out in the planning permission and the historic lead-in times and delivery rates set out above.
- 2.69 This approach is intended to accord with the Government's NPPG for housing and economic land availability assessments, by using benchmarks and assumptions based on evidence of

past trends for development lead-in times and build-out rates (PPG, Paragraph 022 Reference ID: 3-022-20190722 and Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 3-018-20190722).

Stage 3: Windfall Assessment and Small Sites Allowance

- 2.70 As the SHLAA does not exclude smaller sites by applying a site size threshold, no allowance for small sites has been applied other than to take account of future new-build windfalls and net gains from conversions and changes of use, which over previous years have made a significant contribution to the land supply.
- 2.71 NPPF paragraph 71 states that where an allowance is to be made for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply, there should be compelling evidence that they will provide a reliable source of supply.
- 2.72 The NPPF defines windfall sites as sites not specifically identified in the development plan (NPPF Glossary), which would apply to the majority of the Borough's housing land supply since the UDP for Wirral was adopted in February 2000. This SHLAA update only classifies sites as windfalls where they have been granted planning permission within the relevant monitoring year but have not been identified in any previous SHLAA assessment.
- 2.73 Previous Wirral SHLAAs have not included capacity that would be generated from conversions or changes of use. The previous UDP included an allowance for the completion of net conversions and changes of 50 dwellings each year, which has continued to be monitored over time. This approach is therefore retained but updated in the current SHLAA.

Table 2.5: Net Conversions, Windfalls and Demolitions

Year	Net Gain from Conversions and Changes of Use¹¹	New Build Windfalls	Losses and Demolitions
2008/09	154	15	242
2009/10	47	50	131
2010/11	14	26	175
2011/12	10	60	242
2012/13	144	28	355
2013/14	63	23	181
2014/15	158	17	16
2015/16	82	78	52
2016/17	86	89	19
2017/18	91	41	56
2018/19	114	79	93
2019/20	260	50	12
2020/21	86	35	16
Total 2008-2021	1,309	591	1,590
Mean 2011-2021	109	50	104

¹¹ 276 additional net completions were also found to be complete in March 2013 for which a precise completion date cannot be attributed, which are not included in this analysis

Year	Net Gain from Conversions and Changes of Use ¹¹	New Build Windfalls	Losses and Demolitions
Mean 2016-2021	127	59	39

2.74 Table 2.5 shows the results of annual monitoring over the last thirteen years, since the first Wirral SHLAA was published in 2008.

2.75 An allowance for 100 net additional conversions and change of uses per year has been applied, based on previous delivery over the last five and ten years.

2.76 An allowance for 50 new build windfalls per year has also been applied, again, based on consistent levels of delivery over the last five and ten years¹².

2.77 Contributions from net conversions and changes of use and new build windfalls will continue to be included in the 6-15-year supply but will remain subject to ongoing monitoring, to prevent any over-estimation, for inclusion in successive assessments of the ongoing five-year supply.

Demolition Allowance

2.78 The Council, as part of its annual monitoring, maintains a list of properties programmed for demolition and a record of other losses, in addition to demolitions identified through planning permissions and demolition consents.

2.79 While demolitions have reduced significantly over the last two years, an annual allowance for the loss of 50 dwellings has been retained, to reflect the higher levels during earlier years.

Empty Homes Allowance

2.80 The emerging Wirral Local Plan is expected to propose the inclusion of an additional allowance for the return of long-term empty dwellings to the housing supply, which also will be discounted to avoid any double counting.

2.81 The application of this additional allowance has not been taken into account in this SHLAA.

Stage 4: Assessment Review

2.82 The purpose of this stage is to present the findings of the study and to consider refined assessments to understand when sites are likely to come forward. This stage of work is used to identify if there are enough sites that can deliver the housing needs of the Borough over the next five years and beyond. Stage 4 of this study is presented within Section 3 of this report.

Stage 5: Final Evidence Base

2.83 Following on from the assessment review, information on the sites assessed is pulled together to provide the evidence base for the findings of the SHLAA update. The SHLAA site

¹² the emerging Wirral Local Plan will include a discounted allowance, to avoid double counting within broad locations for growth, once they have been confirmed

assessments are published in a series of proformas. Each proforma has an attached site location map and provides an overview of the findings for each site.

2.84 The following information is presented within the lists of sites and proformas set out in Appendix 2, Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 to this report:

- **An assessment of each site** (in terms of its suitability for development, availability, deliverability and developability alongside when a site is realistically expected to be developed and when)
- **Details on each site** (which are realistic candidates for development and evidence and justification for those that have been included and where others are discounted)
- **The potential type and quantity of development that could be delivered on each site** (including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how any barriers to delivery might be overcome and when)
- **An indicative trajectory** (of anticipated development and consideration of associated risks, where relevant).

2.85 The following information is also presented within the lists of sites set out in Appendix 3, Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 to this report:

- **Whether a site is within the Green Belt** (and has not been included in this assessment)
- **Whether a site is within a proposed Broad Location for Growth** (together with a map of its location)
- **Whether a site has been removed from the SHLAA** (together with the reason for deletion)

3.0 ASSESSMENT REVIEW

3.1 This section of the report presents the overall findings from the SHLAA 2021, including the identification of the Borough's 'deliverable' and 'developable' housing land supply over the next five years.

3.2 NPPG states that 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 (i.e. within years 1 to 5, 6 to 10, and 11 and beyond). An overall risk assessment should be made as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated (Paragraph: 024 Reference ID: 3-024-20190722).

Number of sites and nature of sites identified

3.3 As part of the first stage of the work, sites were digitally mapped into a Geographical Information System (GIS) layer. Once entered on the system, a number of sites were discounted prior to the site survey stage due to them being:

- Sites that have gained planning permission prior to the base date of this study
- Sites that have been developed for a new use
- Sites that were no longer available
- Sites that were within the Green Belt
- Sites that had been replaced or superseded by sites with new boundaries

- 3.4 The total number of sites initially identified was 759. Of these, 601 sites had been rolled forward from the SHLAA 2019 and an additional 158 new sites were added for assessment.
- 3.5 From the initial 759 sites, 309 were discounted from being further assessed for the following reasons:
- 210 sites fell within the Green Belt, which are currently deemed ‘unsuitable’ and have not been subject to any further assessment
 - 99 sites have been removed due to being superseded, no longer available or because they now had the benefit of planning permission.
- 3.6 This left 450 sites for full assessment.

Table 3.1 Summary of initial SHLAA results

Number of Sites	Percentage	Status
Sites Suitable, Available, Deliverable & Developable (included in Trajectory)		
42	5.5%	Assessed as ‘suitable’ and included in future land supply (included in Appendix 2)
Sites within a Broad Location		
65	8.5%	Identified as a site within a future broad location for growth but not yet included in the future land supply (included in Appendix 3)
Sites Suitable but further information required		
179	23.5%	Assessed as ‘suitable’ but further information is required before they can be included in the future land supply (included in Appendix 4)
Unsuitable sites		
164	21.5%	Assessed as ‘unsuitable’ or ‘uncertain’ and not included in the future land supply (included in Appendix 5)
210	28.0%	Identified as a site in the Green Belt and not subject to further assessment (included in Appendix 6)
99	13.0%	Removed from SHLAA 2021 and not subject to further assessment (included in Appendix 7)

- 3.7 179 sites were assessed as “suitable” in principle for future residential development but have not been included in the trajectory or in the calculation of the future land supply because further information would be required before they could be deemed as being ‘deliverable’ or ‘developable’. This includes sites which would require a further, more detailed specialist appraisal or investigation to be completed or a particular site-specific issue to be resolved before development could be permitted.
- 3.8 In most cases, it is considered that these sites could only currently be brought forward through a detailed planning application, which directly addresses the issues of concern, before they can be confirmed as included in the future housing land supply.

3.9 A further 164 sites were assessed as 'unsuitable' which had major physical or policy constraints that are currently unlikely to be capable of being resolved. For example, sites likely to be constrained by emerging proposed Local Plan designations included:

- 36 sites that are proposed to be designated for employment uses;
- 7 sites that are proposed to be designated for protection for sport and recreation;
- 7 sites that are proposed to be designated as Local Green Space;
- 20 sites that are proposed to be designated for protection as Urban Open Space; and
- 2 sites that are proposed to be designated as part of Primary Shopping Area.

Future Housing Trajectory at April 2021

3.10 The future housing trajectory arising from the assessment contained within this SHLAA updated is set out in Appendix 8 and the impact on the Borough's future land supply at April 2021 is summarised in Table 3.2¹³:

Table 3.2: Five-Year Housing Land Supply (April 2021) - Plus 5%¹⁴

A	Five Year Projected Demolitions 2021-2026 (@50 per annum)	250
B	Local housing need based on MHCLG Standard Method 2021-2026 (@761 per annum) ¹⁵	3,805
C	Five Year Housing Target 2021-2026 (1.05 x B) + A	4,246
D	Current Five-Year Supply:	5,107
	SHLAA 'deliverable' sites	1,601
	New build dwellings with planning permission under construction or not started	2,756
	Allowance for new build windfalls (@50 per annum)	250
	Allowance for net gains from conversions and changes of use (@100 per annum)	500
E	Annual Requirement over Five Years (gross) (C/5)	850
F	Years' Supply (D/E)	6.0

3.11 A separate assessment of the future requirement for new housing and the sites that will be relied upon for the purposes of the Local Plan over the period 2021 to 2037, will be set out in the Regulation 19 Local Plan and its accompanying supporting documents.

¹³ Further information is also provided in the Council's annual Monitoring Report 2021 which can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/development-monitoring>

¹⁴ A 5% buffer has been applied in accordance with the requirements of NPPF paragraph 74. The Government's Housing Delivery Test Measurement for 2020 (January 2021) can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-2020-measurement>

¹⁵ Housing Need (MHCLG, December 2020) can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

Monitoring and Review

- 3.12 In accordance with national guidance, the Wirral SHLAA is updated on an annual basis to ensure it remains an effective and up-to-date evidence base for the future monitoring of housing provision against targets contained within the emerging Local Plan. The proposed updates will not alter the methodology, unless the NPPG or NPPF is amended in a way which would require a review.
- 3.13 Housing completions monitoring will also continue to be undertaken on an annual basis and will be published as part of the Council's statutory Monitoring Reports.
- 3.14 As in previous years, sites can continue to be submitted for consideration at any time by completing the Council's Housing Land Availability Monitoring Form, which can be requested from and must be returned to forwardplanning@wirral.gov.uk or from Forward Planning, PO Box 290, Brighton Street, Wallasey, Wirral CH27 9FQ and will be assessed in the next relevant SHLAA update.
- 3.15 Sites which are submitted after the expiry of the period for representations to be received on the Regulation 19 Local Plan are however unlikely to be able to be included within the emerging Local Plan.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: List of Evidence Base Used in Assessment

Appendix 2: Sites that are Suitable, Available, Deliverable and Developable - Proformas and Site Maps

Appendix 3: List of Sites Within Emerging Broad Locations for Growth and Site Maps

Appendix 4: Sites Assessed as Suitable But With Further Information Required - Proformas and Site Maps

Appendix 5: Sites Assessed as Unsuitable or Uncertain - Proformas and Site Maps

Appendix 6: List of Sites in the Green Belt Not Subject to Further Assessment

Appendix 7: List of Sites Removed and Not Subject to Further Assessment

Appendix 8: Current Housing Trajectory at April 202

LOCAL PLAN

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