

## Frequently Asked Questions – SHLAA Methodology Update

### **Q1. What is a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)?**

A SHLAA is the process the Council uses to help it to identify suitable and deliverable sites for future housing development, to meet the requirements of national policy.

The SHLAA is also used to inform decisions about the sites that may or may not be allocated for development in the Council's Local Plan.

Having an up-to-date SHLAA, with sufficient sites for new housing development, can also help the Council to resist planning applications for housing development in inappropriate locations.

### **Q2. How often is a SHLAA prepared?**

The Wirral SHLAA is normally prepared from each April and published as part of the Council's statutory monitoring report in December each year.

The existing SHLAA for April 2016 can currently be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-4>

### **Q3. What is the methodology for the SHLAA?**

The SHLAA methodology sets out the way that the Council intends to undertake the assessment of potential development sites. It sets out what the Council will consider and how each individual site will be assessed.

### **Q4. Why is it necessary to change the methodology?**

The SHLAA methodology was last changed, following public consultation, in 2014.

The revised methodology takes account of comments submitted to the Council in response to further consultation on the Borough's housing needs and land supply in August and September 2016.

The previous methodology can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-4>

### **Q5. Who has prepared the revised methodology?**

The revised methodology has been prepared by Council officers guided by the requirements of national policy and guidance.

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The requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework> (paragraphs 47, 48 and 159 refer)

The relevant national planning practice guidance can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment>.

### **Q6. What are the main changes to the methodology?**

A summary of the main proposed changes to the methodology is set out in the Annex to this FAQ.

### **Q7. What is the purpose of the consultation on a revised methodology?**

The Council wants to make sure that the information that it uses to assess each site is correct and that nothing has been missed or overlooked.

The Council also wants to make sure that its future decisions will be based on a complete picture of the facts about each site and location.

### **Q8. Who will be included in the consultation?**

The consultation will include local residents and community groups; businesses; infrastructure providers; Government agencies; and landowners and developers.

### **Q9. What sort of comments is the Council expecting to receive?**

Comments can be made on any part of the proposed revised methodology.

The Council is particularly looking for comments that would help it to decide on the best way to assess whether sites are likely to be suitable for development and to identify any constraints that might influence, limit or prevent their future delivery.

### **Q10. How will the responses to the consultation be used?**

The consultation responses will be used to further revise the methodology, to ensure that all the relevant considerations have been included. The final revised methodology will then be used to carry out the next SHLAA Update.

### **Q11. How are the sites included in the SHLAA identified?**

The sites to be included in the SHLAA are set out in paragraph 3.6 (on page 4) of the proposed methodology.

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They include sites that have been identified from the Council's ongoing monitoring of the Borough and sites that have been submitted for consideration by landowners and developers.

### **Q12. Can I submit a site for consideration in the SHLAA?**

Yes. You can submit a site at any time and it will be included in the next available update of the SHLAA. You do not need to own the site and members of the public, as well as landowners and developers, can submit sites that they think might be suitable for housing development.

There is a form that needs to be completed, which you can request from [forwardplanning@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:forwardplanning@wirral.gov.uk) or from 0151 691 8110

### **Q13. Can I submit updated information about an existing site already included in the SHLAA?**

Yes. You can also submit revised information at any time and it will be included in the next available update of the SHLAA.

### **Q14. How are sites classified in the SHLAA?**

Each site in the SHLAA is given a separate score for 'suitability', 'availability' and 'achievability' and is assigned an overall score with each of these three factors combined. On this basis, sites are currently placed into one of the following categories:

- Category 1 - sites considered to be suitable for housing and which could be delivered within five years
- Category 2 - sites considered to be developable but which may have some additional constraints which mean that they are more likely to be delivered within a 6-10 year period
- Category 3 - sites considered not currently developable and subject to constraints which may only make them deliverable within an 11-15 year period.

The categories allow the Council to estimate when sites are likely to be developed; and to decide on the sites that can be included in the calculation of the ongoing land supply required by national policy.

The consultation proposes to introduce an additional 'Category 4', to allow greater transparency on the reasons for excluding some sites from further consideration.

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### **Q15. If a site is included in the SHLAA does it mean that it is suitable for housing development?**

No. Including a site in the SHLAA only means that it has been assessed and does not mean that it is suitable for housing or for any other type of development.

### **Q16. If a site is included in the SHLAA does it mean that it will receive planning permission?**

No. The SHLAA does not grant planning permission for development or remove the need for a planning application to be submitted.

### **Q17. If a site is included in the SHLAA does it mean that it will be allocated for development in the Council's Local Plan?**

No. The Council will need to take a separate decision about which sites to allocate for development in the Local Plan.

### **Q18. If a site is not classified in Category 1, does it mean that it cannot come forward for development any earlier?**

No. The assessment of each site is only based on the information that was available when the SHLAA was last updated (see also Q22 below).

### **Q19. What will happen to other sites that are not identified in the SHLAA?**

The SHLAA does not prevent other sites from coming forward for development, providing that they are able to meet the necessary requirements (see Q22 below)

### **Q20. What about sites in restricted areas, such as the Green Belt?**

The SHLAA will continue to provide for sites that are unlikely to be developed or which are subject to overriding constraints, such as flood risk, national or international nature conservation or strategic importance for employment, to be discounted from further consideration – such sites would be included in the new proposed Category 4.

Sites in the Green Belt that have been submitted by developers or landowners will also be scored against each of the criteria and assigned a 'theoretical' category (between Categories 1 and 4) but will continue to be listed separately and excluded from the calculation of the Borough's future land supply because they can only be released for development in an adopted Local Plan.

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### **Q21. When will the new SHLAA be available?**

Depending on the comments received, the new SHLAA, based on the final revised methodology, should be available in early 2018.

### **Q22. Will developers be able to submit planning applications in the meantime?**

Yes. Developers can submit planning applications on any site at any time but to be approved any proposal will have to meet the requirements of national policy and legislation and the existing local Development Plan.

The NPPF and its associated Planning Practice Guidance can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

The documents that currently form the local Development Plan for Wirral can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans>

### **Q23. Will the proposals set out in the Housing White Paper affect the review of the methodology?**

The new Government elected on 8 June 2017 will need to decide which parts of the White Paper published in February 2017 will be taken forward into national policy and legislation.

The main proposals include a greater involvement of housebuilders, infrastructure providers and the Planning Inspectorate in calculating the local land supply; and proposals to maximise the use of suitable land, where there is a shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs.

The White Paper can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

### **Q24. Where can I see a copy of the proposed revised methodology?**

The proposed revised methodology can be viewed on the Council's website at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan-6>

The proposed revised methodology is also available for public inspection at public libraries during their normal opening times and in the Forward Planning section at the South Annexe of Wallasey Town Hall CH44 8ED, Monday to Friday between 9.00am and 5.00pm (excluding bank and public holidays and the additional closure

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of Council buildings on 29 August 2017). Please contact [forwardplanning@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:forwardplanning@wirral.gov.uk) or 0151 691 8110 to arrange a booking.

Public library opening hours can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/find-library>

The deadline for comments to be received on the proposed revised methodology is **5pm on Monday 18 September 2017** to [forwardplanning@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:forwardplanning@wirral.gov.uk) or to Forward Planning, Wirral Council Environmental Services, PO Box 290, Brighton Street, Wallasey CH27 9FQ

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### Annex

The main proposed changes to the methodology include:

- a new 'category 4', to allow for greater transparency on the reasons for excluding some sites from further consideration (for example, at paragraph 3.12, page 6; paragraph 3.32, page 9; and Table 4.1, page 23);
- text to reflect the status of new neighbourhood development plans (for example, at paragraph 3.17, page 6; and paragraph 3.23, page 8);
- revised criteria to recognise the provision of recreation facilities on un-designated sites (Table 3.2, page 8 and new paragraph 3.26);
- revised criteria to recognise sites previously used for employment which do not fall within a designated employment area (Table 3.4, page 10, and new paragraphs 3.37 and 3.41, page 11) and reference to the forthcoming Employment Land and Premises Study Update (new paragraph 3.42, page 11);
- a new criterion to take account of high quality agricultural land (Table 3.6 and new paragraphs 3.49 to 3.51, page 13);
- changes in the way information will be presented for sites in the Green Belt (paragraph 4.3 and new paragraphs 4.4. and 4.5, page 23);
- the removal of a mixed-use factor on employment sites (new paragraph 5.6, page 24); and
- the inclusion of additional calculations to show the potential impact of increased densities (new paragraph 5.15, page 25).

Other changes include:

- further information on the background to the proposed revisions and the requirements of national planning practice guidance (throughout the report, for example, at paragraph 3.5, page 4; paragraph 3.13, page 6; paragraph 3.76, page 18; paragraph 3.85, page 20; and paragraph 6.11, page 27);
- additional statements to indicate where the content remains unchanged from previous assessments and to identify where amendments are being proposed (throughout the report, for example, at paragraph 3.18, page 7; paragraph 3.22, page 8; and paragraph 3.28, page 9);

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- reference to the forthcoming Playing Pitch Strategy Update (new paragraph 3.27, page 8); and Viability Study Update (paragraph 3.90, page 21);
- additional text on flood risk (new paragraph 3.62, page 15; and new paragraph 3.67, page 16);
- the re-calculation of scores to take account of additional and amended criteria (paragraphs 3.72 and 3.74, page 17); and
- additional information on windfalls (new paragraph 6.3, page 26 and new paragraph 6.9, page 27).

Appendix 1 of the consultation document also sets out the Council's response to comments submitted on the SHLAA April 2016, in August and September 2016.