

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

Development of Suitability Matrix Local Policy Forum 1 May 2008 Workshop 2

Comments

- The group began the workshop by following through the examples to understand how the matrix works and how the criteria are applied to specific sites. The group found the process quite good, although there were a number of concerns raised, which are discussed below under the suggested improvements.
- The group agreed that overall the approach of using the traffic lights for the matrix works, although it may be necessary to have a formal filtering process set out so that if additional sites are required then those sites of lower rating can be pulled back in for further assessment.
- The group raised a concern regarding a comment in the presentation that it may not be possible for every site to be visited by the assessing officer or team. The group felt that this should be an essential part of the process, as many things and critical issues can be missed when simply doing a desk based study using maps and aerial photographs.
- As the group followed the matrix through using the two examples, although the group thought it was good to have the two stage approach to the matrix, Stage A and Stage B, concern was raised that some sites may simply get overlooked due to flooding issues. It was highlighted that flooding impacts can be mitigated; it is a question of cost and economic viability.
- The groups assessment of the two sites suggested that Site A was a good and viable site gaining a majority of green ticks. Site B however, could have been ruled out at the first hurdle given the potential flooding issues at the site, whilst it still gained a majority of green ticks through the process.

Improvements to Matrix (including additional factors to be considered)

Following an initial work through of the two example sites, the group considered the criteria and raised a number of concerns, questions and improvements which are set out and discussed below:

Stage A

- The group questioned the description of criteria 2 and the inclusion of 'significant unscheduled archaeological feature'. The group were unsure of the meaning of this and what protection it is afforded. It was highlighted that in many cases it may be possible to mitigate any potential impacts upon archaeological remains or features; through preservation in situ or recoding and removal.
- The group suggested that there needed to more clarity with the criteria, or explanation of their implementation. Again the group suggested that a site within the AONB can mitigate against impacts.
- As outlined above the group also raised some concern over the flooding criteria, and that some sites may be excluded when mitigation is possible.

Stage B

- The group suggested that the minerals criteria may not be applicable to Swindon given the very limited minerals, and especially with or adjacent to the settlement boundaries. However the group did appear to understand the reasons for its inclusion and ensuring that nothing is missed.
- The group questioned how such a high level assessment would be able to determine the risk of contamination of Source Protection Zones, especially that of high risk to result in a red traffic light.
- The group questioned the distances that were outlined in the matrix for bus stops, schools, convenience stores and principal centres. The group were confused as to walking or as the crow flies distances, however there following comments stand in either case. They quested where the distances had come from and whether they related to any guidance or best practice. The distances to primary (max 800m) and secondary schools (max 1km) were highlighted as being almost impossible to meet.
- The group also had a significant discussion regarding the distances for principal centres. The group took the definition of a principal centre to be Swindon town centre, and therefore highlighted that most of the outer edges of Swindon would not meet this criterion. This therefore highlighted the need for clear interpretations of what terms mean and how they are going to be applied, so that anyone trying to follow the methodology used in the assessment will be able to understand, whether this is during or after the assessment has been completed.
- The group also could not understand the reasons for the land status criteria, and why the percentages had been split the way they have.
- The group felt overall that the matrix covered all of the issues they would have expected and did not identify any additional criteria, however they did raise a general concern over how the matrix would be implemented and interpreted through the process.

Yellow Group
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