

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

2011 Update

Final Version

August 2012

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment' (SHLAA) is an assessment of how much housing land is potentially available in the urban areas of Sefton in the years ahead.
- 1.2 The 2011 SHLAA has updated the original 2008 SHLAA¹ to a 1st April 2011 base-date. The update was carried out 'in house' by Officers from Planning Services, alongside similar updates in Knowsley and West Lancashire. A broadly consistent methodology has been used across all three Council areas, albeit with some minor differences of detail.
- 1.3 Both the original 2008 SHLAA and subsequent 2010 update are available to view on Sefton's web pages.
- 1.4 This study has followed the 'SHLAA Practice Guidance' published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), which is available to download from the DCLG website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/landavailabilityassessment>
- 1.5 A 2012 SHLAA will be carried out later this year, and should be available to view on Sefton's web-pages in late 2012.
- 1.6 It is important to note that whilst the SHLAA is a key part of our evidence base, it does not in itself represent a statement of Council policy. Whilst this study will inform the Local Plan process, it is for the Local Plan itself to decide which sites should come forward for residential development and by what timescale. The inclusion of sites within this study does not necessarily mean that they will be allocated for development or that the Council will consider planning applications favourably. Similarly, sites that are excluded from the housing supply at this stage are not necessarily unsuitable for housing development.
- 1.7 The remainder of this report is set out as follows:
 - **Section 2:** Summary of Methodology
 - **Section 3:** Summary of Stakeholder Consultation
 - **Section 4:** SHLAA Update Findings
 - **Appendices:** - Appendix 1: Sites with planning permission at 1st April 2011
- Appendix 2: Site Assessments sheets

¹ Carried out on the three Council's behalf by consultancy WYG.

2. Summary of Methodology

- 2.1 The 2011 SHLAA update has followed the same broad methodology as the original 2008 Study, and 2010 update.
- 2.2 Potential housing sites were identified from a number of sources, including:
- Sites with planning permission for housing that have not yet been built out
 - Sites with expired planning permissions for housing
 - Sites without planning permission that were assessed in the 2008 SHLAA
 - Council owned sites that are surplus to requirements, or very likely to become surplus to requirements in the years ahead
 - Sites submitted by land owners and developers to our 'call for sites' exercise, which was advertised in the local press and on-line.
- 2.3 Inevitably there will be some sites that have been missed by the SHLAA, and it would be almost impossible to anticipate every site that will come forward for housing. The SHLAA will be regularly updated to allow for new and unanticipated sites to be taken into account as they become available for development, and for sites that are lost to other uses to be removed.
- 2.4 All sites were subject to a desktop assessment using detailed mapping, aerial photographs, planning history, and other intelligence. Sites that were considered potentially suitable for development, or had not previously been assessed through the 2008 or 2010 SHLAAs, were then visited by Council Officers.
- 2.5 A total of 416 sites were assessed in the 2011 SHLAA update. Of those, 130 were included within the identified housing supply. The rationale for including / excluding sites from the supply is set out below. This process has closely followed the SHLAA Practice Guidance.
- 2.6 The purpose of the SHLAA is to provide a realistic assessment of the potential housing supply. Identified sites therefore have to be suitable for housing and there must also be a realistic prospect that they will come forward for development at the time envisaged.

Excluded Sites

2.7 In general the following types of sites were not included in the identified housing supply:

- **Sites in active use with no planning history or known owner interest in developing the site:** in keeping with the SHLAA Practice Guidance, sites in current use with no planning history or indication of owner interest in development were generally excluded from the identified housing land supply.
- **Sites with planning permission for other uses:** sites that had recently secured planning permission for other uses were generally excluded from the identified housing supply.
- **Sites at high risk of flooding:** sites in Flood Zone 3 (high risk of flooding) were generally excluded from consideration unless the Exception Test could clearly be met².
- **Urban Greenspace:** a cautious approach was taken to sites that are designated as Urban Greenspace in the assessment of supply. These were generally excluded from the identified housing supply except where development would be possible on the footprint of existing buildings. Sefton's Greenspace study, which is likely to be finalised in late 2012, will provide a clearer picture on which, if any, Greenspaces could be suitable for full or partial redevelopment.
- **Green Belt:** sites in the Green Belt were excluded from the study. The sole exception to this was the 'Powerhouse' site to the south of Formby. This site is designated as a 'Major Developed Site in the Green Belt' in Sefton's Unitary Development Plan, and partial development of the site is acceptable in principle.
- **Industrial estates and business parks:** the main industrial estates and business parks (land designated as 'Primarily Industrial Areas') were generally excluded from consideration. This is based on the findings of the 2008 'Employment Land & Premises Study' which found that Sefton needed to retain sites that are designated or allocated for employment purposes in the UDP in order to meet the future needs of business³. A number of industrial / commercial sites outside of formal 'Primarily Industrial Areas' have been included in the housing supply however.
- **Vacant homes:** we have received clear advice from central government that vacant homes brought back into use cannot be counted as 'new' housing supply. Therefore no assumption has

² Only one site in Flood Zone 3 was included in the housing supply, accounting for 14 homes.

³ This study is currently being updated.

been made about the potential supply contribution from vacant homes.

- **Constrained sites:** sites that were subject to significant / multiple development constraints were generally excluded from the housing supply. These included: small sites that could not satisfy minimum separation distances to adjacent properties, sites that were known to be severely contaminated, sites that were subject to severe amenity problems, sites with wildlife / nature designations, sites containing large numbers of protected trees, sites that could not be developed without damaging the character of a Conservation Area, listed buildings that were not suitable for conversion, sites with inadequate access, etc.
- **Removal of unrealistic sites:** a large number of sites considered to be wholly unrealistic were removed entirely from the assessment. The vast majority of these sites had not been assessed as suitable for development in previous SHLAAs, and their continuing presence in the Study was considered unnecessary. These sites generally fell into a number of categories, as listed below:
 - *Residential gardens:* national planning guidance has recently re-classified residential gardens as 'greenfield' land. Accordingly, the majority of garden sites have been removed entirely from the 2011 update. The exception to this is where the owner of the land has promoted their site through the 'Call for Sites'.
 - *Sites in multiple ownership:* a number of sites carried forward from the 2003 'Urban Housing Capacity Assessment' contained 3 or more land ownerships, with no indication of any intention to develop the site. These were largely considered to be unrealistic housing sites, and the vast majority were removed entirely from the 2011 update.
 - *Sites within the curtilage of a listed building:* a number of sites within the curtilage of a listed building were excluded where there was considered to be no acceptable development potential.
 - *Other excluded sites:* sites that are too small to accommodate development, sites with no access, sites that were already developed for housing, sites that had been recently developed for other uses, small areas of landscaping or open space, sites that formed part of a highway or turning circle, residential garages or garage courts.

Sites Included in the Housing Supply

2.8 Of the sites that were included in the housing supply, the following broad assumptions were applied:

- **Site density:** most sites without a current planning permission were assessed against a standard site density of 30 to 40 dwellings per hectare, depending on the character of the site and the surrounding area. A higher density was attributed to a minority of sites that were considered most suited to apartment development. Appropriate site densities were agreed in discussion with Development Managements colleagues.
- **Net developable area:** this was assessed based on the size of the site. A smaller developable area was assumed for larger sites to reflect the need to provide access roads, open space, etc. The table below sets out the net developable area that has been applied.

Assumed Developable Areas

Total Site Area	Net Developable Area
Less than 0.4 ha	100% of developable area
0.4 ha to 2 ha	90% of developable area
Sites over 2 ha	75% of developable area

Source: Tapping the Potential, ODPM, 2000

- **Timeframe:** an estimate was made of when each site was likely to be developed for housing. Sites that already had planning permission were largely assessed based on feedback from the developer or landowner. Sites without planning permission were placed in three periods to best reflect when they were likely to be developed. These were: short term (1-5 years), medium term (6-10 years), and long-term (11-15 years). In line with national guidance, sites placed in the 1-5 year period had to be “suitable, available, and achievable” – usually evidenced by a clear indication that the owner is looking to develop the site in the short term.

Please Note: The ‘5 year supply’ set out in the SHLAA Update is not one and the same as Sefton’s official 5-year supply position, as set out in the 2011 Annual Monitoring Report⁴.

⁴ The ‘official’ 5 year supply includes a contribution from several larger identified SHLAA sites, and assumes a 25% contribution from the remaining ‘1-5 year’ SHLAA sites. This methodology is set out in the 2011 Annual Monitoring Report: www.sefton.gov.uk/amr.

- **Viability:** in 2010, Sefton commissioned viability consultancy 3 Dragons to undertake an 'Affordable Housing Viability Assessment'. This found that there was sufficient development viability in most settlements in Sefton to support an affordable housing contribution. The exception to this however was Bootle, where residential viability was found to be marginal. This accords with feedback we have received from the development industry through our Housing Market Partnership. In order to reflect this in the SHLAA, sites in Bootle without planning permission were usually placed in the 6-10 or 11-15 year supply to allow for the recovery of the local market. Only in a limited number of instances were sites in Bootle placed in the 0-5 year supply, where development was either underway, public sector funding was available, or we had specific intelligence that the site was likely to be viable in the short term.
- **Apartments:** In general a cautious approach was taken towards apartment development given the recent fall in demand for this type of property. Sites considered to be most suited to apartment development were generally not included in the 1-5 year supply.
- **Discounting:** discounting was applied to both sites with and without planning permission. This was to reflect the fact that some sites would not be developed for housing as anticipated for a variety of reasons⁵. For sites without planning permission, an across-the-board discount of 20% was applied to reflect these potential issues. For sites with planning permission, a more sophisticated discounting approach was applied based on contacting site owners / developers about their intentions⁶.
- **'Backland' sites in Southport:** Sefton recently consulted on a draft 'Safeguarding Employment Land' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This SPD proposed a flexible approach that seeks to retain better quality employment sites, whilst allowing poorer quality sites to be redeveloped for other uses. Based on this approach, the SHLAA Update has assumed that 20% of all identified backland sites (196 in total) will be developed for housing over the 15 year period at an average density of 30 dwellings per hectare. The Employment Land & Premises Study 2012 Refresh is looking at this issue again, and its findings will be available in late 2012.

⁵ This could be due to sites with planning permission for apartments not being built, sites delivering fewer homes than anticipated, development of the site for another use (e.g. offices/shops etc), or a variety of unforeseen circumstances including; ground problems, land contamination, infrastructure problems, access problems, complex land ownerships, legal covenants, unknown or changed owner intentions, cutting of Government grants for those limited number of schemes that require funding support, etc.

⁶ This approach is set out in Sefton's 2010 Annual Monitoring Report: www.sefton.gov.uk/amr

Site Scoring

- 2.9 Each assessed site has been scored against a series of criteria. The site scores are split into 3 categories - 'suitability', 'availability', and 'achievability'.
- 2.10 It is important to note that the site scoring has been used for indicative purposes only. The scoring did not usually determine whether a site was considered suitable for housing or not, and many important considerations are not included within the scoring criteria. However, it is a useful tool for assessing how close to essential infrastructure and services a site is, and whether certain constraints apply.
- 2.11 The points awarded for each criteria is set out below:

Suitability

Question	Yes	Partially	No
Does the site suffer from any physical constraints (e.g.topography)?	0	4	8
Is the site affected by un-neighbourly uses (heavy industry, power lines, railway lines, motorways, etc)?	0	4	8
Is there a possibility that the site is heavily contaminated?	0	4	8
Can satisfactory access be achieved to the site?	8	4	0
Is there a Primary School within 600m	3	-	0
Is there a Local Centre within 800m	3	-	0
Is there a Health Centre within 1000m	3	-	0
Is there Employment within 5000m	3	-	0
Is there a Railway Station within 800m	3	-	0
Is there a Bus Stop within 600m	3	-	0
			Max total: 50

Availability

Question	Yes	Partially	No
Is the site in active use?	0	5	10
Is the site subject to multiple or difficult land ownerships?	0	5	10
Is the site owned by a developer or is the owner willing to sell?	5	-	0
			Max total: 25

Achievability

Question	Yes	Partially	No
Is the site known to be located within a strong residential market?	10	5	0
Is the site set within an attractive local environment?	5	3	0
Are there any known significant abnormal costs (including remediation, demolition, etc)?	0	-	5
			Max total: 20

- 2.12 The majority of scores were attributed either during site visits, based on intelligence or known site issues, or were calculated using mapping software. Others were a matter of professional judgement (such as un-neighbourly uses, and physical constraints).
- 2.13 The question 'Is the site owned by a developer or is the owner willing to sell?' was based on any known interest in developing the site. A second question 'Is the site known to be located within a strong residential market?' was scored based on the electoral ward that the site is in. For example wards that contained concentrations of deprivation scored lower than less deprived wards.
- 2.14 The scoring relating to access and contamination should not be viewed as definitive. Highways Officers will ultimately determine whether satisfactory access can be achieved to a site. Similarly, the presence or extent of contamination on a site will only be fully known once site investigations have taken place. In the SHLAA, sites have usually been scored as potentially contaminated where contamination is known to exist, or where potentially contaminating uses have been historically been present (e.g. heavy industry, scrap yards, etc).

Other minor changes from the 2010 SHLAA update

- 2.15 Additionally, the following minor amendments were also included in the 2011 Update:
- **Removal or the 'small sites allowance'**: the 2008 SHLAA and 2010 SHLAA update both contained a 'small sites allowance'. This was based on a sample approach to the large number of smaller sites below 0.1 ha. For the 2011 SHLAA update a full review has been undertaken of all sites under 0.1 ha. This has resulted in the removal of a large number of sites from the SHLAA. Accordingly, all remaining small sites have been subject to a full site assessment, and no sample approach has been taken.

Sites not currently included in the 2011 update

- 2.16 The following sites have not been included in the 2011 SHLAA update, but may feature in future updates:
- **Land at Ashworth Hospital, Maghull**: this site was granted outline planning permission for 300 homes on 16th December 2011 (ref S/2011/0909). This site is not included in the Study as it was granted planning permission subsequent to the 1st April 2011 base-date. It will be included in the forthcoming 2012 SHLAA update, to be published in mid-late 2012.

- **Prison site, Park Lane, Maghull:** This site has planning permission for the construction of a new prison. However, we understand that the prison may no longer be developed, and this site could become available for housing development. However, given the uncertainties surrounding this site, and the Green Belt location, it has been excluded from the SHLAA for now. However, this site could potentially be included in future versions of the Study, and would have capacity for around 400 homes.
- **Windfall sites:** It is reasonable to assume that unanticipated 'windfall' sites will come forward into the future (as they have done historically). The recently published 'National Planning Policy Framework' (NPPF) states that SHLAAs can now make an allowance for windfalls where there is "compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply" (this was not generally permitted under previous planning guidance). This 2011 SHLAA update is base-dated to before the NPPF was published and therefore no windfall contribution is assumed. However, a windfall assumption will be incorporated in the forthcoming 2012 SHLAA update.

2.17 In addition, the Council is currently in the process of reviewing and consolidating its landholdings and this is likely to deliver a modest additional contribution to the supply in the 2012 SHLAA update.

3. Summary of Stakeholder Consultation

- 3.1 A draft version of the SHLAA update was subject to a stakeholder consultation between 28th June and the 26th July. Members of the Sefton, Knowsley, and West Lancashire 'Housing Market Partnership' were invited to review the Study methodology and findings and submit comments. Knowsley Council consulted on a draft SHLAA update for their area at the same time.
- 3.2 The Sefton, Knowsley and West Lancashire 'Housing Market Partnership' is a group of locally active house builders, housing associations, property professionals, infrastructure providers, and representatives from neighbouring local authorities. It meets roughly every 6 months and acts as a forum for discussion on housing and planning matters. Then government requires every local authority in the country to establish a 'Housing Market Partnership' for their area to allow for open discussion about development issues between the Council and the development industry.
- 3.3 Only 2 representations were received during the stakeholder consultation. Both of these were promoting the merits of specific Green Belt sites, and both argued that the SHLAA should include Green Belt sites as part of the assessment.
- 3.4 Green Belt sites have been excluded from the SHLAA as they raise policy issues that are beyond the remit of a SHLAA which is not in itself a policy document. This is consistent with legal advice we have received previously. Whilst the 'Power House' site (ref 6026) has been included in the SHLAA, this site is a 'Major Developed Site in the Green Belt' where partial development is acceptable under Unitary Development Plan policy GBC3.
- 3.5 Accordingly, no changes have been made to the SHLAA assessment in light of these representations.

4. SHLAA Update Findings

- 4.1 The SHLAA update findings are summarised in the tables below. In total, the Study found that 4,674 dwellings (gross) could be accommodated in the urban area (after discounting). However, the net figure reduced to 3,384 once programmed demolitions, and backlog of under-provision against the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) housing target of 500 dwellings per annum (since 2003) were taken into account.
- 4.2 Against the current housing target of 500 dwellings per annum, this equates to just under a 7 year supply of housing land.
- 4.3 The 'net' supply of 3,384 dwellings represents a deterioration of 959 dwellings against the findings of the 2010 SHLAA update. This deterioration can be attributed to a number of factors, including:
- A significant increase in the number of demolitions that are forecast to take place in the years ahead. This was largely accounted for by the confirmation and bringing forward of the demolition of 489 properties in the Klondyke area of Bootle.
 - The RSS housing requirement is an annualised target against which 'backlog' of under-provision can be accrued. Therefore over the course of a year, the supply would be expected to decline by 1 years supply (500 units) if no new sites were identified. In 2010/11, Sefton completed 198 dwellings (net of demolitions) and therefore the backlog of under provision has increased compared to 2010 (from -499 to -637⁷). This 'backlog' represents under-delivery of housing against the RSS target of 500 houses per annum since 2003 (the base date of RSS).
 - A number of sites identified in the housing supply in the 2010 were lost to or granted planning permission for other uses. A small number of additional sites that were in the 2010 SHLAA were also excluded based on new information that emerged.
 - The above losses to the supply were offset to some extent by the identification of new sites, including those submitted through the 2011 'Call for Sites', and additional Council-owned land that has been identified as surplus to requirements.
- 4.4 As set out above, this supply does not necessarily include every site that will come forward for housing over the years ahead. Unexpected

⁷ The backlog increased by less than the 302 units of under-provision in 2010/11 in part because an error was identified and corrected in a previous years completions that related to the double-counting of a significant number of demolitions.

sites will continue to come forward and these will be factored into our supply as they become available.

SHLAA 2011 Update Findings

Source	Total Supply	0 - 5 yrs	6 - 10 yrs	11 - 15 yrs	Notes
Planning permissions:	2129	2040	89	0	Extant planning permissions are taken from the 2010 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) housing trajectory. Discounting has been built in through this process.
Planning permission discounting	-84	-84	0	0	A discount is applied to small sites with planning permission. This is based on contact with developers on larger sites and reflects likely non-delivery of some sites with planning permission.
Assessed sites:	2504	900	954	650	Sites without planning permission that are suitable for housing. An across-the-board 20% discount has been applied to the gross total housing supply.
Backland sites:	125	41.67	41.67	41.67	This contribution relates to the large number of 'backland' employment sites in Southport. There are a large number of these sites, which have historically delivered a moderate but steady housing contribution. The SHLAA update has assumed that 20% of all identified backland sites (196 in total) will be developed for housing over the 15 year period at an average density of 30 dwellings per hectare.
RSS backlog:	-637	-212.33	-212.33	-212.33	This figure represents Sefton's backlog of under provision against the RSS housing target of 500 dwellings per annum since 2003.
Demolitions:	-653	-653	0	0	All known demolitions including those associated with Housing Market Renewal (and successor regeneration programmes).
GRAND TOTAL:	3384	2032	872	480	

SHLAA Sites by Settlement

Bootle & Netherton

	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	Totals
Sites with planning permission	941	89	0	1030
Sites w/o planning permission	318	506	386	1208.8
Demolitions:	-634	0	0	-634
Totals	624.6	594.6	385.6	1605

Crosby & Hightown

	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	Totals
Sites with planning permission	337	0	0	337
Sites w/o planning permission	47	49	0	96
Demolitions:	-4	0	0	-4
Totals	380.2	48.8	0	429

Formby

	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	Totals
Sites with planning permission	106	0	0	106
Sites w/o planning permission	46	16	36	98.4
Demolitions:	-11	0	0	-11
Totals	141.4	16	36	193

Maghull & Aintree

	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	Totals
Sites with planning permission	83	0	0	83
Sites w/o planning permission	19	29	9	57
Demolitions:	-1	0	0	-1
Totals	101.2	28.8	8.8	139

Southport

	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	Totals
Sites with planning permission	578	0	0	578
Sites w/o planning permission	470	354	220	1044
Backland Sites Allowance	41.67	41.67	41.67	125
Demolitions:	-7	0	0	-7
Totals	1082.27	396.07	261.67	1740

Please note: some of the 'totals' for each settlement equate to 1 more/less dwellings than is implied by the figures in the table. This is due to rounding errors.

Please also note: the settlement-specific tables above do not include any allowance for RSS backlog, or discounting applied to planning permissions.

Appendix 1 – Schedule of Sites with Planning Permission at 1st April 2011

This appendix provides details of all sites with a current planning permission in place at 1st April 2010. These sites form part of the SHLAA assessment of housing land supply.

Appendix 2 – Site Assessment Sheets