



Local Plan Review

Methodology for Assessing Potential Sites

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Introduction

- 1.1 Rutland County Council is preparing a Review of its Local Plan. This will update the following “Development Plan Documents” (DPDs) and replace them with a single local plan:
- Minerals Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD (October 2010)
 - Core Strategy DPD (July 2011)
 - Site Allocations and Policies DPD (October 2014)
- 1.2 The Local Plan Review will extend the plan period to 2036 and allocate sites for any new housing or other development that may be required to meet requirements over the plan period.
- 1.3 As a first stage in identifying the sites to be allocated in the Local Plan Review, developers, landowners, town and parish councils, and other interested parties are being invited to submit sites for inclusion in plan through a “Call for sites” process.
- 1.4 It should be noted that sites put forward through the Call for Sites will not necessarily be included as allocations in the plan. All sites put forward will be processed outlined below in order to help determine their suitability for inclusion as allocations in the Local Plan Review.
- 1.5 This note sets out the methodology for assessing potential sites for inclusion in the Local Plan Review. It will be subject to consultation with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Bodies (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) for their views on the proposed process and methodology.

Site assessment process

- 1.6 The aim of the site assessment process is to help determine which sites are the most suitable for allocating for development in the Local Plan Review.
- 1.7 The site assessment process will primarily be desktop based with the purpose of providing a robust overview of the development potential of sites. In some instances, however, further detailed studies may be needed to assist in the consideration of sites, for example in relation to landscape capacity /sensitivity and transport issues.
- 1.8 The assessment will consider:
- a) all the sites submitted to the Council through the “Call for Sites” process (see Paragraph 1.3 above);
 - b) other potential sites that may have previously been identified through the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA);
 - c) any undeveloped allocations from the Site Allocations and Policies DPD (2014) and the Minerals Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD (2010).

Stage 1 – Assessment against minimum site size threshold

- 1.9 All sites will initially be assessed against a minimum site size threshold. This is the minimum size of site that it is considered feasible to allocate for development in the Local Plan Review. It is based on the minimum size of site recommended in government planning practice guidance for housing and economic land availability assessments, adjusted for local circumstances.
- 1.10 The minimum site size threshold is:
- a) 0.15 ha for housing sites, which represents at least 6 dwellings in the Oakham and Uppingham and 4-5 dwellings in the larger villages and elsewhere
 - b) 0.25 ha (or 500m² floorspace) for sites for economic development.
- 1.11 It should be noted that the exclusion of a site from further consideration on this basis does not imply that that the site is not suitable for development, but rather that it is too small to be considered suitable for allocating for development.

Stage 2 - Compliance with key locational policies

- 1.12 Sites that meet the site size threshold outlined above will be assessed in order to determine whether they meet the key locational policies set out in national planning policy and in the Draft Consultative Local Plan, July 2017. These policies are intended to focus development in the most sustainable locations in the towns and larger villages and to restrict development in unsustainable locations in the villages and countryside.
- 1.13 Examples of sites unlikely to be allocated in the Local Plan Review on the basis of these policies are:
- a) sites below the minimum site-size threshold outlined above;
 - b) sites in the Smaller Service Centres and Smaller Villages with the exception of affordable housing sites, infill developments and conversion or reuse of redundant suitable rural buildings;
 - c) sites in the countryside that do not adjoin the planned limits of development of settlements apart from development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside.
- 1.14 Sites put forward for minerals extraction and minerals related development will be assessed to determine whether they meet the key policies in the Consultative Draft relating to the location of future mineral working.

Stage 3 - Detailed assessment against environmental, social and economic factors

- 1.15 A more detailed assessment will be carried out on all those sites that meet the site size threshold and key locational policies outlined above.
- 1.16 Each site will be assessed against a range of environmental, social and economic factors. These factors have been devised to link with the Sustainability

Appraisal (SA) objectives. The site assessments will be recorded in a tabular format (see Appendix 1) which shows for each site:

- a) the factors assessed;
- b) a summary of the site's impact or suitability against each of the factors assessed;
- c) a colour coding (red/orange/yellow/green) for each of the factors identified under b) above according to its impact or the suitability of the site.

- 1.17 The purpose of the colour coding or "traffic light system" in c) above is to allow visual comparison between the sites in terms of the factors assessed and to highlight any significant constraints.
- 1.18 An impact risk rating (see Appendix 2) will be carried out for any waste management or minerals related sites in order to identify the potential scale and level of any impact and to allow comparison between the sites.

Stage 4 - Conclusions and recommended sites

- 1.19 On the basis of the site assessments outlined above, a comparison matrix will be drawn up showing all the sites in terms of the colour codings identified. This will allow comparison between all the sites on a visual basis.
- 1.20 Conclusions will be set out as to the most suitable sites to be allocated for development in the Local Plan Review having regards to the factors identified in the site assessments, the need for the particular development and any other factors that may be relevant.
- 1.21 The conclusions will set out:
 - a) the sites recommended as being suitable for inclusion as allocations in the Local Plan Review and the main reasons for selection of each site;
 - b) sites that are not recommended as being suitable for allocating in the Local Plan Review setting out the main reasons for the exclusion of each site.
- 1.22 The Site Appraisals document will subsequently be updated to take account of the response to consultation on the Consultation Draft version of the Local Plan Review and any additional sites put forward through that process.

Sustainability appraisal process

- 1.23 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process involves assessing the potential sites in terms of their likely impact on the sustainability objectives that have been identified (see Appendix 1). This process will help in comparing the potential sites in terms of their potential impact on these objectives.
- 1.24 The SA will be informed by the site assessment process outlined above, which examines the suitability of each site in terms of a range of environmental, social and economic issues. The links between the plan-making, SA and site assessment processes are illustrated in Appendix 3.

- 1.25 In carrying out the SA of sites it is intended that sites will be grouped with sites having similar characteristics and be appraised as a group. Examples of groupings could include:
- sites that do not meet the site-size threshold;
 - sites in Smaller Service Centres and Small Villages that it is proposed to exclude on the basis of non-compliance with Consultative Draft Local Plan policies on the location of development;
 - sites in the countryside that do not adjoin the built-up area that it is proposed to exclude on the basis of non-compliance with the Consultative Draft Local Plan policies on the location of development;
 - sites within and adjoining Oakham, Uppingham and the Local Service Centres that are being subject to consultation in the Local Plan Review.
- 1.26 The findings of the SA together with the site assessment process will help in determining the most appropriate sites for inclusion in the Consultative Draft Local Plan.

Proposed site assessment criteria and related sustainability appraisal objectives

Category	Criteria	Related SA objective
Stage 1: Initial assessment against key policy considerations		
Key policy considerations	Compliance with key locational policies in national policy and the Consultative Draft Local Plan.	
Stage 2: Detailed assessment against environmental, social and economic factors		
Environmental		
• Topography	Whether land flat, sloping etc	
• Agricultural land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenfield or brown field site • Agricultural land quality • Impact on agricultural activities 	12. To protect the natural resources of the region – including water, air, soil and minerals.
• Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on biodiversity and geodiversity, in particular on locally, nationally and internationally designated sites • Impact on trees and hedgerows 	9. To increase biodiversity and geodiversity.
• Cultural heritage	<p>Impact on designated and locally important heritage assets and their setting including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled Ancient Monuments • Registered Parks and Gardens • Conservation areas • Listed buildings • Archaeological sites 	<p>6. To provide opportunities for people to value and enjoy Rutland's heritage and participate in cultural and recreational activities, whilst preserving and enhancing the environment.</p> <p>10. To protect and enhance the natural, heritage and built environmental assets of the area and their setting.</p>
• Landscape and townscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on landscape and townscape character • Impact in relation to scale and character of existing community • Impact on historic landscape character 	<p>10. To protect and enhance the natural, heritage and built environmental assets of the area and their setting.</p> <p>11. To protect and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the rural landscape of Rutland.</p>

Proposed site assessment criteria and related sustainability appraisal objectives

Category	Criteria	Related SA objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of recreational or public open space land 	Impact on recreational opportunities and open spaces	1 To provide opportunities for people to value and enjoy Rutland's heritage and participate in cultural and recreational activities, whilst preserving and enhancing the environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for new green infrastructure 	Potential for site to provide new green infrastructure including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The wider green infrastructure network Links between existing green infrastructure 	6. To provide opportunities for people to value and enjoy Rutland's heritage and participate in cultural and recreational activities, whilst preserving and enhancing the environment. 9. To increase biodiversity and geodiversity. 11. To protect and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the rural landscape of Rutland.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water conservation and management/flood risk 	Susceptibility to, and impact on, flood risk.	12. To protect the natural resources of the region – including water, air and soil. 16. To reduce the risk and impact of flooding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contamination 	Whether site contaminated.	12. To protect the natural resources of the region – including water, air and soil.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental quality and human health* 	Impacts in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air quality and pollution Noise and vibration Odours Bio aerosols Vermin and birds Litter Bird strike hazard Potential for residual environmental nuisance Potential for cumulative impacts 	5. To improve access to health and social care provision and maintain good health standards. 12. To protect the natural resources of the region – including water, air and soil.

Proposed site assessment criteria and related sustainability appraisal objectives

Category	Criteria	Related SA objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration and after use* 	Potential for beneficial restoration and after use	12. To protect the natural resources of the region – including water, air and soil.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste management* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable communities to take more responsibility for their own waste Contribution towards sustainable waste management and a reduction in reliance on land filling Co-location of facilities together and with complementary activities 	13. To minimise waste, increase recycling and promote sustainable waste management.
Social		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liveability 	Factors that might affect “liveability”: e.g. proximity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> noisy industry busy roads, electricity pylons 	4. To help achieve housing stock that meets the housing needs of Rutland.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to services and facilities 	Proximity to services and facilities including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shops Primary school Secondary school Doctors and health facilities Employment 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility to public transport. 	Proximity to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus routes Railway stations 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amenity of existing residents and adjacent land uses 	Impact on neighbouring communities and adjacent land uses	
Economic		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available, viable and deliverable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether ownership is known Whether owner wishes to develop the site Whether any existing operational land use will cease Whether is an attractive site likely to come forward 	

Proposed site assessment criteria and related sustainability appraisal objectives

Category	Criteria	Related SA objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure available 	Availability of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity • Gas • Water • Drainage • sewerage 	3. To promote the infrastructure necessary to support economic growth and attract a range of business types.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility and transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and effective access to and from the site • Opportunities for walking and cycling • Opportunities to incorporate sustainable transport options • Conflicts with non-industrial traffic on access routes used by heavy commercial vehicles 	15. To reduce the adverse effects of traffic and improve transport infrastructure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on the wider road network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity of transport infrastructure to accommodate type and level of traffic resulting from the proposal • Potential impact on existing road network 	15. To reduce the adverse effects of traffic and improve transport infrastructure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights of way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on public footpaths and bridleways 	6. To provide opportunities for people to value and enjoy Rutland's heritage and participate in cultural and recreational activities, whilst preserving and enhancing the environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for decentralised and renewable energy generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions • Opportunities for renewable energy generation 	14. To minimise energy usage and promote the use of renewable energy sources. 17. Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that cause climate change and adapt to its effects.

Proposed site assessment criteria and related sustainability appraisal objectives

Category	Criteria	Related SA objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for the development 	Need for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment opportunities • affordable housing • waste management facilities • rural diversification • retail development • minerals 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create high quality employment opportunities for all. 2. To encourage sustainable business formation and development in urban and rural areas. 4. To help achieve housing stock that meets the housing needs of Rutland. 8. To promote and support the development of community facilities in all areas, particularly rural areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other constraints 		

* = Applicable to sites proposed for waste management purposes only.

Impact risk rating

Scale of impact

Scale	Definition
Negligible	So small or unimportant that it may safely be neglected or disregarded.
Minor	Beneficial impact resulting in slight increase in quality or character enhancement.
	Adverse impact resulting in slight damage or harm likely to be ameliorated by mitigation measures. Identified constraints are acceptable.
Moderate	Beneficial impact resulting in an increase in quality or character enhancement.
	Adverse impact resulting in significant damage or harm leading to noticeable loss. Identified constraints are significant however avoidance and / or mitigation measures are possible.
Major	Beneficial impact resulting in extensive and significant increase in quality or character enhancement.
	Adverse impact resulting in physical destruction or extensive harm leading to significant loss. Identified constraints are unlikely to be able to be mitigated effectively.

Impact risk rating

	Scale of impact				
Level of impact	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
National	Negligible	Moderate	High	Very high	Adverse
County or sub-regional	Negligible	Low	Moderate	High	
Local	Negligible	Low	Low	Moderate	
Local	Negligible	Low	Low	Moderate	Beneficial
County or sub-regional	Negligible	Low	Moderate	High	
National	Negligible	Moderate	High	Very high	

Links between the plan making and SA process and the assessment method

Rutland Consultative Draft Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Objectives
1. To create high quality employment opportunities for all.
2. To encourage sustainable business formation and development in urban and rural areas.
3. To promote the infrastructure necessary to support economic growth and attract a range of business types.
4. Facilitate the delivery of a steady and adequate supply of minerals to support sustainable growth and safeguard mineral resources and related development from sterilisation and incompatible forms of development.
5. To help achieve a housing stock that meets the needs of Rutland.
6. To improve access to health and social care provision and maintain good health standards
7. To improve community safety and reduce crime.
8. To promote and support the development of community facilities in all areas particularly rural areas.
9. To provide opportunities for people to value and enjoy Rutland's heritage and participate in cultural and recreational activities, whilst preserving and enhancing the environment.
10. To conserve or enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings.
11. To increase biodiversity and geodiversity
12. To protect and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the natural environment and rural landscape of Rutland.
13. To protect the natural resources of the region - including water, air and soil.
14. To minimise waste, increase recycling and promote sustainable waste management.
15. To minimise energy usage and promote the use of renewable energy sources.
16. To reduce the adverse effects of traffic and improve transport infrastructure.
17. To reduce the risk and impact of flooding.
18. Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that cause climate change and adapt to its effects.
19. Progressively restore mineral development land, seeking to maximise beneficial opportunities.

Links between the plan making and SA process and the assessment method

