

Leicester Local Plan
Sites Methodology June 2017

Introduction

1. Leicester City Council is preparing a new local plan for the city. The plan will include strategic policies on housing and economic growth in particular, and a suite of development management policies against which proposals for development will be considered.
2. The plan will also include land use site allocations and designations. For instance this includes sites allocated for housing and employment development and sites designated as open spaces.
3. The purpose of this document is to explain the process of how sites will be put forward as allocations and designations in the local plan.
4. This document is split into two parts:
 - Part 1 - Site assessment Methodology
 - The purpose of this part of the document is to set out the methodology of how sites will be assessed for their suitability for inclusion as allocations or designations in the new local plan. It sets out the proposed stages of assessment which will be undertaken to assess the suitability of sites.
 - Part 2 - Proposed Assessment Criteria
 - This part sets out the proposed assessment criteria which will be used to assess the suitability of the sites during stage 2 of the sites assessment.
5. We welcome comments on the proposed site assessment methodology and proposed Assessment Criteria, in particular if there are other issues or factors which we should take into account when identifying and assessing sites.
6. If you wish to comment on particular potential development sites as part of the current consultation, or wish to submit additional sites for consideration, please see the separate Potential Development Sites document.

Part 1 - Site assessment Methodology

7. There are a series of proposed stages to the assessment of sites and these are explained below. It is proposed that at each stage any sites that do not pass the requirements of the stage will be removed from the process and will be considered no further.

- Stage 1 - Initial site identification
- Stage 2 – Suitability/Availability assessment
- Stage 3 – Accordance with spatial, strategic and sustainability policies and objectives of Local Plan
- Stage 4 – Viability/Deliverability
- Stage 5 – Allocations in Local Plan

Stage 1 - Initial site identification (Current stage)

8. The list of potential development sites (see separate potential development sites document) includes sites which are 0.5 hectares or more in size and which do not currently benefit from planning permission.
9. The initial source of sites was the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The SHLAA is a database of sites which are generally considered to be suitable, available and viable for development. The SHLAA includes a variety of sites including those with planning permission, existing plan allocations or sites which have been submitted to the council by private land owners/developers for inclusion in the SHLAA.
10. The SHLAA database was examined and any sites which met the requirements in paragraph 8 above were selected for inclusion in the list of potential development sites.
11. In addition a number of other privately owned sites have been submitted to the council for consideration in this process and, where they met the requirements in paragraph 8, were included in the list of potential development sites. There will be opportunities for additional sites to be put forward to the council during the preparation of the local plan.
12. Finally all Leicester City Council owned open space of 0.5 hectares or above has been included. The purpose of this is to ensure that the council considers all options for accommodating additional housing and economic growth, as well as retaining sites in their current use. This includes parks, playing pitches, allotments, farmland/pastures and school playing fields. Council owned land which is long term leased out (beyond the time period of the plan) has generally not been included in the list of sites.
13. All the sites which met the requirements of the initial site identification are set out in the Potential Development Sites document. Further details on how to give comments on those sites is set out in that document.

Stage 2 – Suitability/Availability assessment (Next stage)

14. Following the current Potential Development Sites consultation it is proposed that sites will be assessed for their suitability and availability for development. The purpose of this stage is to ensure that only the most suitable and sustainable sites are taken forward in the process. The proposed methodology will involve each site being assessed against a range of criteria and rated as either green, yellow or red against each criterion dependent on their suitability. The more suitable sites will receive more greens with sites receiving reds likely to be less suitable.
15. It is proposed that an initial sift of sites will be undertaken before a full assessment. This will involve assessing each site for their flood risk, impact on heritage assets and impact on biodiversity. Sites which receive a red score in any of these three criteria will be removed from the process, on the basis that the presence of any of these red constraints would mean there would be no or limited potential to develop the site.
16. Following this initial sift the remaining sites will be assessed against a full range of social, environmental and economic criteria. Part 2 of this document sets out the proposed assessment criteria and the way in which each site will be assessed against that factor. Where only parts of a site are affected by, for example, flood risk a judgement will be made whether the remainder of the site could still be considered suitable to remain in the process.
17. An assessment form will be completed for each site explaining how it was assessed against each criterion. At this stage we will also consider comments received on the sites during the current Potential Development Sites consultation process.
18. Any additional sites submitted to us for consideration during the current consultation will also be considered at this stage.

Stage 3 – Accordance with spatial, strategic and sustainability policies and objectives of the Local Plan

19. It is proposed that the sites will be considered against the policies and objectives set out in the emerging new local plan. The purpose of this stage is to ensure any sites put forward as allocations or designations are in line with the overall strategy and aims of the emerging local plan.
20. This will be an ongoing assessment as the spatial, strategic and sustainability policies and objectives of the emerging local plan are developed.

Stage 4 – Viability/Deliverability

21. As part of the wider whole plan viability assessment it is proposed that the sites will be assessed for their development viability against the requirements of the emerging local plan policies, and for their overall deliverability.

Stage 5 – Allocations in Local Plan

22. The sites that have passed all of the above stages will then be considered for inclusion in the local plan. Following further public consultation an independent examination will then be held to assess the plan. Should the plan subsequently be found sound it will be adopted and the sites within it will become local plan allocations and/or designations.

Part 2 – Proposed Assessment Criteria

| Criteria | Site cannot comply with indicator | Site could potentially comply with indicator | Site complies with indicator |
|---|---|--|--|
| Flooding (Environment Agency flooding data) | Most or all of site (or the only access route) is within Flood Zone 3b (functional flood plain) | Most or all of site is within Flood Zone 3a or 2 (areas of decreasing flood risk) | Most or all of site is within Flood Zone 1 (area with very low flood risk) |
| Biodiversity/ geodiversity | The site is in or could impact upon Site of Special Scientific Interest | The site is in or could impact upon a Local Wildlife Site (formerly Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation), Local Nature Reserve or Regionally Important Geological Site. Development would require the removal of trees protected with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) | The site is unlikely to affect sites or features of recognised biodiversity or geodiversity importance |
| Heritage assets (heritage assets are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework) | Development of the site would lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a heritage asset | Development of the site may have the potential to affect a heritage asset however it is possible that this could be mitigated as part of the development | Development of the site is unlikely to affect a heritage asset |

| Criteria | Site cannot comply with indicator | Site could potentially comply with indicator | Site complies with indicator |
|---|--|--|---|
| Physical Constraints/ Topography | The site is too irregular/steep sloping etc. to safely accommodate development and/or there are other physical constraints such as pylon, gas mains, gas holders which would prevent development | There are physical or topographical constraints however it is possible that these could be mitigated as part of the development | There are no known physical or topographical constraints which would prevent the development of the site |
| Pollution/contamination | There are pollution and/or contamination constraints which would prevent the development of the site | There are pollution and/or contamination constraints however it is possible that these could be mitigated as part of the development | There are no known pollution and/or contamination constraints which would prevent the development of the site |
| Green Wedge (Green wedges are extensive areas of predominantly open and green land that penetrate towards the City Centre from the edge of the City. They are identified in the 2014 Core Strategy) | Development of the site would not be in accordance with the four functions of green wedges. | Development of the site would be in accordance with some of the four functions of green wedges. | Development of the site would be in accordance with the four functions of green wedges. |

| Criteria | Site cannot comply with indicator | Site could potentially comply with indicator | Site complies with indicator |
|--|---|---|---|
| Open Space Quantity (Further background on open space is in the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study 2017) | Development of the site would result in the loss of open space in a location already deficient in open space which cannot be mitigated against. | Development of the site would result in the loss of open space in an area already deficient in open space. It is likely that this could be mitigated as part of the development through on site open space provision or enhancing nearby open spaces. | Development of the site would result in the loss of open space in an area that has sufficient open space. Development of the site would not cause an undersupply of open space in the area. |
| Open Space Quality | Development of the site would cause a high quality or recently updated open space to be lost. | Development of the site would cause part of a good quality or recently updated open space to be lost. | Development of the site would not result in the loss of a good quality or recently updated open space to be lost. |
| Open Space Accessibility | The site is more than 1200 metres safe walking distance of nearest open space | The site is within 800-1200 metres safe walking distance of nearest open space | The site is within 800 metres safe walking distance of nearest open space |
| Loss of playing pitches (See Playing Pitch Strategy 2017 for further background) | Development of the site would result in the unacceptable loss of playing pitches and no alternative suitable provision could be provided. | Development of the site would result in the loss of playing pitches however they could be replaced by an equivalent or better suitable provision | Development of the site would not result in the loss of playing pitches |
| Access to site | No safe and direct vehicular and/or pedestrian access to the site is possible | There is no safe and direct vehicular and/or pedestrian access to the site possible at present but this could be overcome as part of development | There is existing safe and direct pedestrian and vehicular access |

| Criteria | Site cannot comply with indicator | Site could potentially comply with indicator | Site complies with indicator |
|---|--|--|--|
| Impact on road network | The development would have an unacceptable impact on the road network | The development would have an unacceptable impact on the road network however it is possible that this could be mitigated as part of the development | The development would not have an unacceptable impact on the road network |
| Access to local facilities and schools | Nearest local centre and/or primary school more than 1200m safe walking distance | Nearest local centre and primary school both within 800-1200 metres safe walking distance | Nearest local centre and primary school both within 800 metres safe walking distance |
| Access to public transport | The site is more than 1200m safe walking distance from a regular bus route/stops | The site is within 800-1200 metres safe walking distance from a regular bus route/stops | The site is within 800 metres safe walking distance from a regular bus route/stops |
| Impact from and on neighbouring uses | The nature of existing neighbouring uses could prevent the development of the site or development could prejudice the existing use of neighbouring sites or their future development | Development of the site could be affected by neighbouring uses however it is possible that this could be mitigated as part of the development | Development of the site is unlikely to be affected by neighbouring uses |
| Legal/Ownership | There are unresolvable legal or ownership constraints which could prevent the development of the site within the plan period | There are legal or ownership constraints which could be resolved prior to development | There are no known legal or ownership constraints |

| Criteria | Site cannot comply with indicator | Site could potentially comply with indicator | Site complies with indicator |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Minerals and waste | The site is a minerals safeguarding location which would prevent development of the site | N/A | Not a minerals safeguarding site/or development of the site is not prevented by being a minerals safeguarding location |
| Infrastructure Requirements | The site requires significant expenditure on infrastructure before development can take place which is unlikely to be delivered within the plan period | Significant infrastructure is required before development can take place however it is expected this will be in place during the plan period to allow development to occur | There are no known significant infrastructure requirements before development can take place |
| Availability | The site would not be available with the timescale of the plan | It is likely that the site could be available within the timescale of the plan however there is potential for uncertainty | The site is available for development within the timescale of the plan |