

Report of the Director of City Strategy

City of York Housing Land Availability Assessment – Consultation on Proposed Methodology

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to seek members views on the proposed methodology for the City of York Housing Land Availability Assessment prior to undertaking the study. This is part of a wider consultation with a range of key stakeholders. All comments will be reported back to members in due course along with the draft study for member consideration.

Background

2. A Housing Land Availability Assessment (HLAA) provides information on the opportunities that exist to meet future housing need within an identified area. The information from the HLAA will be used to inform the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) and is a key element of the evidence base. The Core Strategy will set out the key elements of the planning framework for the City of York including the spatial vision for York and the strategic policies required to deliver that vision.
3. A HLAA is not intended to do the job of a Development Plan Document (DPD). Whilst it will identify land it will not make a judgement about whether a site is developable or not. The role of the HLAA is to identify potential sites and their constraints and for the plan making process, through the Allocations DPD, to assess these constraints and make a judgement as to the extent to which they are developable. Equally the assessment will not make any judgements about whether a site offers the most sustainable site for development – again this is a matter for the plan making process which will have to weigh the merits of different sites according to economic, social and environmental costs and benefits. The assessment simply forms part of the evidence base for the plan.
4. The Housing Land Availability Assessment was introduced in the draft Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing in December 2005¹. This guidance superseded the previous guidance – ‘Tapping the Potential’ on the production of Urban Capacity studies². The main change between the guidance is that

¹ Draft Planning Policy Statement 3, Annex B, December 2005, ODPM

² Tapping the Potential, December 2000, DETR

previous urban capacity studies identified sites just within the main urban area and the new guidance advises that smaller villages and rural areas are included within the study to gain a better estimate of housing potential. The guidance also considers that timescales should be applied to the potential sites by the study so that the release of land can be managed more effectively.

5. The final Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) was released in November 2006³. This statement sets out a new approach for planning for housing, including the identification of sufficient land for the plan period of 15 years, ensuring that the first five years are allocated and developable and that the five year supply is maintained as sites are developed out. PPS3 requires sites for potential allocation to be both developable and deliverable and advises that this information should be drawn from the housing land availability assessment.
6. PPS3 states that the final guidance on producing housing land availability assessments is currently being produced in association with the Local Government Association and the Home Builders Federation and the aim is to publish the guidance early in 2007. Advice sought from both the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Government Officer for Yorkshire and the Humber suggests that the final guidance will not differ greatly from the draft guidance and that local authorities should base their studies as close as possible to the draft guidance.
7. The Council produced an Urban Capacity Study in 2003. The study identified future sites for development and assessed their best possible use by using criteria based on the Tapping the Potential guidance. The 2003 Urban Capacity Study fed into the site allocation process for the City of York draft Development Control Local Plan (April 2005). It has been 4 years since much of the work was undertaken for the previous study and new guidance has also been produced. It is therefore considered necessary to carry out a new comprehensive study rather than just an update to the previous study.
8. There are six key stages to the HLAA methodology, as set out in the draft guidance:
 - *Establishing the process with partners;*
 - *Identifying all the settlements where housing could be provided;*
 - *Considering all potential sources of supply for new housing within these settlements;*
 - *To quantify the supply – i.e. how many houses can these sources of supply potentially deliver;*
 - *To determine the likely level of windfall; and*
 - *Considering ‘developability’*

³ Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) – Housing, November 2006, DCLG

The draft methodology (Annex A to this report) sets out the proposed approach to each of these stages for members comments.

Consultation

9. The proposed methodology is being presented to members so that they may make comments and to raise awareness of the study. It has also been sent to key stakeholders in order to establish links with partners. The list of consultees has been drawn from the Statement of Community Involvement. A full list of consultees can be seen in annex 1 of the report. Consultees will be asked to comment on the methodology, in particular the thresholds for identifying sites, the proposed stages of the assessment, the windfall thresholds and discounts and the constraints criteria. The report has also been placed on the City of York Council website.
10. Following the production of the Housing Land Availability Assessment further related consultation will be undertaken as part of the production of the Allocations Development Plan Document. This consultation will involve a 'call for sites' and will take place in November/December 2007. The results will enable the Housing Land Availability Assessment to be updated. At this stage we will contact a wide range of landowners and agents in order to help identify sites that may become available for development up to 2029. This will assist us in the identification of sites, as it will utilise the knowledge of the landowners and agents on the availability of sites and any issues regarding their development. New sites that are identified as part of this consultation will be assessed using the same methodology as is proposed in this report.

Options

11. Subject to Members views and comments on the proposed methodology and the results of the stakeholder consultation the Housing Land Availability Assessment will be undertaken using the proposed methodology and a draft report will be produced in Spring 2007 for member comment.

Analysis

12. It is important to establish a sound evidence base when establishing new planning policies for City of York. It is equally important that the issues raised and options as to how these key evidence base studies are completed should be subject to consultation.

Corporate Priorities

12. The option set out above accords with the following Corporate Strategic Priorities:
 - Improve the quality and availability of decent homes people can afford
 - Improve the way the council and its partners work together to deliver better services for the people who live in York.

Implications

13. The following implications have been assessed:

- **Financial** None
- **Human Resources (HR)** None
- **Equalities** None
- **Legal** None
- **Crime and Disorder** None
- **Information Technology (IT)** None
- **Property** None
- **Other** None

Risk Management

14. The policies prepared by the Council as local planning authority should be founded on a thorough understanding of the needs of the area and the opportunities and constraints which operate within the area. The preparation of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment will provide an important part of the overall evidence base. Its preparation will ensure that the preparation of policies is not compromised by unrealistic expectations and provide the basis for the Council's consideration of future options. Failure to provide such an evidence base would raise issues about the validity of the Council's proposals.

Recommendations

15. That members:

- I. Provide comments and views on the proposed methodology for the Housing Land Availability Assessment prior to officers undertaking the assessment.
- II. That the views of members will be taken into account alongside those from other key stakeholders in finalising the methodology for the Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Reason

To ensure that the methodology used to undertake the assessment is appropriate in relation to guidance and local circumstances.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) – Housing, November 2006, DCLG
Housing Land Availability Assessments: Identifying appropriate land for housing development, Draft Practice Guidance, December 2005, ODPM

Annexes

Annex A: Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology, Consultation Draft, February 2007