

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2013/14)

Purpose :

To present the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment ('the Assessment') (2013/14) for information.

Recommendations :

That members note the contents of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2013/14).

Reason :

The preparation of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is required by national planning policy and helps to inform planning policy decisions about the amount and location of new housing in the Borough. The Assessment is expected to generate some public interest and this report is brought to the committee to explain the context and help members respond to any public comments.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment ('the Assessment') (2013/14) sets out the potential future supply of land in the Borough, as of 1 April 2013, that is suitable, available and achievable for housing development during remaining part of the plan period, 2013 – 2026. It is important to note that the Assessment is very much a theoretical exercise because not all of the sites identified will be developed for housing during the plan period, and other sites may come forward in their place. Similarly the Assessment does not indicate that planning permission should be granted for development of a site and furthermore any comments on the suitability of a site, or otherwise, are not intended to be taken into account, at least by the Borough Council, in the determination of planning applications. It is not a 'policy' document.

1.2 The process of identifying sites with potential for housing development involves assessing:

- The amount of housing each site could provide (the 'capacity' of the site);
- Whether a site is suitable for development; and
- The likelihood of development coming forward.

At this stage only a preliminary assessment is carried out and in most cases the site capacity is only intended as an estimate and should not be deemed to be fixed.

1.3 Assessing the suitability of sites is guided by national planning policy, including national guidance, and the relevant part of the development plan, which in this Council's case is the adopted Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core

Strategy (the 'Core Strategy') – as the most recent and thus up to date part of the development plan. The results of the Assessment are then used:

- To determine whether there is enough land to meet the housing target for the Borough, as identified in the adopted Core Strategy;
- To inform the five year housing land supply; and
- To establish a 'housing supply trajectory' (or forecast), which indicates how development might be phased to come forward over the plan period.

1.4 The Assessment is also used to inform plan making, but does not allocate sites for development or determine whether a site should be allocated. It simply identifies a potential supply of sites from which the sites most suitable for allocation can be selected. The results of the assessment also play a valuable role in helping to monitor the implementation of policy. This is important in considering whether the policies of the Core Strategy, in relation to housing supply, are effective and responsive to current market information and if not whether there is a need to change the direction of planning policy.

1.5 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the key findings of the Assessment (2013/14) and should be read in conjunction with that Assessment. It is important to note that the Assessment represents a 'snap-shot' of the housing land supply position as at 1 April 2013.

1.6 In line with national guidance the Assessment is regularly updated and the next document will represent the potential land supply position at 1 April 2014. It is this next Assessment which will be used to inform the process of deciding which sites should be allocated for housing and other development in the new Local Plan.

1.7 Given the size of the Assessment document with its appendices, the document is not being attached to this report but a hard copy of the Assessment (2013/14) will be available for inspection in Democratic Services.

2.0 **Background**

2.1 National planning policy context

2.2 The Assessment (2013/14) has been produced in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and with current national guidance on how assessments of housing land availability should be carried out. This is set out in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment : Practice Guidance, 2007. For information the draft National Planning Practice Guidance (published in August 2013) contains broadly the same guidance as the 2007 Guidance, which it will ultimately replace.

2.3 Local planning policy context

2.4 Members will be aware that the Core Spatial Strategy sets a total target of 5,700 new homes to be built in the borough during the plan period (2006 – 2026). It also identifies four Spatial Areas: Newcastle Urban Central; Newcastle Urban South and East; Kidsgrove; and the Rural Area, and indicates the level of

housing required in each of these spatial areas. The aim is to maintain a supply of suitable and available housing sites sufficient to meet these needs.

2.5 The Assessment helps to track progress towards meeting the targets in the Core Strategy and in doing so takes into consideration new information about potential housing sites and completed housing developments within the Borough gathered through the residential land use monitoring processes. The Assessment (2013/14) has also taken into account new site nominations and other information on sites gathered during the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation undertaken in 2012.

2.6 Content of the Assessment

2.7 The Assessment (2013/14) includes:

- a covering report, which summarises the national and local planning policy context, the methodology followed (section 4) and key findings (section 5); and
- a set of appendices providing key information on all the sites that have been identified.

2.8 Sites have been categorised into:

- those that could provide housing during the plan period (listed in Appendix 2 of the Assessment); and
- those excluded from the assessment (now listed in a single schedule at Appendix 4 of the Assessment).

2.9 Appendix 2 of the Assessment is divided into three sections:

- sites in the five year supply;
- sites that could be developed in years 6-10; and
- sites that could be developed in years 11-13.

Each section contains separate schedules for each of the four spatial areas. Within each of these schedules, sites are listed alphabetically by ward and then by site address. Each site is mapped and given a unique reference number.

2.10 Maps of excluded sites are provided in Appendix 5 of the Assessment.

2.11 Members will be aware that a report to this Committee on 4 June 2013 reported the results of the Borough's five year housing land supply calculation as of 1 April 2013. The Assessment (2013/14) identifies each site in the deliverable five year housing land supply i.e. those sites which by April last year had a valid planning permission for residential development, or had been subject to extensive recent developer interest for residential development.

3.0 **Identifying suitable sites for housing**

- 3.1 Sites have been assessed through both desktop analysis and site visits. In order to ensure sites are assessed consistently a standardised site survey pro-forma is used. A copy of the pro-forma is available in Appendix 6 of the Assessment.
- 3.2 In line with the policies of the Core Strategy, sites in the urban areas of Newcastle and Kidsgrove are generally considered to offer suitable locations for housing. Sites within the village envelopes of Loggerheads, Madeley and the villages of Audley Parish are also considered to offer suitable locations for housing. Members are reminded that these villages are identified in the Core Strategy as providing the most comprehensive range of essential local services in the rural area.
- 3.2 In assessing whether sites offer suitable locations for housing, regard has also been had to policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in paragraph 14. In effect, this means that proposed developments are generally considered to be sustainable unless the adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The 2007 Guidance further states that *"A site is suitable for housing development if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities"*. For the purposes of the Assessment this has been interpreted to mean that sites without access to a range of services and facilities, and to a choice of modes of transport, are generally considered not to offer suitable locations for housing.
- 3.3 Factors which might limit the potential capacity of a site, and in some circumstances might ultimately affect whether a particular site could be developed for housing, have also been taken into consideration. Such constraints could include land contamination, proximity to noisy roads, and potential ecological impacts. Known constraints are identified in the Assessment (2013/14), but it is generally assumed that they could be resolved during the planning application process.

4.0 Key findings

4.1 Overall Supply

- 4.2 The total capacity of all the housing sites identified in the assessment is 3,427. Taking into account all housing completions and conversions between April 2006 (the beginning of the plan period) up until 31 March 2013, there is now a requirement to build 4,018 houses in the period up to 2026. This clearly indicates that there is a shortfall of housing land across the Borough as a whole.
- 4.3 To determine whether there is potentially enough land in each of the four Spatial Areas, the total capacity of potential housing sites in each Spatial Area is compared with the amount of housing required to meet the remaining Core Strategy indicative targets for each Area. Again the calculation of the requirement takes account of all housing completions and conversions up to 31 March 2013. The results show:-

- A shortfall in Newcastle Urban Central (including Silverdale, Thistleberry, Knutton, Cross Heath, Chesterton and the Town Centre) : capacity of 1,628 compared to a requirement of 2,262;
- A shortfall in Newcastle Urban South and East (including Clayton, Westlands, Seabridge, May Bank, Wolstanton, Porthill and Bradwell): capacity of 320 compared to a requirement of 666;
- A surplus in Kidsgrove (including Kidsgrove, Butt Lane and Talke): capacity of 787 compared to a requirement of 461;
- A small surplus in the rural areas: capacity of 692 compared to a requirement of 629.

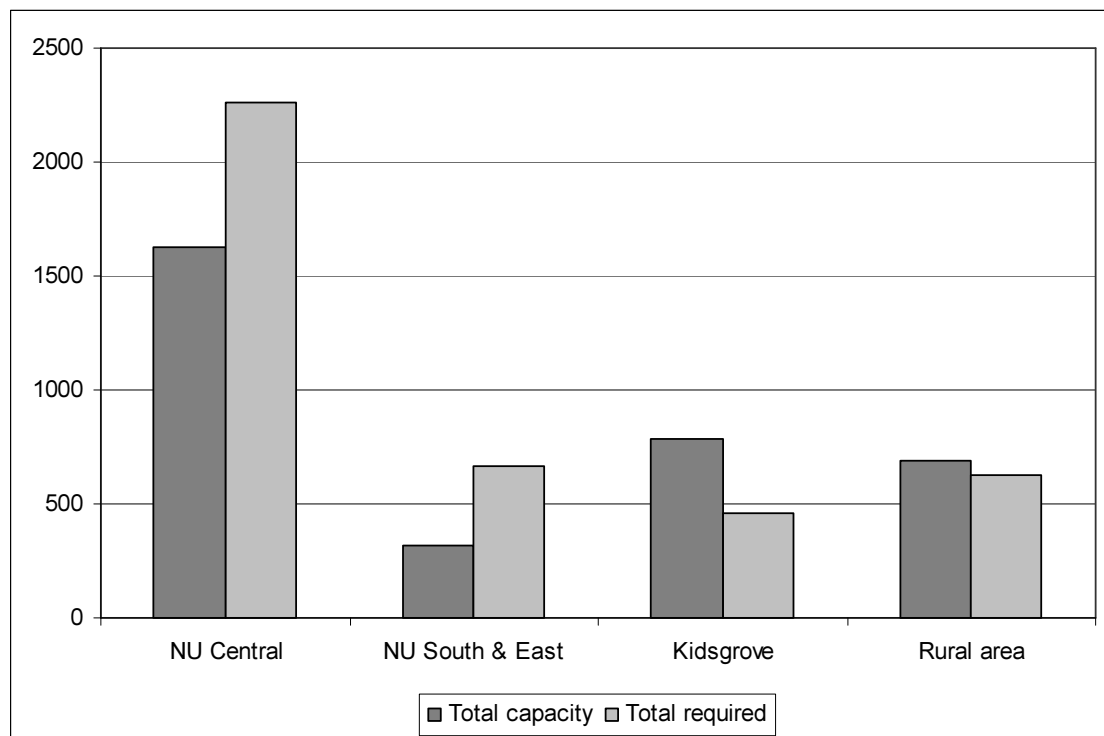


Figure 1: Total capacity of housing sites compared to requirement

4.4 The sites, which potentially make up the overall housing land supply, include:

- 112 'brownfield' (previously developed) sites, with a total capacity of 1,607;
- 96 'greenfield' (not-previously developed) sites, with a total capacity of 1,586;
- two sites including both 'brownfield' and 'greenfield' land;
- 63 sites large enough to support 'major' housing development (of ten dwellings or more);
- 147 small sites* (less than 10). 72 of these sites form part of the five year housing land supply. 23 have expired planning permissions.

*It is worth noting that the draft National Planning Practice Guidance advises that generally sites with a capacity of 5 and above should be included in the Assessment. This will be taken into account when the Assessment is next updated. However, sites with a capacity of 5, or less, with planning permission, will be included and will continue to count towards the Council's future five year housing land supply.

4.5 Five year housing land supply

4.6 The Assessment demonstrates that:-

- sites in the five year housing land supply could provide 1,057 new homes; and therefore;
- to deliver the Core Strategy annual target (285) and make up the shortfall from previous years (313), 1,738 new homes are needed over the next five years ((285 x 5) plus 313);
- adding a 20% buffer to the five year housing land supply, due to a record of persistent under-delivery, means there needs to be enough available sites to provide 2,086 new homes within the next five years.

4.7 These findings confirm that there is a shortage of sites in the five year housing land supply as previously reported. As Members will be aware the consequence of this is that the Borough Council is currently unable to apply policies in the development plan on the distribution of housing when determining planning applications.

4.8 Excluded sites

4.9 Sites which have been deemed unsuitable at this stage (excluded sites) have been recorded and given a reference number. A justification is also provided within the Schedule of Excluded sites. The number of excluded sites has increased from 268 identified in the last Assessment to 302. The reasons why sites are excluded vary and are listed below. However, the increase in excluded sites is largely due to the fact that many of the sites nominated during the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan Issues and Options consultation have not been considered suitable because they are greenfield sites within the designated Green Belt area.

A site may be excluded if it is:

- In the designated Green Belt;
 - Not currently available for development;
 - Not considered developable, for example because their development would not be viable in the current market;
 - Likely to be developed for other uses other than housing;
- and
- A Council decision has been made, through the determination of a planning application, that the site is not in a sustainable location.

4.10 Estimated phasing of development

4.11 The housing supply trajectory, appended to this report at Appendix 1, indicates how development might be phased. It takes into account a number of factors including information from landowners and developers, as well as, whether sites have current or extant planning permissions. However, it should be noted that the trajectory is not a firm forecast or prediction of when development is expected.

4.12 In line with the objectives of the Core Strategy, urban brownfield sites have generally been prioritised ahead of previously undeveloped land and rural sites.

4.13 The Core Strategy allows for the possibility that the boundaries of village envelopes could be reviewed to meet the housing requirements in the rural area towards the end of the plan period. Therefore, some rural sites, which lie on the edge of Rural Service Centre village envelopes, have been phased at the end of the plan period. The inclusion of such sites in the potential land supply has been done on the basis that they would only be considered suitable for allocation if this appeared necessary to meet a shortage of housing in the rural area towards the end of the plan period.

4.14 At the moment if every rural site was developed, the supply of housing in the rural area would exceed the maximum of 900 set out in the Core Strategy by 63. Clearly then the allocation of every rural site included in the Assessment is not necessary. Members are reminded that the allocation of sites and indeed any review of village envelope boundaries can only be done as part of the process of preparing a new development plan document, such as the Local Plan and would therefore be subject to extensive public consultation. However, as first reported to the Committee in October, 2013, the fundamental issues regarding the lack of housing land mean that it is necessary to completely review planning policy, including all land options, in order to put in place a robust spatial framework. A key part of this process will be the preparation of a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which will form the evidence base for setting a new housing target and housing trajectory for the Borough. It will also be the start of the process of reviewing the policies in the adopted Core Strategy which relate to the spatial distribution of housing. The central objective of any such policies will be the creation of sustainable communities.

4.15 The trajectory in Appendix 1 to this report compares:

- the number of homes built each year from 2006 to 2013;
- the number of homes estimated to be built in each year from 2013 to 2026;
- the annual target established in the Core Strategy (285 new homes per year); and
- the increased target needed to make up the current shortfall within five years (348 new homes per year).

4.16 The trajectory demonstrates that the number of homes built is expected to fall short of the target during the next five years (2013 – 2018). However, it does indicate an improving situation in years 6 - 10 but this very much depends upon the strength of the housing market and sites successfully gaining planning consent.

3.12 Comparison with Assessment 2012/13

3.13 The findings of the latest Assessment suggest that on the whole the land supply position has worsened since the Assessment 2012/13 was published. Special points to note are:

- The number of houses that could be built in the Borough remains at about 86% of the number required to meet the Core Strategy target, but
- The number that could be built in Newcastle Urban Central has fallen from 83% of the number required to 72%;
- The number that could be built in Newcastle Urban South and East has fallen from 74% of the number required to 48%;
- The number that could be built in Kidsgrove has increased from 113% of the number required to 171%;
- The number that could be built in the rural area has increased from 101% of the number required to 110%.
- Sites in the five year housing land supply amount to 3.27 years, compared to 3.69 years when the 2012/13 Assessment was published.

3.14 Members should note that these changes are due to a combination of factors, including: sites being granted planning permission; the removal of sites which are no longer deemed to be available, or have been developed, including sites developed for alternative uses; an update of the estimated site capacities. The increase in the rural area is mainly due to the inclusion of a previously unidentified brownfield site within the village envelope of Madeley Heath.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The Assessment (2013/14) confirms the issues which led to the decision to withdraw the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, mainly that there are not enough potential housing sites available within the Borough, and particularly in the urban areas of Newcastle-under-Lyme, to deliver the housing targets set out in the Core Strategy. Furthermore it demonstrates that the spatial distribution of housing proposed within the Core Strategy cannot be achieved.

5. Next steps

5.1 The Assessment (2013/14) will be published in due course on the Borough Council's website at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/landavailabilityassessment

5.2 The next Assessment (2014/15) will be preceded by a general 'call for sites,' to encourage new sites to be nominated so that all land options can be considered. Once the next Assessment is updated it will be used to inform the selection of

sites to be allocated for development in the new Local Plan. The new Local Plan will set a new housing target and provide an opportunity for the Borough Council to consider different options for the distribution of housing and other types of development. The suitability of sites that have been excluded from the Assessment (2013/14) may be reassessed as part of the process of preparing the new Local Plan.

6. Background documents

- Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Core Spatial Strategy (2009)
- Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan: Planning Committee report, 29 October 2013
- National Planning Policy Framework (2012)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment: Practice Guidance (2007)
- Draft National Planning Practice Guidance (2013)
- Five Year Housing Supply Assessment for the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme: 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2017: Planning Committee report and Supplementary report, 4 June 2013