

Appraisal of proposed site allocations

The Council's proposed site allocations for residential and employment uses will be assessed against a holistic suite of 'site assessment criteria' organised under three broad categories: (1) sustainability issues; (2) community facilities; and (3) environmental features. Each individual site allocation will be assessed based upon the scale of development proposed and its proximity to the relevant community facilities and environmental features.

Scale of development will be used to determine a sites likely impact on known sustainability issues, both positive and negative i.e., impact on provision of affordable housing, impact on air quality, impact on traffic congestion, etc. In general, the larger the scale of development proposed (number of dwellings or area of employment development), the greater the potential for a sustainability impact.

Proximity will be used to judge accessibility to existing key community facilities and risk of harm to important environmental features. Broadly speaking, the closer a proposed development site is to an existing community facility, the more accessible that facility is to the site residents/users. This provides a measure of the sustainability of that site, with the site considered more sustainable if it provides good access to a range of facilities.

In relation to the environmental features, the converse is correct; proximity is used to judge risk of environmental harm or risk of an environmental issue affecting site residents/users. For this assessment, it has been assumed that the closer a site is to an environmental feature, the greater the risk of harm or the greater the risk of an environmental issue occurring. Again, this provides a measure of the sustainability of the site, with the site considered more sustainable if there are few environmental risks or issues.

The use of site assessment criteria is designed to ensure that the SA is proportionate to this stage of the planning process (allocation of sites for specific uses rather than a detailed planning application) and is risk-based (seeks to identify those sites more likely to contribute to the Local Plan having a significant effect).

A total of 40 draft site assessment criteria have been developed to assess proposed housing allocations and 27 criteria have been developed for employment allocations. The criteria used are broadly similar; however, several criteria developed for the housing allocations are not considered relevant for the employment allocations and have therefore been excluded.

The full criteria used are set out in the attached spreadsheet ('Draft site assessment criteria_v1-1'). This includes details of how each criterion is defined and the thresholds used to identify potential positive and negative sustainability impacts. Table 1 below provides a summary of the relationship between these site assessment criteria and the SA framework objectives (developed at SA scoping stage).

All 'reasonable alternative' sites identified through the Council's SHELAA process will also be subject to appraisal against the site assessment criteria.

Development of the site assessment criteria and thresholds

The draft site assessment criteria have taken into account other site appraisal work being undertaken by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (i.e., SHELAA), relevant guidance and wider SA practice. The final set of criteria will be developed in consultation with the Council.

An initial list of criteria was developed to encompass the full range of SA objectives. However, it should be noted that there is no one-to-one relationship between the site assessment criteria and SA objectives. Typically, a site assessment criterion is relevant to several objectives.

The choice of criteria was informed by SA good practice guidance (particularly RTPI, 2018) and through a review of the site assessment criteria used in the SA of other Local Plans for areas that exhibit similar characteristics to those in Hinckley & Bosworth. The choice was further informed by the likely availability of relevant datasets and in an appropriate (GIS) format. Each criterion will be carefully defined so that only relevant data is used in the subsequent assessment.

The scale/size and distance thresholds applied to each criterion, used to assess accessibility or scale of impact/risk, were then developed. Again, these thresholds were sense-checked against

recommended thresholds provided in guidance and thresholds used in similar Local Plan SA work. Care was taken to ensure they reflected guidance whilst also taking into consideration the largely rural nature of much of Hinckley & Bosworth borough.

Guidelines on recommended walking distances to certain community facilities published by CIHT¹ and IHT² were applied, as was statistics on average walking distances published by UK Government³. These guidelines indicate that the average walking journey is 1km and identify 'desirable', 'acceptable' and 'preferred' maximum walking distances. It also identified an average walking speed of 1.4m/s, which equates to a distance of approximately 400m in 5 minutes. Many of the assessment criteria utilise this 400m/5-minute extent to distinguish between the different distance thresholds i.e., <400m (less than 5 minutes walking time) equals 'very good' accessibility; 400-800m (5 to 10 minutes walking time) equals 'good accessibility, etc.

Site assessment methodology

The assessment of the proposed site allocations and reasonable alternative sites will be undertaken following a three-step process:

1. Assessment of sustainability issues based on scale of development or site size;
2. GIS-based analysis of proximity; and
3. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results from steps 1 and 2.

Step 1: Assessment of sustainability issues based on scale of development or site size

Each development site will be assessed against a suite of 'sustainability issues', which are identified on the accompanying spreadsheet. These sustainability issues have been chosen to reflect key sustainability issues within the borough as identified through the SA scoping process.

These sustainability issues are relevant to all development sites; however, the level of impact is likely to be directly linked to the scale of development. Therefore, development scale – number of proposed dwellings for residential development – or size – site area (hectares) for employment development – will be compared against the size thresholds to determine the potential sustainability impact.

Step 2: GIS-based analysis of proximity

The proximity of each development site to the various assessment criteria will be based on spatial analysis carried out using a Geographical Information System (GIS) (ArcGIS).

The distance between each development site and the nearest relevant community facilities and environmental features will be measured and then assessed against the distance thresholds contained in the accompanying spreadsheet. Use of proximity to a standard suite of criteria ensured consistency and transparency in the appraisal and determination of accessibility and risk.

Distance will be measured in a straight line from the nearest boundary of the development site to the nearest boundary of each assessment criteria. Whilst it is recognised that the actual distance that site residents/users will need to travel to access the community facilities or environmental features would be greater than this, these actual distances cannot be determined because they are based on individual actions. Such analysis is beyond the scope of the SA and is more effectively considered at detailed planning application stage. However, use of straight-line distances provides an indication of distance and travel time, and ensures that the individual site assessments are undertaken on a like-for-like basis.

¹ Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, 2015. *Planning for Walking*

² The Institution of Highways & Transportation, 2000. *Guidelines for Providing Journeys on Foot*

³ Department for Transport, 2018. *National Travel Survey* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2018>

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results from steps 1 and 2

Each development site will be given an overall sustainability score based upon the outcomes of the assessment at steps 1 and 2. Scores will be allocated based upon the scoring system provided in the attached spreadsheet. For example, if a proposed housing site was assessed as having 'good' access to a specific community facility (i.e., fell within the distance threshold specified for 'good' under that criteria), it will be given a score of '1' for that criteria. All criteria will be scored in this way. The scores for each site will then totalled.

A qualitative appraisal will then be undertaken to further consider any potential issues identified during the site assessment. Whilst the site assessment criteria used do not directly assess a significant (positive or negative) effect in relation to the SA objectives, the criteria provide an indication of where sustainability issues may be encountered and therefore warrant further consideration by the Council. Where a site scores 'very poor' or 'very high' for more than one criterion, further consideration of these issues will be made.

This sites assessment process will provide evidence on the likely sustainability benefits or otherwise of individual sites and will allow comparison between sites in terms of their potential impact. The assessment will form part of the overall decision-making process for which sites are recommended for allocation in the local plan.

Alongside this assessment the local authority will also need to consider other factors such as the overall strategy and policies of the emerging local plan, and how particular sites will align, or not, with that strategy and policy.

Table 1: Link between SA Framework and SA Site Assessment Criteria

SA receptor	SA objective	Appraisal criteria	Site Assessment Criteria	
Environmental				
Landscape	1	Protect and enhance the integrity and quality of the Borough's urban and rural landscapes, maintaining local distinctiveness and sense of place.	Protect and enhance landscape character areas in accordance with management objectives.	SAC17 – SAC23 SAC26 SAC28 – SAC29
			Minimise impacts of development on rural landscape and development within Green Wedges.	SAC26
			Protect and enhance areas of tranquillity.	SAC19 – SAC23 SAC26 SAC28 – SAC29 SAC34
			Manage and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on landscape character.	SAC19 – SAC23 SAC26 SAC28 – SAC29 SAC35 – SAC36
Biodiversity and nature conservation	2	Protect and enhance biodiversity, habitats and species.	Protect and enhance designated sites.	SAC19 – SAC21
			Protect and enhance BAP priority habitats and species.	SAC19 – SAC21 SAC23 SAC26 SAC29 SAC40
			Avoid habitat fragmentation and increase connectivity of habitats.	
			Deliver schemes that promote habitat and species resilience and adaptability to the effects of climate change.	
Water environment	3	Protect and improve the quality and quantity of the water in the Borough's surface and groundwaters.	Contribute to the achievement of WFD objectives.	SAC19 SAC23 SAC24 SAC36
			Minimise pollution and modification to watercourses.	
			Encourage sustainable and efficient management of water resources.	
			Protect and improve drinking water quality.	
	4	Reduce the risk of flooding to existing communities and ensure no new developments are at risk.	Prevent development that is inappropriate to the Flood Zone.	SAC24
			All new development takes account of the latest published Climate Change allowances. Promote and increase the use of SuDS that result in Greenfield or better run-off rates.	
Land	5	Protect the Borough's land quality and soil resources	Reduce soil erosion and protect and enhance soil quality and quantity.	SAC28 – SAC29
			Minimise the loss of Grade 2 and Grade 3 ALC land.	
			Promote the use of brownfield land for development where possible.	
			Increase the remediation and regeneration of contaminated land.	

SA receptor	SA objective	Appraisal criteria	Site Assessment Criteria	
Air quality	6	Protect local air quality	Maintain and improve local air quality.	SAC1 – SAC16 SAC19 – SAC21 SAC26 SAC29 SAC34 SAC37 – SAC38
			Reduce the impacts on air quality from transport.	
			Mitigate against the uses that generate NO ₂ or other particulates.	
Climate	7	Reduce the impacts of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	Promote measures that minimise greenhouse gas emissions, domestic, industrial and transport emissions.	SAC1 – SAC16 SAC33 SAC35 – SAC39
			Promote the development of renewable energy generation.	SAC32 SAC35
			Minimise the likely impacts of climate change through promotion of appropriate adaptation measures in new development.	SAC19 – SAC21 SAC23 – SAC24 SAC26 SAC29 SAC35
			Promote measures to reduce the need to travel by car.	SAC1 – SAC16 SAC37 – SAC38
Historic environment	8	Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings.	Conserve and enhance designated heritage features.	SAC17 – SAC18
			Maintain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of Conservation Areas and settlements.	SAC18
			Promote high-quality design that is sympathetic to the historical setting.	SAC17 – SAC18
			Manage the risk of encountering unknown archaeology.	SAC26 SAC29
Social				
Population	9	Reduce social deprivation	Increase community cohesion.	SAC1 – SAC16 SAC30 – SAC32
			Increase employment in deprivation hotspots.	SAC8 – SAC9 SAC30 – SAC32
			Decrease levels of crime and the fear of crime.	SAC1 – SAC16 SAC30 – SAC32
			Improve educational attainment rates.	SAC5 – SAC7 SAC39
	10	Promote a healthy and active lifestyle	Increase access to high quality healthcare facilities.	SAC1 – SAC3
		Promote active and healthy lifestyles.	SAC12 – SAC15	

SA receptor	SA objective	Appraisal criteria	Site Assessment Criteria
		Promote recreational and leisure opportunities and access to open space.	SAC26 SAC40
		Increase regular participation in physical activities and sport.	SAC1 – SAC16 SAC26 SAC40
	11	Improve access to affordable housing and increase housing supply	
		Reduce homelessness.	SAC30 – SAC32 SAC39
		Provide a supply of affordable houses that keeps pace with rising demand.	SAC30
		Provide quality and flexible homes that meet the needs of the community.	
Economic			
Local economy	12	Promote a sustainable and diversified economy and improve skills and employability.	
		Promote retention of existing jobs and create new employment opportunities.	SAC31
		Increase diversity in the range of job opportunities.	
		Ensure an adequate supply of a range of sites in terms of types and quality for employment uses.	
		Improve access to opportunities for education, learning and skills training for all sectors of the community.	SAC5 – SAC7
		Support the creation of flexible jobs to meet the changing needs of the population.	SAC31
Material assets	13	Increase access to public services in the Borough.	
		Improve access to local facilities, including healthcare and schools.	SAC1 – SAC16
		Improve public transport services in the rural areas of the Borough.	SAC10 – SAC12
		Enhance formal green space.	SAC13 – SAC14 SAC40
		Maintain and enhance local services in rural areas.	SAC1 – SAC16 SAC39
Mineral resources and waste	14	Ensure sustainable management of waste in the Borough.	
		Reduce waste and increase re-use, recycling and energy produced of waste.	SAC16
		Improve on the proportion of waste that is sent for recycling.	SAC32 – SAC33
		Reduce volume of waste created per household.	SAC39