

Southampton Local Plan – compliance with National Planning Policy Framework

Revised June 2013

With the recent changes in national planning policy it is essential for the continued prosperity of the city, its citizens and businesses that the statutory planning framework is clear about what land uses will be encouraged in which locations. Predictability, consistency and speed in planning decisions also help to encourage investor confidence in the city. Consequently the Council has carried out an assessment as to how well Southampton's current local plan reflects the new national planning policy guidance – the National Planning Policy Framework issued 27th March 2012, and the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites published on 23 March 2012.

The overall aims of the current local plan fit well with the National Planning Policy Framework – we are planning for significant economic growth supported by new homes, infrastructure and facilities to create a great place to live, and an attractive, environmentally sustainable place to be.

In addition, **the vast majority of the policies in the city's current local plan are in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework** (see below for the exceptions). Consequently the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework is unlikely to have a significant impact on the development in the city. Applications will continue to be assessed against conforming policies within the current local plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. As a result good quality schemes in the right location will continue to be delivered and poor quality schemes will be refused.

The current **local plan** for Southampton comprises:

- Adopted Southampton Core Strategy 2010 which sets out the strategic policies; plus
- Saved policies from the Local Plan Review 2006 which set out site allocations and development management policies; plus
- Saved relevant policies from the Minerals and Waste Local Plan 1998 (to be replaced by the Minerals and Waste Plan, adoption in 2013)

The Minerals and Waste Local Plan was not included as part of this assessment since it is currently being updated and its conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework has been tested at Examination..

The 3 topic areas where the local plan is not fully in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework or Planning Policy for Traveller Sites at this point in time are:

- Absence of the model policy that sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development (as required by the Planning Inspectorate, but not by the National Planning Policy Framework).

ACTION:

A new model policy is proposed to be included in the Core Strategy as part of the current Core Strategy Partial Review.

- Absence of a policy that specifically enables local communities, through local and neighbourhood plans, to identify Local Green Spaces for protection. However, the local plan is consistent in approach with the National Planning Policy Framework in that Core Strategy policy CS21 protects open space and Core Strategy policy CS22.promotes biodiversity

ACTIONS:

The requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework (para 76 – 78) will be applied if any individual proposals come forward.

The introduction of a new policy to enable communities to identify Local Green Spaces will be considered in the preparation of the City Local Plan.

- Need for a revised Accommodation Assessment to establish the housing needs for gypsies & travellers and travelling showpeople. Once completed, this will enable the Council to assess the need for additional sites in order to demonstrate a five year housing land supply for these communities.

ACTION

This study is currently underway.

Housing delivery and the 5 year housing land supply

The recently updated SHLAA (March 2013) can demonstrate that the city has a 5 year housing land supply together with an additional 5% buffer.

The figures are as follows:

	No. of dwellings completed/projected*
Core Strategy Requirement (2006-2026)	16,300
5 year supply target (2012-2017)	3,975 (4,174 including a 5% buffer)
Total supply	4,622 (+647 above target)
10 year supply target (2012-2022)	7,950
Total supply	8,506 (+556 above target)

*Potential Dwelling numbers are indicative only unless relating to extant planning permissions. (Numbers and planning status correct as at 31.12.12)

Establishing the appropriate buffer

In addition to the five year housing land supply target, the National Planning Policy Framework requires an additional buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land (para 47). This buffer is an additional 5% of the five year housing land supply target, or 20% if there has been persistent under-delivery. Southampton can demonstrate a record of persistent delivery and consequently the 5% buffer should apply with sites being brought forward from later in the programme.

Evidence:

Prior to the economic downturn the city achieved housing completions far in excess of the annualized target*:

There were 4517 completions Apr 2006 – Mar 2011 (5 years) compared with a target of 4075 (based on an annualised target of 815 dwellings per year). This equates to a 10.8% over-supply.

Even at the start of the current recession, over the last 3 years (2008/9 – 2010/11) completions were 2350 against a target of 2355 dwellings (only a 0.2% under-supply). There was only 1 year (2009/10) in which delivery at 525 units was below the annualized target of 785 for that year.

** Annualised target for the Core Strategy plan period 2006 -2026 is 815 dwellings pa which will deliver the target of 16300 new homes. After the deduction of completions in 2006/7 and 2007/8 the revised annualized target 2008 – 2026 reduces to 785 per annum to deliver 16300 homes by 2026.*

Demonstrating viability and deliverability in plan-making

At public examination into new plans the Local Planning Authority must demonstrate that the policies in the plan are likely to be deliverable over its plan period (National Planning Policy Framework para 182). A key element in considering the deliverability of the plan is the viability of its proposals.

The Council will demonstrate the viability of its proposals as follows:

- **When preparing a new plan** To demonstrate the broad brush viability of the plan the Council will assess the likely cumulative impacts on the viability of development of the standards and policies contained in a new plan when added to current local and national standards (as required by the National Planning Policy Framework).

The emerging Southampton CIL Charging Schedule has undertaken such an assessment and has demonstrated the broad brush viability of the current local plan documents.

- **When updating the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the annual update of the five year housing land supply (in the Annual Monitoring Report).** The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment identifies housing sites which have a reasonable prospect of being viably developed. However, a site-specific viability assessment only has a short-lived value reflecting the circumstances at a point in time. Consequently, preparing a detailed viability assessment of each identified housing site is not considered to be useful or proportionate. Accurate financial and other information is unlikely to be available for all sites and it is considered that the cost of preparing assessments would far exceed the benefits.

When reviewing housing delivery through a revised Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment or annual housing figures (reported in the Annual Monitoring Report) the Council will re-assess sites on the basis of known planning permissions, scheme phasing and completions together with softer information from owners and developers. Known developers or owners of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment sites will be asked to comment

on the predicted timescale for completion of housing on their sites before any update to the document is finalized.

- **When determining a planning application** the Council will apply the flexibility contained in the Core Strategy and Local Plan Review policies (in appropriate cases) so that the viability of schemes can be taken into account in decision-taking. Throughout the plan period the Council must be able to react to the changing economic realities and balance the need for viable development against the need to deliver high quality sustainable development with supporting infrastructure and services. Consequently, the Council will continue to build flexibility into planning policies when possible and appropriate, so that decision-takers can decide whether the benefits of individual developments outweigh their potential adverse impact.