

# **Farnham Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Farnham Housing Land Availability Assessment**

**October 2014**

## **Introduction**

The Farnham Housing Land Availability Assessment (FHLAA) is a study of the potential of the Neighbourhood Plan area to accommodate additional housing development.

This report sets out the method used to undertake the FHLAA assessment. Whilst this is not a District/Borough based Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), it will inform the Waverley Borough SHLAA.

The FHLAA is a background paper only and it is not a statement of Town Council policy and does not allocate land. It will form a part of the evidence base for the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan and will be used to help inform judgements on the future development and allocation of land for housing.

The FHLAA considers as many options as possible but does not pre-empt or prejudice any decision the Town Council may make in the future on any particular site and does not alter any policies or land use designations as set out in the Neighbourhood Plan. It is the role of the FHLAA to provide information on the range of sites which are available to meet need, but it is for the development plan itself to determine which of those sites are the most suitable to meet those needs.

## Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework states that every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing needs of an area. A draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013) provides the most up to date evidence available and has identified a net housing need in Waverley Borough of around 9400 homes (470 homes per annum) as being an objective assessment of full need for market and affordable housing over the 2013 to 2031 period.

In addition to existing housing commitments, in order to meet the identified need of around 9400 homes, the Borough Council are consulting on 4 housing scenarios for the Borough with different implications for Farnham:

<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Additional homes at Farnham beyond existing provision of 1100 dwellings</b>
Scenario 1	Around 2,700 homes
Scenario 2	Around 1,500 homes
Scenario 3	Around 1,000 homes
Scenario 4	Around 700 homes

The Neighbourhood Plan should plan positively to help accommodate identified strategic housing need unless:

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted (for example, those policies relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding).

The NPPF requires local authorities to:

- identify specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that are ready for development and to keep this topped up over-time in response to market information
- identify specific, developable sites for years beyond the first five, to enable a rolling five year supply

The NPPF advises that neighbourhoods should:

- develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development
- plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan

This assessment identifies all sites regardless of the amount of development needed in order to provide an audit of available land.

### **3 The Assessment**

#### **Assessment purpose**

The purpose of the FHLAA is to:

- Identify sites with potential for housing
- assess their housing potential
- assess their suitability and when they are likely to come forward

The FHLAA aims to identify as many sites with housing potential as possible in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan area and assesses them for their suitability, availability and achievability.

The Farnham Neighbourhood Plan was being prepared in parallel with the Waverley Borough Council SHLAA. The Borough Council did not make their SHLAA available until after the publication of their Local Plan consultation. The Town Council therefore embarked on an assessment at a parish scale to input into the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan. Resources have mainly comprised the Neighbourhood Plan team, with input from the team's professional planner.

Assessment has been based on the suggested methodology outlined in the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) but, as this guidance recommends, the assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan has been proportionate.

#### **Sites to be Assessed**

From up to date information supplied by Waverley Borough Council, the Town Council are aware of planning permissions for housing development in the plan area that are unimplemented or under construction. Such sites were considered suitable and deliverable for housing development and were not re-appraised. This avoids double-counting a site's contribution to the housing land supply.

The Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 contains no housing allocations for Farnham.

The Town Council are not aware of any surplus, or likely to become surplus, public sector land but the draft Neighbourhood Plan consultation gives the opportunity for such sites to come forward and be appraised prior to the Regulation 15 stage.

The Employment Land Review revealed sites which were poorly located for business purposes and sites in poor condition which had potential for housing development. Such sites were appraised in the FHLAA.

All sites in and adjoining Farnham identified in the Waverley Borough Council SHLAA 2012 (updated by the 2014 SHLAA) were appraised. The draft Neighbourhood Plan consultation also encourages other potential sites to come forward which will be appraised prior to the Regulation 15 stage.

#### **Site Size**

The FHLAA assesses a range of different site sizes from small-scale sites to opportunities for larger scale developments. The site size threshold was 0.2ha. Other smaller sites may be

able to come forward as windfall sites but in accordance with the National Planning Policy Guidance on housing land availability assessments, are considered too small to be considered in the FHLAA.

## **Site Assessment**

A comprehensive set of sites derived from the data sources above was assessed against national and local policies and designations to establish which have reasonable potential for development and should be included in the site survey.

### *Sites excluded from detailed appraisal*

A number of sites were excluded from detailed appraisal if they

- fell below the site size threshold of 0.2ha
- had achieved planning consent or were being developed
- were located within the designated Green Belt
- were located with Flood Zone 3
- were located within 400m of the Thames Basin Heath SPA

These sites are listed in Appendix 1 of the FHLAA.

### *Site Appraisals*

#### *FHLAA template*

An assessment template (see Appendices 2 and 3) was devised to provide a consistent approach to the assessment of each site.

### *Site Suitability*

Site surveys were undertaken for the sites which were not excluded from detailed appraisal in order to record site characteristics such as:

- site topography and boundaries;
- current land uses and character of surrounding area;
- potential physical constraints (e.g. access, location of infrastructure / utilities);
- potential environmental constraints (eg woodland, hedges, water bodies).

Site visits were supplemented by reference to Ordnance Survey maps; aerial photography and local knowledge from Neighbourhood Plan team.

Assessing the suitability of sites for development was guided by the development plan and national policy. When assessing the sites against the adopted development plan, account was taken of how up to date the plan policies are and whether they remain consistent with national policy. It was considered that the following policies were becoming superseded by more up to date evidence<sup>1</sup>:

- Countryside beyond the Green Belt
- Areas of Strategic Visual Importance

---

<sup>1</sup> • Waverley Green Belt Review Parts 1 and 2 (2014)  
• Waverley Landscape Review (2014)  
• Surrey Hills AONB Areas of Search ( Hankinson Duckett Associates): October 2013

- Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) only
- AGLV treated as being within the Surrey Hills AONB

For this reason, the more up to date evidence was used for the site assessments.

The NPPF sets out specific policies which indicate development should be restricted. For example, those policies relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding. Such factors were recorded for each site. In addition, given recent evidence, candidate areas for Green Belt and the Surrey Hills AONB were also considered as part of the assessment.

As well as assessing the impact on the strategic gap between Farnham and Aldershot (a designation within the adopted Local Plan), the assessment also considered the impact of potential development on the gaps between Badshot Lea and Weybourne; Rowledge and Wrecclesham and Rowledge and Frensham which had been identified as important through early engagement on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Access to local facilities and public transport was also assessed in testing the sustainability of each site.

#### *Site availability*

A site was considered available for development, when, on the best information available (confirmed by the call for sites and information from land owners), there was reasonable confidence that it could come forward.

#### *Site Achievability*

A site was considered achievable for development where there appeared to be a reasonable prospect that the site would be developed at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period. Any known development costs such as the removal of contamination or redevelopment of a brownfield site were noted. The need for the provision of SANG was also noted.

#### *Summary*

For each site a summary of its suitability, availability and achievability was prepared. Those sites considered appropriate as a potential housing option are included in Appendix 2 of the FHLAA. Appendix 3 contains sites not included as housing options after assessment.

#### *Development Potential*

For those sites considered appropriate as a potential housing option (see Appendix 2) an approximate density (dwellings per hectare) was proposed based on the general density of the surrounding development. It is important that the FHLAA process recognises the balance that needs to be struck between making efficient use of land through good design principles and the character and historic fabric of the area and the amenities of surrounding land uses.

Where a site was constrained by existing landscape features or on-site SANG or open space was required, the gross site area was reduced. The approximate number of dwellings per site was calculated based on the net site area and the approximate density.

*Deliverability over the plan period*

Where a site was considered appropriate as a potential housing option, the period when the site may be delivered was estimated (0-5 years; 6-10 years; 10+years). This was based on the need to overcome constraints, including the provision of SANG. The draft Neighbourhood Plan consultation gives the opportunity for landowners to clarify the potential development period.