

Farnham Neighbourhood Plan

Farnham Housing Land Availability Assessment

May 2016

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), can 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 forms part of the evidence base for the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan and is 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 polices 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 include those sites which 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. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015) provides the most up to date evidence available and has identified a net housing need in Waverley Borough of 519 homes per annum as being an objective assessment of full need for market and affordable housing over the 2013 to 2033 period.

In 2014, the Borough Council consulted widely on 4 housing scenarios for the Borough based on a lower objectively assessed housing need with different implications for Farnham. Option 4 was the first preference for 80% of respondents and this would have resulted in the need for approximately 1,800 additional homes for Farnham. Farnham is within the buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The retained South East Plan Policy NRM6 states that priority should be given to directing development to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures. In order to comply with this policy, housing to meet the strategic housing need of the Borough will need to be directed away from Farnham.

In relation to house building, the adopted Waverley Borough Local Plan (2002) covers the period from 1991 to 2006 and clearly does not provide an up-to-date basis for new housing provision within the Borough. Whilst the West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015) provides the most up to date available evidence of housing need this has not been tested and the most appropriate spatial strategy for the Borough to meet identified need will not be confirmed until a new Local Plan for Waverley Borough is adopted.

The Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1: Strategic Policies and Sites Pre-Submission Draft, June 2016, signals the need for a minimum of 2,330 new homes in Farnham (including homes permitted and built since April 2013 and anticipated windfall development) in the period 2013 - 2032 (the equivalent of 123 dwellings per annum). The emerging strategic housing provision for the Neighbourhood Plan period of 2013 – 2031 is therefore approximately 2214 dwellings.

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 and the Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan did not result in such sites coming forward.

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 together with sites which came forward as a result of the Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan consultation.

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
- were not available – i.e. not promoted by landowner

These sites are listed in Appendix 3 of the FHLAA.

Site Appraisals

FHLAA template

An assessment template (see Appendices 1 and 2) was devised to provide a consistent approach to the assessment of each site. The template was amended slightly from that used for the Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan to reflect revised Neighbourhood Plan policies.

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 the 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 evidence¹:

- Countryside beyond the Green Belt

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

- Areas of Strategic Visual Importance
- 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; Rowledge and Boundstone and Rowledge and Frensham which had been identified as important through 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 housing allocation are included in Appendix 1 of the FHLAA. Appendix 2 contains sites not included as housing allocations after assessment.

Development Potential

For those sites considered appropriate as a housing allocation (see Appendix 1) 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 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 and any responses from landowners clarifying the potential development period.