

Farnham Neighbourhood Plan

Farnham Housing Land Availability Assessment

August 2018

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.

The FHLAA is a background paper only. It is not a statement of Farnham Town Council policy and does not allocate land. It will form part of the evidence base for the review of the Neighbourhood Plan and will be used to help inform judgements on 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 these 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 Strategic Housing Market Assessment was carried out in 2013 and identified a net housing need in Waverley Borough of around 9400 homes (470 homes per annum) in the period from 2013 to 2031.

As a result of the Examination of the Waverley Local Plan Part 1 in December 2017, the housing figure across the borough was raised and the borough now has a strategy to develop 11,210 new homes in the period from 2013 to 2032 with an allocation of 450 extra homes for Farnham. The Local Plan was adopted by Waverley Borough Council in February 2018 and the current strategy for Farnham is to deliver 2780 homes from 2013 to 2032.

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 the Framework indicate development should be restricted (for example, those policies relating to sites protected under the Habitats Regulations and/or those 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 years, 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 a thorough audit of available land.

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. All sites in the previous Waverley SHLAA (2012, 2014) which have continued to be promoted since and are included in the LAA (2016, 2018), together with those put forward in the Farnham Town Council's call for sites in March 2018, have been assessed.

Assessment has been based on the suggested methodology outlined in the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) but, as the 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 is aware of planning permissions for housing development in the plan area which are not yet implemented or under construction. Such sites were considered suitable and deliverable for housing development and were not re-appraised. This avoids double-counting of a site's contribution to the housing land supply.

The recently adopted Farnham Neighbourhood Plan (May 2017) and Waverley Borough Council's Local Plan Part 1 (February 2018), allocate housing sites whose suitability, availability and achievability has already been tested and confirmed through independent examination and, in the case of the Neighbourhood Plan, referendum. The emerging

Waverley Borough Council's Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, May 2018 which is at the Preferred Option stage, allocates no housing sites in Farnham, other than accommodation for gypsies and travellers.

There is one site in Farnham owned by Surrey County Council and two others owned by Waverley Borough Council, which are expected to come forward for development during the life of the plan and these sites have been included in the appraisal.

The Waverley Employment Land Review, which was updated in April 2016, revealed sites in Farnham which are poorly located for business purposes and other sites in poor condition. These have potential for housing development and were appraised in the FHLAA.

Site Size

The FHLAA assesses a range of different sizes from small-scale sites to opportunities for larger scale developments. The Town Council is aware of the Government's desire for Neighbourhood Plans to consider the opportunities for allocating small sites of half a hectare or less suitable for housing. Nevertheless, for practical reasons the minimum site size threshold for FHLAA assessment was 0.2 ha. Other smaller sites may be able to come forward as windfall sites but, in accordance with National Planning Policy Guidance on housing land assessments, are considered too small to be appraised in the FHLAA.

Site Assessment

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

Sites excluded from detailed appraisal

Sites were excluded from detailed appraisal if they

- fell below the site threshold of 0.2 hectares
- had achieved planning consent or were being developed
- were located within the designated Green Belt
- were located in Flood Zone 3
- were located within 400 metres of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

These sites are listed in Appendix 1 of the FHLAA (2018)

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 or utilities)
- potential environmental constraints (e.g. 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 adopted development plan, whilst account was also taken of draft policies in the emerging Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, May 2018. The most up to date evidence was used for the site assessments.

The NPPF sets out specific policies which indicate where development should be restricted. These policies relate to

- sites protected under the Habitats Regulations
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Land designated as Green Belt
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- sites with designated heritage assets
- sites in locations at risk of flooding

Such factors were recorded for each site. In addition, candidate areas for inclusion within the Surrey Hills AONB were considered as part of the assessment.

As well as assessing the impact on the strategic gap between Farnham and Aldershot, (Policy DM17 in the emerging Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, May 2018), the assessment also considered the impact of development on the gaps between Badshot Lea and Weybourne, Rowledge and Wrecclesham and Rowledge and Frensham, which are covered by adopted Farnham Neighbourhood Plan Policy 11.

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

Site Availability

A site was considered available 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 potential housing options 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 potential housing options (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 where 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 restraints, including the provision of SANG. The draft Neighbourhood Plan consultation gives the opportunity for landowners to clarify the potential development period.