

South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG)



Candidate Sites Proposed Assessment Methodology

July 2018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper seeks to establish a common baseline methodology in relation to candidate sites for SEWSPG local planning authorities to adhere to when devising their Replacement LDPs. In the majority of cases, common procedures have been agreed, but in some circumstances, it might be appropriate for an authority to vary elements of the approach to suit their individual needs. Therefore this paper will act as a baseline methodology for authorities to use.
- 1.2 The paper will primarily focus at a local level. The framework that is suggested could be adapted and applied at a regional level for the purposes of creating a Strategic Development Plan, however the criteria for identifying more strategic sites is likely to be different.

Candidate Sites and the Local Development Plan

- 1.3 The LDP, through the Candidate Sites process, will identify land to address development needs for various land uses, including but not limited to the following:
 - Residential
 - Employment
 - Education
 - Recreation and Leisure
 - Other Community Facilities
 - Retail
 - Tourism
 - Gypsy and Travellers
 - Minerals and Resources
 - Renewable Energy Technology
- 1.4 The evidence gathering exercise is an important process and submissions must be accompanied with an appropriate level of information to justify the proposed site's inclusion in the LDP. The LDP Manual makes it clear that LPAs will need to consider the most appropriate level of detail for information on site specific proposals. Too little detail will result in stakeholders and the community lacking vital information, impairing the usefulness of the exercise, however maintaining a strategic focus remains important.
- 1.5 This paper will aim to provide guidance on what 'an appropriate level of detail' is and suggests a multiple stage approach which authorities should follow in order to provide a consistent approach across South East Wales.

Threshold for Candidate Sites

- 1.6 The threshold for accepting candidate sites is likely to depend on the type of strategy a planning authority is seeking to follow and the nature of the authority itself. For example, more rural authorities such as Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons National Park are more reliant on multiple small scale proposals and may wish to utilise a 5 dwelling threshold. Alternatively, other authorities may consider employing a very strict settlement boundary approach and may also decide to adopt a lower threshold for accepting candidate sites. In

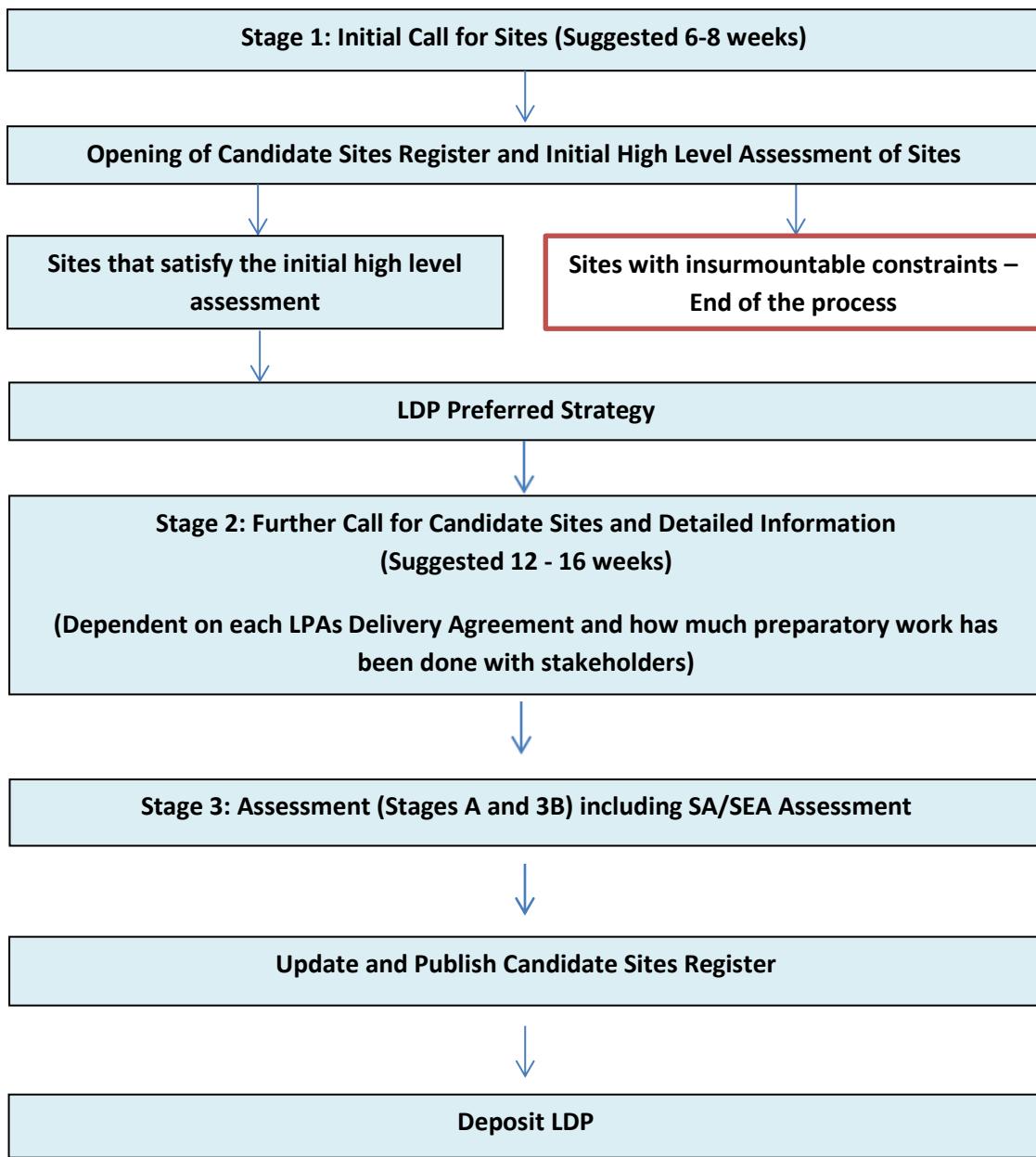
addition, a lower threshold might be utilised in an attempt to get more SME builders to enter the market. However, it is suggested that in the majority of cases, local authorities should set a threshold based on the Town and Country Planning definition of major development, which in summary for residential development is 10 dwellings or more, or a residential site area of 0.5ha, or for other types of development, 1ha or more.

2 Overview of the Proposed Methodology

- 2.1 In the past, Local Authorities have run consultations on proposed candidate site methodologies and site criteria. If a general consensus can be agreed at a regional level to have a common approach to candidate sites (in agreement with key stakeholders such as Welsh Government and the HBF), then the need for such consultations in the future is probably unnecessary. This proposed methodology has subsequently been agreed by the SEWSPG.
- 2.2 The proposed methodology involves a two stage call for candidate sites. Stage 1 involves an initial call for sites which will help Local Authorities in setting their Preferred Strategy. The initial call will simply involve a submission from landowners/developers and will be a red line plan showing the boundary of the proposed site along with some basic information. The initial call will benefit Local Authorities as it will give a picture of the land available to help inform a Preferred Strategy, but it will also assist landowners/developers in that they are not spending time and money on making candidate site submissions which could be contrary to a Preferred Strategy.
- 2.3 Once the Stage 1 initial call for sites has ended, a candidate sites register will be opened. The candidate sites register is simply a record of submitted sites. The sites submitted during this stage will inform the preparation of the Preferred Strategy. Following the initial call for sites and using the candidate sites register, the Local Authority will then prepare its Preferred Strategy. At this stage there will be a high level assessment (i.e. initial sift) of all sites submitted in order to help inform the Preferred Strategy. The initial sift will involve an assessment of sites against current constraints, with particular attention given to ‘greater than local constraints’ (i.e. the constraints imposed by Welsh Government/NRW etc. which are not local constraints). Consideration will also be given to a site’s compatibility with the emerging Preferred Strategy. Any sites which are assessed as having insurmountable constraints to development (such as residential in C2 flood zone) will be filtered out and not pursued any further. The Local Authority may wish to alert the submitter that the site(s) will not be pursued any further.
- 2.4 Once the Preferred Strategy has been set, the Stage 2 Further Call for Candidate Sites and Detailed Information can then begin. Developers/landowners will be aware of the LDP Preferred Strategy at this stage. At Stage 2, detailed information for those sites submitted during the initial call for sites that are compatible with the Preferred Strategy should be submitted in order to provide evidence on a site’s deliverability and viability. Stage 2 is also an opportunity for developers and landowners to submit completely new sites, providing they believe them to be compatible with the Preferred Strategy. Following the conclusion of Stage 2, the candidate sites register will be updated with any new sites received and published. All

candidate sites which have been accompanied with a full set of detailed information will then be assessed, including against the sustainability appraisal (SA) framework. All sites that progress through this stage will be considered for inclusion in the Deposit LDP. The SA/SEA work will need to be continually updated in order to reflect the different stages of this process. It will need to address how the Council arrived at its Preferred Strategy and the Preferred Strategy will need to be assessed against the SA/SEA Framework itself. It is considered that individual sites submitted as part of Stage 1 do not necessarily need to be assessed against the SA/SEA Framework as these will be part of the market evidence used to shape the Preferred Strategy. Where developers are seeking to address market demand this will need to be a consideration in devising the Preferred Strategy. It is likely that numerous sites submitted as part of this stage will be very speculative and unsuitable, and consequently there seems little point in undertaking an SA/SEA on these sites. However, all candidate sites remaining in the process at Stage 2 will all be subject to SA/SEA. An overview of the candidate sites process can be viewed below.

Overview of the Candidate Sites Process



3 Stage 1: Initial Call for Sites

- 3.1 An initial call for sites should be conducted by the Local Authority to assist in helping to shape an LDP Preferred Strategy. As noted above, the initial call will assist the Local Authority in understanding what land is available to define their Preferred Strategy, but it will also assist the developers/landowners in that they are not spending time and money on making candidate site submissions which are clearly going to be contrary to a Preferred Strategy.
- 3.2 Appendix 1 sets out the type of information that a developer/landowner will be expected to provide as part of this stage. In terms of setting thresholds, it is considered that each Local Authority should apply the same thresholds as they will use for the further call for candidates site stage. This approach will then allow a Local Authority to identify the broad locations on a map to inform their Preferred Strategy. For authorities who may wish to identify some individual sites within their Preferred Strategy, they may wish to seek some additional information on delivery at this stage in order to strengthen their Preferred Strategy.

Opening of Candidate Sites Register and Initial High Level Assessment of Sites

- 3.3 Following the initial call for sites, the Local Authority must compile a Candidate Sites Register and publish it on the Council website and make the document available for inspection at the designated deposit points. The Candidate Sites Register must include a clearly defined outline of the site on an OS base plan along with the following information:
 - Site:
 - Total size (ha):
 - Greenfield (ha):
 - Brownfield (ha):
 - Submitted by:
 - Current site use:
 - Proposed use:
- 3.4 It is recommended that the Candidate Sites Register is opened to the public; however it will be open for information purposes only. If a site is included as an allocation as part of the Deposit LDP, the public will have an opportunity to comment at this stage.
- 3.5 A high level site assessment process will take place to consider factors such as insurmountable constraints, for example C2 flood risk, and particular attention will be given to ‘greater than local constraints’ (i.e. the constraints imposed by Welsh Government and NRW etc.). As noted above, consideration will also be given to a site’s compatibility with the emerging Preferred Strategy. This initial sifting process will help to inform the Preferred Strategy. Those sites that fail this initial assessment will not be considered suitable for further consideration as part of the LDP process and will be filtered out. Sites that are considered suitable for the proposed use can be taken forward to stage 2. Councils may wish to inform sites promoters accordingly if their sites will not be taken any further.

LDP Preferred Strategy

- 3.6 The LDP Preferred Strategy should be devised following the initial call for sites. Once the LDP Preferred Strategy is established, this will give developers and land agents the knowledge with regard to what the Council is seeking and should prevent the submission of additional sites which are completely contrary to the Preferred Strategy.

4 Stage 2: Further Call for Candidate Sites and Detailed Information

- 4.1 At Stage 2, additional detailed information will need to be provided for those sites submitted during the initial call for sites that satisfied the high level initial assessment. This information will need to be submitted via a standardised form based on that set out in Appendix 2. This will ensure that the required additional information is provided in order to undertake a full assessment of the site. Any sites submitted as part of Stage 1 which are not supplemented with a standardised form at Stage 2, will not be assessed and will not be considered for inclusion in the LDP.
- 4.2 At Stage 2 there is also an opportunity to submit additional candidate sites, providing developers/landowners believe they conform to the Preferred Strategy. All candidate sites will need to be submitted via a standardised form based on that set out in Appendix 2. In order to be assessed and to be considered for the LDP, a candidate site must be accompanied with a completed standardised form.
- 4.3 The standardised form contains criteria to assist authorities in assessing the suitability of the sites for inclusion as allocations in the LDP. The criteria selected is broadly the same as other authorities have used in the past, however, in accordance with the recommendations from the Welsh Government Longitudinal Viability Study, further information is being sought on site delivery in relation to potential residential schemes. The submission form must include an indicative timetable for delivery.
- 4.4 Candidate site submissions must answer all of the questions set out in the form. If there is a realistic prospect of site delivery within the plan period, then it is expected that these questions can be addressed.
- 4.5 A caveat has been added to the submission form outlining the possibility the applicant or site proposer may need to submit more detailed viability information in order to support their submission, should the Council request this. Following such a request, if the viability information is not provided, then it is likely the proposed site will not proceed any further in the process and will not be considered for allocation in the Deposit LDP.

Update and Publish the Candidate Sites Register

- 4.6 Following Stage 2 further call for candidate sites, it is expected that a number of new sites will emerge once developers and landowners are fully aware of the LDP Preferred Strategy. As a result, the Candidate Sites Register will be updated, published on the Council website and made available for inspection at the designated deposit points.

5 Stage 3 Candidate Sites Assessment

5.1 It is proposed that the Stage 3 Candidate Sites Assessment is split into two sections. Stage 3A will involve a more detailed assessment of candidate sites at an officer level using a ‘traffic light’ coding system. Stage 3B will then involve the assessed sites going out to consultation to Council internal departments such as highways and education, as well as external consultation with statutory agencies such as Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water and National Grid. This split approach is intended to filter out any non-deliverable or inappropriate sites so that internal and statutory consultees are only commenting on sites that have a reasonable chance of being allocated in the LDP and ultimately being delivered. During this stage, the candidate sites will need to be assessed against the Council’s SA/SEA Framework. The SA/SEA Framework will be developed at an earlier stage of the LDP process and each Council’s SA/SEA is likely to be slightly different. Candidate sites will need to be assessed against these objectives in terms of whether they will contribute positively or negatively. It is up to each Council how they choose to do this in conformity with their own SA/SEA Framework.

Stage 3A

5.2 It is proposed that a ‘traffic light’ coding system should be used by officers in order to identify which sites are more desirable and which sites are less so. The ‘traffic light’ coding system is as follows:

	Impact
Proposed site is expected to have significant positive impacts	Green
Proposed site is expected to have some positive impacts	Light Green
Proposed site is expected to have a neutral impact	Light Blue
Proposed site is expected to have some negative impacts	Orange
Proposed site is expected to have significant negative impacts	Red
The impact of the proposed site cannot be predicted at this stage	

5.3 The criteria to be assessed are:

- Land - Planning Policy Wales emphasises the importance of re-using brownfield sites. Therefore previously developed land will rank higher than greenfield sites. The proximity to existing settlements will also be a consideration. It is understood that in some situations where a developer is seeking to promote a significant new community, then such a site will not be part of the existing settlement boundary. Therefore consideration will need to be given to its proximity to existing settlements and transport linkages proposed between new settlements and existing settlements.
- Availability and Deliverability – The Council will need to have a reasonable degree of confidence that the site will actually be delivered and there are no legal obstacles to delivery.
- Accessibility – The importance of reducing the need to travel and new developments having access to a range of key services is set out in national policy.
- Historic and Cultural Landscape – Potential impact on historic landscapes, conservation areas and listed buildings will need to be considered.

- Environmental – Sites which impact on the following environmental designations will need careful consideration:
 - Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - Ramsar Site
 - Special Protection Area (SPA)
 - Sites of Important Nature Conservation (SINC)

Loss of protected woodland/trees/hedgerows will need to be avoided as much as possible, and schemes which have an impact on air quality will need to demonstrate appropriate mitigation.

- Physical – The existence of physical constraints, such as flood risk and topographical constraints will be a factor, along with agricultural land and mineral safeguarding areas;
- Economic and Other Benefits – Certain development schemes may bring additional benefits to a locality, for example, assisting regeneration, bring improvements to a local highway, or helping to support a school at risk of closure.

The proposed assessment template for Stage 3A can be viewed in Appendix 3.

- 5.4 The final section of the template ‘Site Appraisal Summary’ allows for an officer recommendation and a comment on how the proposed site fits with the Preferred Strategy. Following the conclusion of Stage 3A, a clear indication of which sites are more suitable for development will emerge. Those sites which have received poor assessments and ‘show stopping’ constraints will be eliminated from the process.

Stage 3B

- 5.5 Stage 3B will predominately involve the infrastructure providers. New development can often place additional pressure on existing infrastructure, such as water supply, drainage, sewerage, power and communications. In addition, community facilities such as schools, surgeries and recreational space could also come under pressure. Consequently, the Council will need to consult the infrastructure providers on all sites that have successfully made it through Stage 3A.
- 5.6 The Council will encourage the infrastructure providers to assess the sites and identify any potential issues and what mitigation measures are likely to be necessary in order to overcome these issues. The Stage 3B form found in Appendix 3 will be used to capture this information.
- 5.7 It is likely that the Council will have to contact the developer or land agent to understand whether the mitigation measures are acceptable, achievable and do not impact on the overall viability of the site. If obstacles are proving insurmountable at Stage 3B, then the site should be removed.

Deposit Local Development Plan

- 5.8 Following the conclusion of the Candidate Sites Assessment, the Council should have a list of viable, deliverable, sustainable sites for potential inclusion in the Deposit Local Development Plan.

APPENDIX 1 – PROPOSED STAGE 1 INITIAL CALL FOR SITES FORM

STAGE 1: INITIAL CALL FOR SITES
To assist in devising an LDP Preferred Strategy, the Local Authority is seeking the submission of potential development sites. Please complete one form for each site that is proposed. It must be accompanied by an Ordnance Survey base map which clearly identifies the land in question. All completed forms must be emailed to: lpd@xxxxxxxxx.gov.uk Or sent to: Planning Policy Team XXXXXXXX XXXXXX XXXXX XXXX The closing date for submissions is 5pm on XXXXXXXXXXXX
CONTACT DETAILS Name: Address: Postcode: Telephone Number: Email Address:
AGENT'S CONTACT DETAILS (IF APPLICABLE) Name: Address: Postcode: Telephone Number: Email Address:
SITE DETAILS: Name: Address: Post Code: Grid Ref:

Total size (ha): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenfield (ha): (Gross/Net) • Brownfield (ha): (Gross/Net) 			
Current site use:			
Proposed use:			
Current planning status (if known):			
Location (Edged red on an accompanying Ordnance Survey Plan):			
SITE SUITABILITY ISSUES			
Question	Yes	No	Comments/further details/mitigation proposed
Does the site have any known physical constraints (e.g. topography, access, severe slope, vegetation cover etc.)			
Is the site within a C1 or C2 flood risk zone?			
Is the site within a European Designated Site (e.g. SAC, RAMSAR)?			
Is this site affected by any known 'bad neighbour' uses (e.g. power lines, railway lines, major highways, heavy industry)?			
Is there a possibility that the site is contaminated?			
Is the site subject to any other known key constraints?			
Any additional notes about site suitability:			

APPENDIX 2 – PROPOSED STAGE 2 CANDIDATE SITE FORM

STAGE 2: FURTHER CANDIDATE SITE FORM AND DETAILED INFORMATION

To register a site for potential inclusion in the Local Development Plan process, a Candidate Site Form must be completed and submitted.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL PLANS AND ASSESSMENT FORMS SUBMITTED WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION.

Please complete one form for each site that is proposed. It must be accompanied by an Ordnance Survey base map which clearly identifies the land in question and highlights the land under ownership or control.

All completed candidate site forms must be emailed to:

lpd@xxxxxxxx.gov.uk

Or sent to:

Planning Policy Team
XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXX
XXXX

The closing date for submissions is **5pm on XXXXXXXXXXXX**

CONTACT DETAILS

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

AGENT'S CONTACT DETAILS (IF APPLICABLE)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

SITE DETAILS									
Site Name: Location (Edged red on an accompanying Ordnance Survey Plan):									
Site Area (Hectares): Estimated Gross/Net Greenfield Land: Estimated Gross/Net Brownfield Land: Grid Reference (If known):									
Current Use(s):									
Proposed Use(s):									
Brief description of proposal (if residential, please give an estimate of the number of units):									
OWNERSHIP									
Is the site wholly in the ownership of the proposer? If not, are all other land owners aware of this submission?		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>		Yes	No				
Yes	No								
If multiple landowners are involved, please provide an Ordnance Survey Plan clearly identifying the parcels of land owned, and please provide contact details of all owners.									
SITE SUITABILITY ISSUES									
Question	Yes	No	Comments/further details/mitigation proposed						
Does the site have any physical constraints (e.g. topography, access, severe slope, vegetation cover etc.)									
Is the site within a C1 or C2 flood risk zone?									
Is this site affected by 'bad neighbour' uses (e.g. power lines, railway lines, major highways, heavy industry)?									
Is there a possibility that the site is contaminated?									
Is the site subject to any other key constraints?									
Any additional notes about site suitability:									

UTILITIES				
Is the site capable of connection to the following services?				
Mains water supply	[<input type="checkbox"/>]	Mains sewerage	[<input type="checkbox"/>]	
Electrical supply	[<input type="checkbox"/>]	Gas supply	[<input type="checkbox"/>]	
Landline telephone	[<input type="checkbox"/>]	Broadband	[<input type="checkbox"/>]	
Other (please specify):				
Please provide any further details:				
TRANSPORT				
Is the site currently accessible from the existing highway network? If not, please explain/demonstrate on an accompanying plan how access could be achieved:				
What are the opportunities for modal shift and increasing sustainable forms of transport and not negatively impacting on air quality? (For major developments, consideration should be given to providing a separate Transport Statement)				
SITE DELIVERABILITY AND VIABILITY				
Please give a likely indication of the following:				
Submission of Planning Application(s):				
Commencement on site:				
Using the timescale below, please give an indication of the build rates:				
Please indicate an approximate timescale for site delivery:				
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33

What constraints/covenants on the site would need to be overcome before development can commence and how would this be achieved?

Does the site (or part of the site) currently have planning permission, or has the site obtained planning permission in the past? If so, why has it not been delivered?

Have you undertaken any site surveys? If so, please provide details.

If you are the landowner, have you engaged with/undertaken any discussions with a potential developer(s)?

Is the site financially viable to come forward?

The Council may seek a viability assessment on your site in order to demonstrate whether its delivery is viable or not. Failure to submit a viability assessment when requested may result in your proposed site not being allocated.

APPENDIX 3 PROPOSED ASSESSMENTS

STAGE 3 ASSESSMENT		
3A		
SITE:		
CONFORMITY WITH LDP PREFERRED STRATEGY:		
LAND		<p>FACTORS TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously Developed Land or Greenfield? • Within settlement boundary/adjacent/outside?
AVAILABILITY AND DELIVERABILITY		<p>FACTORS TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land ownership • Legal obstacles to delivery • Viability concerns
ACCESSIBILITY		<p>FACTORS TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to community facilities/likelihood of providing new facilities • Proximity to regular bus and rail services/likelihood of providing new services • Proximity to proposed Metro nodes • Proximity to cycle routes/walking routes

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE		FACTORS TO CONSIDER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on a Scheduled Ancient Monument? • Impact on a Listed Building? • Adjacent/within a Conservation Area? • Impact on Registered Historic Park/Garden or Historic Landscape/Areas of Special Archaeological Sensitivity?
ENVIRONMENTAL		FACTORS TO CONSIDER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on European or National ecological designations? • Impact of local ecological designations? • Will there be a loss of protected woodland/trees/hedgerow? • Will there be a negative impact on air quality or an air quality management area? • Is the site within an area of landscape sensitivity?
PHYSICAL		FACTORS TO CONSIDER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood risk zone? • Topographical constraints? • Contaminated land? • BMV agricultural land? • Mineral safeguarding area • Bad neighbours?
ECONOMIC AND OTHER BENEFITS		FACTORS TO CONSIDER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely number of jobs? • Potential for delivering new community facilities/saving existing facilities? • Regeneration benefits? • Potential for delivering highway improvements?

SITE APPRAISAL SUMMARY

STAGE 3 ASSESSMENT			
3B	SERVICE PROVIDER	SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND POTENTIAL ISSUES	MITIGATION NECESSARY
NRW			
Power			
Water/Sewerage			
Communications			
Health			
Education			
Highways			
Environmental Health			
Other internal consultees			

**OVERALL CONCLUSION
AND NEXT STEPS**