

# Appendix D

## HOUSING SITE OPTIONS BACKGROUND PAPER

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This background paper provides a brief explanation of how the housing site options shown on the inset maps, which form **Appendix B** to the Joint Committee report, have been identified.

### 2.0 Methodology

#### *Meeting the residual requirement*

- 2.1 The starting point for each settlement was the proposed housing provision figure previously approved by the Local Plan Steering Group for the purpose of meeting the respective housing targets for Boston Borough and South Holland District (see **Appendix A** to the Joint Committee report). From that figure was deducted the number of dwellings built since 1st April 2011 and the number of dwellings with planning permission as at 31st March 2015. This resulted in a 'residual requirement' – the number of dwellings which currently need to be provided in the form of Local Plan allocations.
- 2.2 The amount of land that is needed to provide these dwellings obviously depends on the density at which the sites are built and the assumptions that have informed the process are as follows:
- in the two Sub-Regional Centres, each gross hectare will deliver 30 dwellings; and
  - in the Main Service Centres and Minor Service Centres, each gross hectare will deliver 20 dwellings.

It should be noted that changes to these assumptions would potentially have major effects upon the area of land required.

- 2.3 It is also important to remember that - at this stage - officers have not been seeking to identify which sites will be allocated in the Local Plan. Rather, they have been trying to identify the sites which are possible options for allocation. This means that, ideally, there is a wish to identify sites that will accommodate significantly more housing than is set out as the residual requirement. These

options can then be the subject of a public consultation exercise, the results of which can be used to inform decisions on which ones should proceed to the next stage of Local Plan preparation.

### ***Identifying options***

- 2.4 The first stage of identifying possible options for sites was to consider the land put forward by landowners and other interests in response to the two 'calls for sites' - the first in 2011 and the more recent in 2014 - which have formed part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process. Across the Local Plan area, these have amounted to about 850 sites in all. However, in many settlements, officers have determined that all the sites that are contenders for allocation have not been submitted. Where this has been the case, officers have identified the owners of these parcels of land and have written to invite them to put their sites forward for possible development if so wish.
- 2.5 It has also often been the case that people have submitted everything they own, and as a consequence have sometimes put forward very large areas of land which, in terms of potential dwellings, would significantly exceed the residual requirement or would dominate the settlement. If there has been the potential for part of one of these sites to work better, officers have contacted the owners to check that they would be happy for a reduced site to be considered.

### ***Assessing developability***

- 2.6 Each site has been assessed, as is required by Government guidance, in three broad ways:
- availability;
  - achievability; and
  - suitability.

These criteria are explained below.

- 2.7 For availability, the issue is whether there is knowledge of any legal or ownership issues that might prevent the site's development. Generally, a site is considered to be available as long as its owner has notified that it will be released for development in a timely fashion. A site owned by a house builder should suggest greater certainty in this regard.
- 2.8 For achievability, the issue is whether there is confidence that the site will be developed during the period of the Local Plan (which, in the case of South East Lincolnshire, is 2011-2036). Basically, this hinges on whether its development is likely to be financially viable within this period.

2.9 For suitability, the issue is whether the development of the site would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities. To this end, officers looked at:

- environmental impacts – would it harm natural or historic assets, and would it harm the amenity, character or appearance of the area?
- infrastructure – would it lead to the loss of open space, employment land, community facilities, etc? Would it place undue burdens on infrastructure?
- site location – is it close to jobs, shops, schools, healthcare, open space, etc? Is it within or adjacent to the settlement?
- site characteristics – does it have amenity value? Is it good-quality agricultural land? Is it previously-developed land? Are there any nearby ‘bad neighbour’ uses?
- transport – would it create or worsen traffic problems? Are there pedestrian, cycle and public transport links to jobs, shops, schools, etc? For Boston and Spalding, sites were assessed in respect of their potential to contribute directly to the delivery of transport infrastructure identified in the Local Transport Plan (i.e. the Spalding Western Relief Road and Boston Distributor Road).

2.10 If a site was assessed as unavailable, unachievable or unsuitable, it was classed as **undevelopable** and has proceeded no further in the process of identifying options. Many sites were eliminated from further consideration because, for example, they were not adjacent to the settlement, were too big, or sought to extend a settlement beyond a physical feature which currently constitutes a strong ‘limit’ to its growth.

2.11 If a site was assessed as available, achievable and suitable, it was classed as **developable**. These were the sites from which options were chosen. For most settlements, the process of site-assessment has resulted in the identification of site options with a total dwelling capacity that comfortably exceeds the residual requirement. The handful of settlements where this is not the case are all situated in South Holland District and these will be the subject of further investigations.

### ***The role of flood risk***

2.12 This background paper has so far made no mention of flood risk. This is because flood risk has not been used as part of the assessment of suitability. Instead, for every developable site, officers have identified the flood zone (1, 2, 3a or 3b), the flood hazard (no hazard, low hazard, danger for some, danger for most or danger for all), and flood depth (no hazard, 0-0.25m, 0.25-0.5m, 0.5-1.0m, 1-2m, and >2m). Where future decisions on the choice between sites

have to be made, flood risk will be an important factor, with the lowest risk being chosen (all other things being equal).

***Other considerations***

2.13 Another important consideration is that account has been taken of the general desirability to identify a number of smaller sites in any given settlement, rather than one large site. This is because several smaller development proposals:

- will usually integrate better into the settlement character;
- will usually give a better spread of development over the Local Plan period, rather than a single site potentially being built out in five years; and
- in terms of delivery, represent a 'safer bet' than being dependent on all going well with a single site.