

## ***Criteria for Determining the Acceptability of Housing Sites***

### **Introduction**

The Council have resolved that the District Local Plan should identify sufficient housing sites to accommodate an additional 3,600 dwellings during the 15 years between 1991 and 2006 in an attempt to stem the current trend of population decline and generate a scenario of population growth in the longer term.

A number of these dwellings will be provided on smaller sites of less than one acre or 10 dwellings. The Plan contains policies aimed at controlling the location of these 'infill' sites. However, no specific sites have been identified for these.

Work was carried out on the identification of sites of over one acre in size or accommodating 10 dwellings or more. A database of 231 such sites was compiled from a number of sources. A number of objective assessment criteria were applied to each site to determine which were the most suitable to be included in the Deposit Plan.

Sources of sites:

- \* Sites suggested by Landowners, Agents or Developers.
- \* Sites with outstanding planning permission or applications.
- \* Sites with refused, lapsed or withdrawn planning applications.
- \* Sites identified in existing local plans, topic papers or other study reports.
- \* Sites subject to 'GEN' enquiries.
- \* Sites suggested by local residents.
- \* Sites suggested by Local Authority Departments.

### **Preliminary Assessment Criteria**

This assessment was aimed at removing those sites which are situated in the best landscape areas or away from the built up areas and settlements. In accordance with the overall strategy of the Plan the criteria reflects that the better environments are to be conserved and that new housing development should be located in existing settlements.

Criteria:

- (a) The site is within an Area of Landscape Value.  
SCORE: 0 if within area or 3 if outside.
  - (b) The site is within built up area.  
SCORE: 4 if site meets criteria or 0 if not.
  - (c) The site is included in Landscape Assessment.  
SCORE: 2 if site meets criteria or 0 if not.
- NOTE: A site can only score in either (b) or (c) to avoid double counting.
- (d) The site is currently derelict, underused, vacant or represents a redevelopment opportunity.  
SCORE: 2 if the site meets criteria or 0 if not.

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- (e) The site is within a Landscape Zone which can accommodate further development AND which is well related to the built up area.  
SCORE: 1 if the site meets criteria or 0 if not.
- (f) The site is well related to a settlement.  
SCORE: 1 if the site meets criteria or 0 if not.

The maximum possible score is 11.

The Landscape Assessments were carried out in 1992 by officers from the Environmental Services Department and the Landscape section at County Hall. The District was sub divided into 23 areas based on the topography and ridgelines. The quality of the landscape is determined largely by the state of the landscape framework which results from the manner of the landform, vegetation and development.

Following the application of these assessments to the 231 sites 50 failed to score at least 5 points and were, therefore eliminated from the exercise. This left 181 sites. It was calculated that sites totalling 12,200 gross dwelling units should be carried forward to the second assessment stage. This would ensure that sufficient sites would be available to meet the plan's requirement. This is the reason for selecting 5 as the cut off point.

### **Additional Assessment Criteria**

This was a lot more detailed than the preliminary assessment and includes criteria concerning sustainability, nature conservation, developer interest, planning gain, and marketability.

#### Criteria:

- (g) The site contains or is abutted by a recognised wildlife site.  
SCORE: 2 if unaffected or 0 if affected. Score 1 if abutted.
- (h) The site contains or is abutted by a recognised site of archaeological importance.  
SCORE: 2 if unaffected or 0 if affected. Score 1 if abutted.
- (i) The site has a southerly aspect.  
SCORE: 1 if site meets criteria or 0 if not.
- (j) The site is within 0.5 mile radius of a primary school.  
SCORE: 2 if whole site meets criteria or 0 if not. Score 1 if part of site.
- (k) The site is within 0.5 mile radius of a district or local commercial centre.  
SCORE: 2 if whole site meets criteria or 0 if not. Score 1 if part of site.
- (l) The site is within a settlement in need of new housing investment.  
SCORE: 2 if site meets criteria or 0 if not.
- (m) The site is within 1 mile radii of one or more major employment centres.  
SCORE: 2 if site is within two or more, 1 if within one, or 0 if none.
- (n) The development of the site would help sustain or provide village services.  
SCORE: 2 if site meets criteria or 0 if not.

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- (o) The site provides a possible planning gain opportunity.  
(Excludes landscape improvement or woodland)  
SCORE: 2 if site meets criteria or 0 if not.
- (p) The site has a housebuilder interested in it. (Known to DDC)  
SCORE: 3 if site meets criteria or 0 if not.
- (q) The site has opportunity for landscape improvement or woodland edge planting. SCORE: 1 if yes and 0 if none.
- (r) The site is within a settlement identified by the Housebuilders' Federation as having perceived housing demand.

SCORE: 5 if at Lanchester or Burnopfield.

SCORE: 4 if at Ebchester, Shotley Bridge or Hamsterley Mill.

SCORE: 3 if at Stanley, Crookgate Bank, Hamsterley or Langley Park.

SCORE: 2 if at Dipton, Esh Winning, Medomsley, Tanfield or Hobson.

SCORE: 1 if at Annfield Plain, Consett, Castleside, Iveston, Blackhill, Tanfield Lea or Tantobie.

The total score possible is 26.

This criteria was applied to the 181 remaining sites. In order to ensure that sufficient sites were available to meet the housing requirement it was decided that those sites scoring 21 or more would be included on the proposals map for inclusion in the plan. The Plan contains 28 proposed and 14 sites with associated uses.

The total score is achieved by adding the preliminary score to the score achieved in the additional assessment, giving a total score out of 37.

**Note:** As well as these sites a development limit has been defined for the north eastern end of Burnhope (refer to Policy HO8). This has resulted in six extra housing sites being included in the Plan.

