

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CANDIDATE SITE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. Introduction

Part 6 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (The Act) places a duty on each local authority in Wales to prepare a Local Development Plan (LDP). The Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan)(Wales) Regulations 2005 prescribe the form and content of the LDP and make provision for the procedure to be followed in their preparation.

The LDP will set out the Council's land use strategy for the Vale of Glamorgan for the period 2011-2026. The purpose of the LDP is to identify the anticipated level of future development as well as the types of development that may occur and where such development may take place during the life of the Plan.

A key element in developing the Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan is the identification of suitable sites for new housing, employment, and other uses such as community and recreation. As part of this process, the Council invited submissions from developers and other interested parties to submit sites between the 4th December 2006 and the 31st January 2007. As a result of this exercise a significant number of potential sites (over 300) have been submitted to the Council for consideration through the LDP process.

2. Candidate Site Assessments

In order to assess the suitability of sites promoted, the Council has developed a site assessment methodology, which will be applied to all sites, including those which may emerge from technical studies undertaken by or on behalf of the Council as well as unimplemented sites allocated within the current Unitary Development Plan.

The methodology involves a robust assessment of the suitability, availability and deliverability of land for particular uses and assesses whether sites promoted for development accord with the Council's Preferred Strategy for the LDP. The site appraisal process also considers the Council's requirements for undertaking a Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA) as part of its LDP preparations.

The assessment of candidate sites will be subject to the following 3 stages:

Stage 1: Assessing sites against the LDP Preferred Strategy

This will assess whether sites have the potential to contribute to the strategic aims and objectives of the LDP, including the level and distribution of growth set

out in the Preferred Strategy. Only those candidate sites that satisfy the first assessment stage will go forward for to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Detailed site appraisal- assessing sites in terms of their suitability and deliverability.

This examines site specific issues set against criteria relating to the physical characteristics, accessibility and location, environmental constraints and opportunities, infrastructure issues and site availability. Where relevant the site appraisals will also consider legislation and government policy.

Stage 3: Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to be carried out as part of the Local Development Plan process to assess the environmental, economic and social effects of the plan, and include site specific proposals.

Details of the 3 stages of appraisal are set out below

3. Site appraisal process and methodology

Each potential site will assessed in terms of its suitability and deliverability, as set out in the matrix at the end of this paper. Details of the proposed criteria are given below:

Stage 1: The Spatial Strategy ‘Fit’

Preferred sites will generally need to be consistent with the overall spatial strategy for the Vale. This will be set out in the Preferred Strategy which will include the identifying of the roles and functions of different settlements, which in turn will provide the framework for directing future development, in terms of location, scale and type as well accessibility to services and facilities. However, other aspects of the spatial strategy such as the overall levels of growth and relative distribution between settlements will need to feed into the site selection process along with the site appraisal results.

Stage 2: Detailed Site Assessment

This will involve assessing sites in terms of their suitability and deliverability, and will involve examining sites against set criteria relating to site accessibility and location, environmental impact, physical site constraints, infrastructure issues and site availability. This assessment will require additional information to be provided by internal departments such as highways and education as well as external consultation with statutory agencies and organisations where appropriate.

- a) **Site type** – National Planning Policy set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (2002) emphasises the importance of re-using Brownfield sites, in order to minimise the take-up of Greenfield land. Previously developed land will therefore normally rank higher than Greenfield sites; however, this will not necessarily be the main determining factor in whether a site is suitable for allocation.

Similarly, PPW places an importance on the safeguarding of agricultural land that is graded 1, 2 and 3a, and on lower graded land where this has either an environmental value recognised by landscape, wildlife historic or archaeological designations. Accordingly, the methodology shall consider these factors when assessing site specific proposals.

Site location & Accessibility – National Planning Guidance highlights the importance for new developments to have access to a range of services, facilities and opportunities, and can in turn be accessed by existing communities. Consequently, the relative distance to existing facilities, public transport, including the level and frequency of public transport provision will be a key determinant. For housing proposals only, the assessment will firstly examine the location of the site proposal in terms of whether it is located within, adjacent to or outside a settlement, and secondly the ease of pedestrian and cyclist access to key services such as primary schools, doctor’s surgeries and local shops.

The Institute of Highways and Transportation Guidelines for Providing Journeys on Foot (2000) suggests that in terms of commuting, schools and recreational journeys, walking distances of up to 2000m can be considered, with the desirable and acceptable distances being 500m and 1000m. Consequently, the Council will assess the accessibility of sites against the below criteria.

	Facilities, e.g shops, bus stop.	Commuting / school	Other
Desirable	200m	500m	400m
Acceptable	400m	1000m	800m
Preferred maximum	800m	2000m	1200m

Source: Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot (IHT 2000)

**Acceptable walking distance to facilities are defined as those where a high proportion of the trips generated by new development can be conveniently made by passenger transport, on foot or by bicycle.*

In the case of retail, employment, and leisure proposals, sites will be categorised according to whether they are located in the town centre, edge of centre, out of centre or out of town, (the sequential test).

- b) **Environmental** – The degree of impact on the character and appearance of an area, biodiversity and other environmental assets/resources will be assessed.

Where a site falls within one of the following key environmental designations categories, it will normally be discounted from further consideration:

- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Ramsar Site
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Sites of Important Nature Conservation (SINC)

Where a proposal falls within or adjacent to a Local Nature Reserve, Ancient Woodland, Historic Parks and Gardens, Schedule Ancient Monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas or other environmental designations the Council shall consult with the appropriate organisation to determine any potential impacts. Where it is found that a site is likely to lead to environmental improvements, this will rank more highly than those which will have a neutral or detrimental effect.

- d) **Physical constraints** – The existence of constraints such as flood risk, contamination and vehicular access to a site will be assessed. Sites with fewer constraints would rank more highly than those with significant development constraints. Similarly, and in accordance with Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15 Development and Flood Risk (July 2004) sites promoted for housing which are located in areas of high flood risk C2 Flood Zones will generally not be permitted. However, the Council shall consult with the Environment Agency and other appropriate agencies to determine the existence of any physical constraints and to also ascertain any appropriate mitigation measures.
- e) **Infrastructure capacity** – New development can place additional pressures on existing infrastructure such as water supply, drainage and sewer capacities as well as other local facilities such as schools, community facilities and recreational space. Consequently, the Council shall engage with service providers and other Council departments to determine whether such pressures do exist and to identify appropriate mitigation measures (for example through the use of planning obligations).
- f) **Benefits** – Development schemes may bring additional benefits to a locality or area, for example, assisting regeneration, bringing improvements to the local highway network, or satisfying particular local needs. It is not considered that the securing of benefits alone would allow for unacceptable development to become acceptable, however, each site will be assessed on a case by case basis.
- g) **Deliverability** – Deliverability of the Strategy is a key element of the LDP and the Council will need to ensure that allocated sites have a realistic chance of coming forward for development within the plan period. For example, the willingness of an owner to release a site for development is a key factor which needs to be considered as part of the process. This is especially the case where the Council itself identifies land that it considers can assist in the delivery of the LDP strategy.

Other factors may also impact on deliverability and implementation, for example, the existence of other land uses on the site which are unable to immediately vacate, land remediation or site viability issues.

Stage 3: Sustainability Appraisal

The Council's SA Framework was developed during the scoping stage, when the extent of the appraisal was determined, and is included in the Scoping Report (February 2007). The Framework consists of 15 Sustainability Objectives which ensure the LDP is assessed against environmental, economic and social criteria. When considered together, the Objectives provide an overall indication of the sustainability of the LDP.

The Council's Preferred Strategy will be subject to SA prior to the assessment of candidate sites, therefore appraising each site against the full SA Framework is deemed inappropriate and unnecessary, since the Stage 1 strategic assessment will enable the Council to identify less sustainable sites, i.e. those that "do not fit" with the Council's Preferred Strategy. Therefore, only those sites that have undergone detailed site assessments shall be subject to individual SA assessments to determine their contribution towards meeting the Council's Sustainability Objectives.

The assessment process will involve scoring each site in terms of its likely impact (positive or negative) on each sustainability objective. This will be supported by site information collated at stage 2 of the assessment and shall involve scoring sites against their impact on sustainability within the Vale of Glamorgan, as in the table below. In addition, site specific appraisal criteria have been developed by the Council in order to determine how each site contributes towards the Council's sustainability objectives (see Stage 3 sustainability appraisal table below).

	Effect
Development at the site will have a positive impact on sustainability	++
Development at the site will have a some positive impact on sustainability	+
Development at the site will have a negligible or neutral impact on sustainability. A recorded neutral effect does not necessarily mean there will be no effect at the site level, but shows that at this strategic level there is no identifiable effects.	0
Development at the site will have a slight negative impact on the sustainability.	-
Development at the site will have a very negative impact on sustainability	--
The impact of an issue cannot be predicted at this stage.	?

Alongside each score there will be space for commentary which, where necessary, will explain and justify the reasoning behind it and may also help identify potential mitigation measures.

It should be noted that a simple 'adding up' of the numbers of + and - will not necessarily signify a preference of one site over another, since sites suitability

will also be influenced by other legal requirements or national planning guidance, for example the Habitats Regulations or the requirements of Planning Policy Wales.

It is acknowledged that there is a degree of overlap between the stages 2 and 3, with some criteria covered in each. However, the Sustainability Appraisal process is a statutory requirement and includes a number of different criteria to those proposed in the detailed site appraisal. Carrying out the proposed appraisal processes will ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations, and that sites are proposed on the basis of a sound appraisal.

SITE REFERENCE:	
SITE ADDRESS:	
AREA (ha):	
CURRENT LAND USE	
PROPOSED USE	
POTENTIAL SITE CAPACITY	Where the actual number of dwellings to be provided on a site is unknown at present, the potential number will be calculated using an average net density of 30 dwellings per hectare.
SETTLEMENT RANKING:	This is taken from the Council's assessment of existing local facilities and public transport provision available within each settlement.

SITE ASSESSMENT STAGE 1

Spatial Strategy Assessment:

Conclusion:

SITE ASSESSMENT STAGE 2

Site Status, Location and Accessibility	Yes/No	Commentary	Scoring Criteria	Score
Q. Is the site classified as Greenfield or Brownfield? (in accordance with PPW definition)			Brownfield= 2 Greenfield=1	
Q. Is the site situated on agricultural land?			Grade 2, 3 or 3a agricultural land= -1 Below grade 3a = 1	

Q. Is the site within an existing settlement?			In Settlement= 2 Edge of Settlement=1 Outside Settlement= -1 Countryside= -2	
Q. Is the site easily accessible to local services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling?			Yes=1 No=2	
Environmental	Yes/No	Commentary	Scoring Criteria	Score
Q. If the site is located within or adjacent to a European, National, Regional or local ecological designation what is the potential impact on the designation?			Positive= 1 Neutral/None=0 Adverse= -1	
Q. If the site incorporates a Listed Building or is located adjacent to Listed buildings what is the potential impact?			Positive= 1 Neutral/None=0 Adverse= -1	
Q. If the site is located within or adjacent to a Registered Historic Park and Garden or Historic Landscape what is the potential impact?			Positive= 1 Neutral/None=0 Adverse= -1	
Q. If the site located within or adjacent to a Conservation Area what is the potential impact?			Positive= 1 Neutral/None=0 Adverse= -1	
Q. If there any other important features associated with the site, e.g. boundary walls or trees etc what is the potential impact on these features?			Positive= 1 Neutral/None=0 Adverse= -1	
Q. Is the site located affected by any existing planning designations or permissions?			Yes but not adversely affected/No =0 Yes adversely affected=-1	
Physical Constraints	Yes/No	Commentary	Scoring Criteria	Score

Q. Is the site prone to flood risk (Zones A,B,C, C1,C2)			Suitable (no capacity issues)=2 Mitigation (potential issues, may be alleviated) 1 Not suitable or cannot be mitigated against = -1	
Q. Is there appropriate Vehicular Access to main highway			Yes access appropriate =2 Yes but improvements required= 1 No suitable access or cannot be improved = -1	
Infrastructure Capacity	Yes/No	Commentary	Scoring Criteria	Score
Q. Are there any infrastructure capacity issues?			Suitable (no capacity issues)=2 Mitigation (potential issues, may be alleviated) 1 Not suitable or cannot be mitigated against = -1	
Q. Are there shortages in local services or facilities?			Suitable (no capacity issues)=2 Mitigation (potential issues, may be alleviated) 1 Not suitable or cannot be mitigated against = -1	
Benefits	Yes/No	Commentary	Scoring Criteria	Score
Q Are there potential benefits to local community associated with the development?			Yes= 1 No=0	
Deliverability	Yes/No	Commentary	Scoring Criteria	Score
Q. Is it the capable of being developed during the LDP period?			Yes=1 No =-1	
Total Site Assessment Score				
Site Appraisal Summary				

SITE ASSESSMENT STAGE 3: SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

Assessment Criteria	Effect
Development at the site will have a positive impact on sustainability	++
Development at the site will have a some positive impact on sustainability	+
Development at the site will have a negligible or neutral impact on sustainability. A recorded neutral effect does not necessarily mean there will be no effect at the site level, but shows that at this strategic level there is no identifiable effects.	0
Development at the site will have a slight negative impact on the sustainability.	-
Development at the site will have a very negative impact on sustainability	--
The impact of an issue cannot be predicted at this stage	?

Sustainability Objective	Appraisal to assess whether or not:	Commentary	Effect
1. To provide the opportunity for people to meet their housing needs	The site has the potential to deliver a mix of housing tenures including affordable housing (achievable on larger sites through 106 agreements).		
	Whole or part of the site has been promoted for affordable housing.		
	The site is located in an area of housing need as identified in the Housing Market Assessment Study (when finalised)		
2. To maintain, promote and enhance the range of local facilities	The site is promoted for community, leisure and recreational facilities.		
	The proposal would not lead to a loss of a community facility.		
	The site has the potential to provide community facilities.		
3. To maintain and improve access for all	Existing services and facilities are easily accessible from the site by walking, cycling and public transport.		

4. Reduce the causes of deprivation	The development would lead to improved access to employment, housing, health, education facilities or enhancement of the built environment for wards ranked in the lower Indices of Multiple Deprivation.		
5. To maintain, protect and enhance community spirit	The site would not lead to a coalescence of settlements		
	The site would not result in a loss in recreational land or a community facility		
6. To minimise the causes and manage the effects of climate change	The site would not increase the need to travel and or increase travel distances		
	The site is not located within an area prone to flood risk or would will have a negative effect on the quality of water resources		
	The site is capable of incorporating renewable energy sources or energy conservation measures		
7. To minimise waste	The site will have a positive impact on waste minimisation (e.g. a proposal for new waste management facility).		
8. To use land effectively and efficiently	The site is a brownfield site and/or involves the beneficial re-use of existing buildings		
	The site is capable of accommodating high density development		
9. To protect and enhance the built environment and natural environment	The proposal would have a neutral or positive effect on a conservation area, or buildings or gardens designated as having historic interest		
	The proposal will have a neutral or positive effect on biodiversity, landscape or nature conservation designation.		
10. To provide a high quality environment within all new developments	The development has the potential to support high quality public realm.		

11. To protect, enhance and promote the quality and character of the Vale of Glamorgan's culture and heritage	The site is not located within a nationally or internationally designated ecological site, an Area of Archaeological or Historical Importance (e.g. Ancient monument, Listed Buildings, Conservation Area).		
12. To reduce the need to travel and enable the use of more sustainable modes of transport	The site is well served by a public transport and accessible by walking and cycling		
	Services and facilities are easily accessible by a range of transport modes including walking and cycling.		
13. To provide for a diverse and wide range of local job opportunities	The proposal is for new employment development.		
	The site would not result in a loss of employment land that has been identified as having a continued economic role.		
14. To maintain and enhance the viability of the Vale's town, district and local centres	The site is located either within the either a centre, edge of centre or an out of town location.		
15. To promote appropriate tourism	The proposal is either for a new or enhanced tourism facility or would not result in a loss of a tourism facility.		
Sustainability Appraisal Summary			