

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan:
Strategic Employment Land Availability Assessment
March 2017



South East Lincolnshire
Joint Strategic Planning Committee

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Site Assessment Disclaimer

The South East Lincolnshire SELAA 2017 forms part of the evidence base for the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan. It is a 'snapshot' of site information at the time of publication and will change on a regular basis as units are built and planning permissions are granted.

The SELAA only identifies land that MAY have future potential for development. It does not allocate sites to be developed and identification of sites within this document does not imply that planning permission will be granted on them. The report provides a broad indication of suitable sites and does not identify all sites that may be delivered.

Detailed assessments of potential sites for allocation (and reasonable alternatives) within the Local Plan will be carried out through the Sustainability Appraisal process, which will be subject to public consultation at various stages through the Local Plan process.

1.0 What is a Strategic Employment Land Availability Assessment (SELAA)?

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 158 indicates that Local Plans *“should be based on adequate, up-to-date, and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area.”*
- 1.2 The NPPF, paragraph 158 goes on to indicate that *“local planning authorities should ensure that their assessments of ... housing, employment and other uses are integrated”*, and that *“reviews of land available for economic development should be undertaken at the same time as, or combined with, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments”* (paragraph 161). In slight contrast, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) refers to the production of a ‘Housing and economic land availability assessment’, which would identify *“a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period.”*
- 1.3 This assessment looks only at potential sites for meeting South East Lincolnshire’s employment land needs - a separate assessment has been carried out to look at potential housing land – the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, March 2017. However, each has taken account of the findings of the other.
- 1.4 The South East Lincolnshire Town Centre and Retail Capacity Study, December 2013 identifies that future demand for convenience goods is likely to be met through commitments and organic growth in the short term and through small stores (up to 500sqm) to meet underserved areas or to anchor new Local Centres in the longer term. The additional need for comparison goods floorspace in Boston Town can be delivered on redundant or under-used sites within the town centre or at edge of centre locations. However there is a need for an additional 10,810sqm of floorspace in Spalding. Therefore retail allocations will only be required in Spalding, and will be addressed through the Spalding Retail Paper, March 2017.
- 1.4 The PPG makes it clear that an *“assessment is an important evidence source to inform plan making but does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development. This is because not all sites considered in the assessment will be suitable for development (e.g. because of policy constraints or if they are unviable). It is the role of the assessment 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 those sites are the most suitable to meet those needs.”*
- 1.5 In 2012, to determine the overall strategy for employment, the Joint Strategic Planning Committee commissioned specialist consultants to prepare an NPPF- compliant Employment Land Review (ELR), which included an assessment of a selection of employment sites in the Plan area. This work was updated in the Employment Land Technical Paper, January 2016 to include a wider range of sites included those submitted through an initial call for sites in July 2011 and April 2014. However, this is the first time that an NPPG compliant SELAA has been published.

- 1.6 It is important to note that a SELAA can only provide a ‘snapshot’ of the land availability at the time it is produced and is subject to constant change as units are completed, applications are granted and new sites become available. However, it is important that the SELAA is kept up to date with regards to ongoing land supply, and it is intended to update this report on at least an annual basis, with regards to completions and new sites identified.

2.0 What sites have been assessed?

- **Functional economic market area** - The PPG states that *“the area selected for the assessment should be the housing market area and functional economic market area. This could be the local planning authority area or a different area such as two or more local authority areas or areas covered by the Local Enterprise Partnership”*. The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan covers the combined areas of Boston Borough and South Holland District. The Employment Land Technical Paper Update, March 2017 (ELTP) identifies that the two local authority areas are located within the same functional economic market area, so all sites will be within the Local Plan area.
- **Site size** – The PPG states that *“the assessment should consider all sites and broad locations capable of delivering five or more dwellings or economic development on sites of 0.25ha and above. Where appropriate, plan makers may wish to consider alternative site size thresholds.”* The SELAA considers that the threshold for economic development is appropriate for the Local Plan area.
- **Site type** – The PPG identifies that a *‘range of different site sizes from small-scale sites to opportunities for large-scale developments such as village and town extensions and new settlements where appropriate; should be assessed.* It adds that the following types of site should be included:
 - *“Existing housing and economic development allocations and site development briefs not yet with planning permission (data from each LPA);*
 - *Planning permissions for housing and economic development that are unimplemented or under construction (data from each LPA);*
 - *Planning applications that have been refused or withdrawn (data from each LPA);*
 - *Land in the local authority’s ownership (data from each LPA);*
 - *Surplus and likely to become surplus public sector land (data from public sector partners);*
 - *Vacant and derelict land and buildings (including empty homes, redundant and disused agricultural buildings, potential permitted changes e.g. offices to residential) (data from SHLAA and call for sites);*
 - *Additional opportunities in established uses (e.g. making productive use of under-utilised facilities such as garage blocks) (data from each LPA, SHLAA and call for sites);*
 - *Business requirements and aspirations (information from each Local Authority’s Economic Development Team, local agents and developers);*
 - *Sites in rural locations (data from SHLAA and call for sites);*
 - *Large scale redevelopment and redesign of existing residential or economic areas (information from each Local Authority, local agents and developers);*
 - *Sites in and adjoining villages or rural settlements and rural exception sites (data from SHLAA and call for sites);*

- o *Potential urban extension and new free standing settlements (data from each LPA, SHLAA and call for sites)."*

It also goes on to indicate that *"plan makers should issue a call for potential sites and broad locations for development, which should be aimed at as wide an audience as is practicable so that those not normally involved in property development have the opportunity to contribute."*

- 2.1 The SELAA has been produced in accordance with the above advice, with specific 'calls for sites' issued in July 2011 and April 2014, and sites also being submitted as part of the Local Plan consultations in May 2013, January 2016 and July 2016.
- 2.2 In addition to the above sources a desktop review of the Plan Area has identified other sites or broad locations that may have development potential. These have been included within the SELAA.
- 2.3 A locally specific criterion was added to ensure that sufficient employment land is provided/safeguarded in locations where housing growth is proposed. This is:
 - o Existing employment sites (or where permitted use is employment) within 400m of a higher order settlement in the Local Plan settlement hierarchy (Sub-Regional Centre, Main Service Centre or Minor Service Centre).

This is to ensure that sites are assessed where there is likely to be capacity in the utilities infrastructure (or where it is more likely to easily be achieved) and close to a local labour supply and local amenities. 400m has been selected because it is a generally accepted distance within which residents would be prepared to walk to work/home. This approach is consistent with the methodology used for the housing sites selection process.

3.0 How have sites been assessed?

- **Capacity** - the PPG indicates that *"the estimation of the development potential of each identified site should be guided by the existing or emerging plan policy including locally determined policies on density...* The use of floor space densities for certain industries may also provide a useful guide." The adopted South Holland Local Plan (July 2006) and the Boston Borough Local Plan (April 1999) nor the 'South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 Draft for Public Consultation (including site options for development) January 2016' and the 'South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 Preferred Sites Consultation', July 2016 specify densities. However, the ELTP indicates that for each potential development site the gross site area will be adjusted (from gross to net areas), unless otherwise detailed by a planning permission. It has been assumed that greenfield sites would have a gross to net adjustment of 80% to reflect the need to provide all necessary infrastructure (including roads, flood mitigation, sustainable drainage) and to provide a buffer to adjoining uses. For brownfield sites within the built area or within established employment areas, a gross to net adjustment of 90% has been assumed, as it is expected that most necessary infrastructure will be in place.

The employment land requirement for South East Lincolnshire (identified in the ELR/ELTP) is in hectares rather than floorspace, so it is not considered necessary to consider plot ratios or any other form of detailed density provision.

- **Type** – the PPG states that *‘an assessment of land availability identifies a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period.’* In South East Lincolnshire this will include potential development sites (for allocation) and existing employment sites (for protection);
- **Suitability** – the PPG indicates that *“assessing the suitability of sites or broad locations for development should be guided by:*
 - *the development plan, emerging plan policy and national policy;*
 - *market and industry requirements in that functional economic market area...*

When assessing the sites against the adopted development plan, plan makers will need to take account of how up to date the plan policies are and consider the appropriateness of identified constraints on sites/broad location and whether such constraints may be overcome.

Sites in existing development plans or with planning permission will generally be considered suitable for development although it may be necessary to assess whether circumstances have changed which would alter their suitability. This will include a re-appraisal of the suitability of previously allocated land and the potential to designate allocated land for different or a wider range of uses. This should be informed by a range of factors including the suitability of the land for different uses and by market signals, which will be useful in identifying the most appropriate use.

In addition to the above considerations, the following factors should be considered to assess a site’s suitability for development now or in the future:

- *physical limitations or problems such as access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination;*
- *potential impacts including the effect upon landscapes including landscape features, nature and heritage conservation;*
- *appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed;*
- *contribution to regeneration priority areas;*
- *environmental/amenity impacts experienced by would be occupiers and neighbouring areas.”*

- 3.1 Taking account of the above guidance, the following criteria for assessing the potential development sites were used:

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

- The scale of employment development which the emerging South East Lincolnshire Local Plan seeks in the Plan area;
- Consistency with the emerging South East Lincolnshire Local Plan spatial strategy;
- Existing and proposed use;
- Whether the site is of a strategic or local scale;

- Whether the site is capable of accommodating a critical mass of employment uses;

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- Impacts on natural assets (Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Geological Interest, National Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites) or upon natural habitats or biodiversity networks;
- Impacts upon Minerals Safeguarding Areas;
- Impacts on heritage assets (Scheduled Ancient Monuments, listed buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, conservation areas, buildings of local historic interest, archaeological remains).
- Impact on the amenity, character and appearance of the area (e.g. avoiding settlement coalescence, relationship with the existing development form, character and street pattern, etc.);

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Whether development will lead to the loss of open space, green infrastructure, or community, education, recreation or social facilities;
- Whether development will place undue burdens on infrastructure;

LOCATION

- Whether the site is close to homes (and therefore local labour), shops, community and leisure facilities;
- Whether the site is located within or adjacent to a settlement;

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

- Amenity value of the site;
- Agricultural land quality;
- Flood risk;
- Whether the site contains previously-developed/brownfield land;
- Compatibility of surrounding uses e.g. homes;
- Ability of site to be developed easily e.g. shape, gradient, boundary etc.

TRANSPORT

- Whether development will create or exacerbate traffic problems;
- Proximity to main road network;
- Pedestrian, cycle and public transport links to homes, shops, and leisure facilities;
- Ability to accommodate development, parking, servicing;

MARKET SIGNALS

- Likely ongoing market attractiveness for the site for employment use;
- Ability to accommodate full range of B Class development;
- Type, condition and number of units (for expansion site);
- Opportunities for redevelopment or intensification (for expansion site);
- Prominence of site;
- Vacancy rate, and vacant land/floorspace or take-up of land (for expansion site);
- Evidence of developer/occupier interest;
- Recent investment on site/recent planning permissions/evidence of marketing;

- Potential for development for employment use, for alternative employment generating use or for mixed use;

3.2 Taking account of the above guidance, the following criteria for assessing established employment sites were used:

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

- Consistency with the emerging South East Lincolnshire Local Plan spatial strategy;
- Current use and no of units;
- Whether the site is of a strategic or local scale;
- Whether the site is capable of accommodating a critical mass of employment uses;

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- Impacts on natural assets (Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Geological Interest, National Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites) or upon natural habitats or biodiversity networks;
- Impacts upon Minerals Safeguarding Areas;
- Impacts on heritage assets (Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, listed buildings, conservation areas, buildings of local historic interest, archaeological remains);
- Impact on the amenity, character and appearance of the area (e.g. avoiding settlement coalescence, relationship with the existing development form, character and street pattern, etc.)

LOCATION

- Whether the site is close to homes (and therefore local labour), shops and community facilities;
- Whether the site is located within or adjacent to a settlement;

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

- Amenity value of the site;
- Agricultural land quality;
- Flood risk;
- Compatibility of surrounding uses e.g. homes.
- Whether the site contains previously-developed/brownfield land;
- Quality of external environment e.g. landscaping;

TRANSPORT

- Whether development will create or exacerbate traffic problems.
- Proximity to main road network
- Pedestrian, cycle and public transport links to homes, shops and community facilities;
- Provision of turning and parking;

MARKET SIGNALS

- Prominence of site;
- No of occupiers;
- Vacancy rate, and vacant land/floorspace;

- Evidence of investment, planning permissions, active management;
 - Ability to redevelop and/or intensify;
- 3.3 Where a site's suitability appears potentially constrained, the SELAA identifies the constraint and what action would be needed to overcome it.
- 3.4 Employment development is classified as a less vulnerable use in terms of flood risk, therefore the focus for the Environment Agency is to ensure that occupiers are safe in times of flooding – this will be addressed through a flood risk assessment at the planning application stage. However, depending on the extent of risk, flood mitigation can add a significant cost to development which may adversely impact upon the viability of employment development. Therefore, it was decided that the following information relating to flood risk would be used as a criterion for assessing the likely achievability of development sites:
- Flood zone – zone 1, zone 2, zone 3a, or zone 3b;
 - Flood hazard – no hazard, low hazard, danger for some, danger for most, or danger for all; and
 - Flood depth – no hazard, 0m-0.25m, 0.25m-0.5m, 0.5m-1m, 1m-2m, or more than 2m.
- 3.5 **Availability** – the PPG indicates that *“a site is considered available for development when, on the best information available (confirmed by the call for sites and information from land owners and legal searches where appropriate), there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies, or operational requirements of landowners.”*
- 3.6 Taking account of the above guidance, sites have been considered as available provided: their owners have indicated that they will be released for development in a timely fashion; and there are no known obstacles to their being brought forward.
- 3.7 Where a site's availability appears potentially constrained, the SELAA identifies the constraint and what action would be needed to overcome it.
- 3.8 **Achievability** – the PPG indicates that *“a site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site 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.”*
- 3.9 This element of the SELAA consists of a comparison of the potential value of employment land, against potential unusual development costs (e.g. site clearance or decontamination, flood mitigation, a need for significant infrastructure, etc.).
- 3.10 Where a site's achievability appears potentially constrained, the SELAA identifies the constraint and what action would be needed to overcome it.
- 3.11 **Timescale and rate of development** - the PPG indicates that *“the local planning authority should ... assess the timescale within which each site is capable of development. This may*

include indicative lead-in times and build-out rates for the development of different scales of sites.”

- 3.12 Assuming timescales for the delivery of employment land is acknowledged to be more complex than that for housing land: unless an end user is known when planning permission is granted, sites are built on a design and build basis so react to the market.
- 3.13 The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan will cover the twenty-five year period from 2011 to 2036, and is expected to be adopted in 2018 (year 8 of the Local Plan period). Thus, the Local Plan is currently in year 6 (2016). 6.7ha of land was completed between 2011 and 2016.
- 3.13 Given the complexities with employment land delivery the SELAA has broken the rest of the plan period into two timeframes:
- 2017-2021: includes land with planning permission; land considered suitable against the provisions of the Boston Borough Local Plan (April 1999) or South Holland Local Plan (July 2006); land within an established employment area with services/infrastructure to the boundary; land with an end user/known investor involved; and land which does not involve a significant level of upfront investment; and
 - 2022-2036: includes most strategic greenfield sites; significant extensions to employment areas, land where a high level of upfront investment is required e.g. utilities, access, site clearance, contamination.

Each developable site will be attributed a timeframe as a guide to when potential development could start. Timescales for completion are difficult to assume and will mostly depend on demand.

4.0 How have sites been classified?

- 4.1 A site which is assessed as available, developable **and** suitable is considered as ***developable***.
- 4.2 A site which is assessed as unavailable, **or** unachievable **or** unsuitable is classified as ***undevelopable***.
- 4.3 This also applies to the assessment of existing sites as well.

5.0 What are the overall findings?

- 5.1 The SELAA considers 164 development sites, and of these:
- 102 (62.1%) are classified as undevelopable; and
 - 62 (37.8%) are classified as developable.
- 5.2 The 58 developable sites (discounting four sites that are within the boundaries of larger sites) could theoretically accommodate a total of 236.43ha of new employment land:
- 184.33ha in South Holland District; and
 - 52.1ha in Boston Borough.
- 5.3 Of those totals, the following net available land are theoretically developable during the Local Plan period (years 1-25):
- 157.54ha in South Holland District (including 2.87ha completed in years 1-6); and
 - 41.65ha in Boston Borough (including 3.83ha completed in years 1-6)
- 5.4 Of the 236.43ha of potential new developable employment sites:
- 96.01ha could be started 2017-2021 (including 24.4ha for two power stations); and
 - 140.42ha could be started 2022-2036 (including 9.6 for a port extension)
- 5.6 Each individual site has been given a unique reference number relevant to the settlement in which they are located. Maps of each settlement can be found in Appendix 1.