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Executive Summary

Swindon Borough Council adopted the *Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011: A Local Plan covering the Administrative Area of Swindon Borough* in July 2006. The Swindon Borough Council's urban capacity studies were used to inform housing policy decisions in this Local Plan.

Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3), published in November 2006 provides that all local planning authorities should undertake a Housing Land Availability Assessment. (In superseded Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing - PPG3, such determination of urban capacity was referred to as an Urban Capacity Study). Within PPS3, a key objective is that local planning authorities should continue to make effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously-developed, and in particular, vacant and derelict sites and buildings.

To comply with the requirements of PPS3, and the dynamic nature of Swindon as a 'Strategically Significant Town', this Housing Land Availability Assessment study (HLAA) proposes a review of the previous urban capacity studies to present current urban capacity information and other information required. This Housing Land Availability Assessment study commenced in September 2006 and was completed in February 2007, the contents of which are set out in this report.

The table below shows the results of this Housing Land Availability Assessment according to source type.

Source	Number of Sites	Total Area (ha)	Minimum Capacity	Maximum Capacity
Sources in the existing stock				
Subdivision of existing housing : sites : trends	0 -	0 -	0 0	0 68
Flats over shops (LOTS)	10	26.13	0	227
Empty homes	1	0.02	0	1
Intensification of existing areas	98	25.40	564	1066
Redevelopment of existing housing	3	1.94	41	88
Brownfield land				
Previously-developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non housing)	62	34.04	1192	1634
Redevelopment of car parks	1	0.20	7	8
Conversion of commercial buildings	4	1.70	39	227

Other sources				
Unimplemented/outstanding planning permissions	0	0	0	0
Review of existing housing allocations in plans	0	0	0	0
Review of other existing sites and allocations in plans	0	0	0	0
Land not previously developed including greenfield sites	5	2.50	76	123
The New Swindon Company project areas	5 project areas	18.69	1206	1935

In summary, the table below shows the urban capacity potential from this Housing Land Availability Assessment in comparison to previous urban capacity studies.

Urban Capacity Study Housing Land Availability Assessment	Number of Sites	Total Area (ha)	Minimum Capacity	Maximum Capacity
UCS (2002)	318	250.93	4 269	7 945
UCS-R (2003)	235	161.67	3 269	8 053
UCS-2 (2004)	222	113.80	2 156	5 732
HLAA (2007)	189 (including 5 project areas)	110.14	3 125	5 377

Swindon Borough Council is currently developing a Core Strategy in line with the new approach to development plans as set out in The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004. These changes include the replacement of Local Plans and Structure Plans with a Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy will thus be a Development Plan Document, which sets out the vision and strategy for Swindon Borough and to which all other Development Plan Documents must comply. It forms the key part of the Local Development Framework. The Housing Land Availability Assessment study will now be used to inform housing policy decisions within this Core Strategy.

1. Background

1.1 Swindon Borough Council adopted the *Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011: A Local Plan covering the Administrative Area of Swindon Borough* in July 2006. The Swindon Borough Council's urban capacity studies were used to inform housing policy decisions in this Local Plan.

1.2 In accordance with planning policy guidance, the first Urban Capacity Study (UCS) was published in September 2002, with an independent assessment by Nathaniel Lichfield (Swindon Urban Capacity Audit). The Urban Capacity Study - Update (UCS-R) was published in October 2003, while the Urban Capacity Study - Second Review (UCS-2) was published in December 2004. A summary of the urban capacity figures from these reports is as follows:

Urban Capacity Study	Number of Sites	Total Area (ha)	Minimum Capacity	Maximum Capacity
UCS (2002)	318	250.93	4 269	7 945
UCS-R (2003)	235	161.67	3 269	8 053
UCS-2 (2004)	222	113.80	2 156	5 732

An in-depth discussion on the policy background for these urban capacity studies can be found in the original Swindon Urban Capacity Study published in September 2002.

1.3 The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 contains within it a housing strategy that relies on the continued delivery of housing completions in the Northern Development Area and Southern Development Area and an additional greenfield site at Commonhead. The housing strategy also lists some 30 previously developed (brownfield) or urban greenfield sites at policies H2, CA5A and CA6B, that the Local Planning Authority expects to come forward during the Plan period. These sites offer an estimated 2 433 dwellings (including 333 dwellings from the 2 central area sites) to the overall supply. Most of these sites were identified in the review of the urban capacity studies. The urban capacity studies were also used to develop policies for subdivision of dwellings, office conversions and living over shops (LOTS).

1.4 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3), published in November 2006 provides that all local planning authorities should undertake a Housing Land Availability Assessment. (In superseded Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing - PPG3, such determination of urban capacity was referred to as an Urban Capacity Study). Within PPS3, a key objective is that local planning authorities should continue to make

effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously-developed, and in particular, vacant and derelict sites and buildings. *Previously developed land (brownfield land) is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.*

- 1.5 PPS3 further provides that a national annual target of at least 60% of new housing should be provided on previously developed land. There is further strong national and regional policy support for brownfield residential development to meet urban housing targets. Policy SS11 in Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10) proposes 'more efficient use of land within the urban areas through the development of brownfield land, development at higher densities and the selective redevelopment of parts of the urban area.' Swindon Borough Council currently has a target of 40% for housing development on previously developed land. Housing land availability assessments have a key role in helping to determine housing developments to meet such targets.
- 1.6 There is also a move for regional planning bodies to co-ordinate housing land availability programmes of assessment and assessment methodology to maintain consistency of approach, such that the evidence from these assessments can be used not only in the preparation of local development documents (LDDs), but also regional spatial strategies (RSSs). It is anticipated that regional planning bodies (RPBs) will draw on these assessments in developing regional spatial strategies and determining the level and distribution of housing provision for sub-regions and in proposing and reviewing the brownfield target for the region.
- 1.7 Thus, to comply with the requirements of PPS3, and the dynamic nature of Swindon as a 'Strategically Significant Town', this Housing Land Availability Assessment study (HLAA) proposes a review of the previous urban capacity studies to present current urban capacity information and other information required. This Housing Land Availability Assessment study commenced in September 2006 and was completed in February 2007, the contents of which are set out in this report.
- 1.8 Swindon Borough Council is currently developing a Core Strategy in line with the new approach to development plans as set out in The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004. These changes include the replacement of Local Plans and Structure Plans with a Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy will thus be a Development Plan Document which sets out the vision and strategy for Swindon Borough and to which all other Development Plan Documents must comply. It forms the key part of the Local Development Framework. The Housing Land Availability Assessment study will now be used to inform housing policy decisions within this Core Strategy.
- 1.9 The Housing Land Availability Assessment is not the vehicle for determining residential land use, as this is done through other mechanisms, such as the Development Plan process. The purpose of the study is to provide an assessment of housing land

availability and the identification of sites should not be taken as representing either an intention to allocate these sites for housing, or as a material planning consideration in the determination of a planning application.

2. Swindon Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1 The Housing Land Availability Assessment commenced in September 2006 with the main task of updating the previous urban capacity studies. The first and second reviews (UCS-R and UCS-2) of the Urban Capacity Study followed an amended methodology based upon the Llewelyn-Davies methodology for assessing urban capacity (as described in UCS published September 2002), and taking into consideration the Urban Capacity Study Audit by Nathaniel Lichfield such that the reviews were undertaken in accordance with Tapping the Potential - Assessing Urban Housing Capacity: Towards Better Practice published December 2000 (TTP).
- 2.2 Currently, TTP stands as guidance on urban capacity studies. However, Housing Land Availability Assessments: Identifying Appropriate Land for Housing Development - draft practice guidance (HLAA - draft practice guidance), was published in 2005 with the intention of providing local authorities, developers and other bodies with a simple process and advice on the issues that need to be considered when undertaking housing land availability assessments. When it is finalised, it will replace previous guidance - Tapping the Potential.
- 2.3 The new guidance does not intend to prescribe how assessments should be carried out, rather to highlight the issues local authorities and their partners will encounter in undertaking their assessments and to act as a checklist for the process of identifying land for housing development. The new approach to identify land for housing does not mean authorities and their partners should abandon all previous work and techniques used for urban capacity studies, but instead build on urban capacity studies with the intention of identifying brownfield development opportunities.
- 2.4 For continuity with previous urban capacity study results, this Housing Land Availability Assessment in part proposes an update of previous studies, and on consideration that the methodology was deemed robust in a Public Local Inquiry, again follows the revised Llewelyn-Davies methodology. However, guidance from TTP and HLAA - draft practice guidance are integrated into this study as a proposed transition to final published guidance on Housing Land Availability Assessments.

Methodology

- 2.5 The Llewelyn-Davies based methodology is effectively split into five steps, carried out over two separate stages:

Stage 1

Step 1: Defining the Urban Area

Step 2: Classifying the Urban Area

Step 3: Policy Scenarios

Step 4: Estimating the Potential of Sites and Buildings

Stage 2

Step 5: Testing Constraints Imposed by the Market

It should be noted that the revised methodology accords with the four steps defined by TTP as being integral to an urban capacity study, namely:

Step 1: Identifying the Capacity Sources

Step 2: Surveying Work

Step 3: Assessing the Yield

Step 4: Discounting the Potential

The HLAA - draft practice guidance proposes the following process:

Stage 1: Establish the process with partners

Stage 2: Identify the assessment area

Stage 3: Consider all sources of supply

Stage 4: Quantify the supply

Stage 5: Determine the likely level of windfall

Stage 6: Consider developability

Essentially, Stages 2-4 in the HLAA - draft practice guidance, aligns with both the revised Llewelyn-Davies methodology and that of TTP. Stage 1 - establishing the process with partners will be addressed further on in this study, such that once guidance on Housing Land Availability Assessments is adopted, it can be incorporated as Stage 1 into further Housing Land Availability Assessments undertaken by the Borough. Stages 5 and 6 in HLAA - draft practice guidance propose variation on Step 4 and 5 of the revised Llewelyn Davies methodology. The requirements of PPS3 to

include elements from these stages will also be addressed further on in this study under outcomes.

Step 1: Defining the Urban Area

- 2.6 Whilst TTP recognises that there are various definitions of 'urban' available, it states that, '... in considering the areas in which to search for housing capacity, local authorities could assume that 'urban' embraces all settlements that can contribute to sustainable patterns of development.' TTP further indicates that the settlement boundary defined by a local plan, is an acceptable measure in defining urban capacity boundaries.
- 2.7 For the purposes of this study, Swindon Urban Area as defined by the urban area boundary on the Local Plan Proposals Map (see Appendix 1) and explained under DS1 of the Plan will be considered, but will exclude land to the east side of the A419, which is largely in employment use.
- 2.8 Within the Swindon Urban Area, parts of Swindon Central fall within the framework of a Central Area Strategy. In July 2001, the Council approved the Swindon Central Area Strategy as the basis for achieving the redevelopment and regeneration of parts of the central area. Under this strategy, The New Swindon Company was established in 2002 as starting point for the process of developing a 'strategic' planning framework (regeneration framework) for this central area. Both the regeneration framework and more detailed framework plans/development briefs should provide the basis for new development proposals in the central area.
- 2.9 For the purposes of the Housing Land Availability Assessment, those parts of Swindon's central area that fall within this regeneration framework, will be considered apart from the methodology as applied to all other areas in the study, in order to optimise the housing land availability figures from this area within the constraints of the regeneration framework. Such figures will be added to the overall urban capacity of the study.
- 2.10 Primary Rural Settlements of Highworth and Wroughton as defined by the primary rural settlement boundaries on the Local Plan Proposals Maps (see Appendix 2) and explained under DS5 will also be considered in this study.
- 2.11 The Secondary Rural Settlements of Badbury, Bishopstone, Broad Blunsdon, Castle Eaton, Chiseldon, Hannington, Hinton Parva, Liddington, Lower Blunsdon, South Marston, Stanton Fitzwarren, and Wanborough as outlined by secondary rural settlement boundaries on the Proposal Map of the Local Plan (see Appendix 3), will further be considered within the constraints of Policy DS5 (and read in conjunction with Policy H6 and ENV1) - that a limited level of development will be allowed, with permission being restricted to infilling, conversions, or re-use of previously developed land.

- 2.12 The HLAA - draft practice guidance states that the housing land availability assessment should 'identify all settlements where housing could be provided - not just the main urban areas.' It is important to take a wide and objective look at all potential sources of housing supply. For example, a previously developed site in a village could provide the opportunity for essential new homes, which could in turn help to sustain local shops, services and public transport.
- 2.13 The original Urban Capacity Study (UCS - September 2002) and subsequent reviews (UCS-R and UCS-2) excluded these secondary rural settlements, as it was considered that the focus should remain with principal settlements as preferred locations for development. However, in keeping within the constraints of Policy DS5, H6 and ENV1, such settlements could be considered bearing in mind paragraph 31 of the PPG3 guidelines, and thus they have been included within this study.
- 2.14 Certain land within the HLAA study area is not considered to be suitable for any form of development and these are excluded. Such discounted areas include protected open land at the edge of and adjacent to the urban area, landscape designations, working allotments, Town Parks, Country Parks, local neighbourhood parks with facilities, well-used formal sports facilities (including private facilities), ecology areas, community/institutional buildings (and their grounds) that are in regular use and required for that purpose, areas prone to slip, excessive slope, flood and land safeguarded for infrastructure development. Justification for exclusion of these areas can be found in UCS - September 2002.

Step 2: Classifying the Urban Area

There are three stages to Step 2: sourcing sites, surveying sites and recording site surveys.

Sourcing Sites

- 2.15 For the purposes of this study, the master list from the previous urban capacity studies (UCS, UCS-R and UCS-2) was used as the starting point for sourcing sites. The list stood at 493 sites. With such a large master list to assess and survey, the list was rationalized such that only sites which were of relevance to this study, and which could still generate urban capacity potential, were considered.
- 2.16 Sites that had been built or were in the process of being built were removed from the master list, as these offer zero potential. Allocated sites and commitments in the Local Plan were separated from the list. These sites are monitored bi-annually in April and October in a housing monitoring report - Housing Land Availability. They will be reviewed under other sources of supply, but would generally offer zero potential.

- 2.17 Sites on the master list which have been granted planning permission, but which as yet have not been started, were also separated from the master list. These sites are also monitored bi-annually in the above report. Such sites will also be reviewed under other sources of supply, but here again would generally offer zero potential. On review, if planning permission for a site lapsed, such a site would be able to be reconsidered for urban capacity.
- 2.18 For this Housing Land Availability Assessment, new sites have come forward and been added to the master list. These sites were sourced from current planning applications, planning application enquiries, land use surveys of the various wards within the Borough, and through liaison with internal Borough departments to identify sites from Swindon's assets register that could be brought forward for residential development. Such departments included Housing, Property, Education, Adult Services, Library Services and Transportation Planning. Recent allotment and car parks strategies were also reviewed not only for new sites, but also to exclude some sites from the original master list.
- 2.19 Sites that fell within the New Swindon Company framework area, were also separated from the master list at this stage, as these sites would benefit from methodology to optimise urban capacity figures within the constraints of the regeneration framework. Such figures will be added to the overall housing land availability figures of the study. Capacity figures from this area will be considered under other sources of supply and will add significant urban capacity potential.
- 2.20 All sites at this stage were categorised in the master list into wards to provide ease of use in the site surveying stage.

Surveying Sites

- 2.21 On amendment of the original master list to reflect the above exclusions, 236 sites remained. Forty-seven new sites were added to the list and thus gave a total of 283 sites.
- 2.22 Sites remaining on the original master list were surveyed on foot and by car. This was necessary, as property descriptions used in the master list differed in part to those that might be used in the Housing Land Availability reports and CAPS (system used for planning applications, planning permissions and planning completions), and it was necessary to check and confirm any residential developments. Surveying these sites was also necessary to assess any changes in land use that may have taken place since the last urban capacity review, and that makes the site unsuitable for urban capacity potential (e.g. a derelict playground which was once considered for urban capacity has been upgraded to a fully functional playground again and thus now offers zero potential for urban capacity).

- 2.23 Information obtained from other sources such as current planning applications, planning application enquiries, Borough strategies and through liaison with internal Borough departments, was also used to inform the site surveying process of these sites in order to gather the most recent information of relevance to each site.
- 2.24 New sites were surveyed depending on the source of the site. For some new sites, information was obtained from development control, development control briefs, development briefs, internal Borough departments and other such sources. Other new sites were surveyed on foot and by car where appropriate. Each of the newly identified sites was assessed in accordance with the steps of the Llewelyn-Davies methodology and recommendations of the audit, not least to assure continued consistency and transparency.
- 2.25 Primary rural settlements of Highworth and Wroughton as defined by their rural settlement boundaries and secondary rural settlements of Badbury, Bishopstone, Broad Blunsdon, Castle Eaton, Chiseldon, Hannington, Hinton Parva, Liddington, Lower Blunsdon, South Marston, Stanton Fitzwarren, and Wanborough as outlined by rural settlement boundaries were also surveyed on foot and by car. Further information from other sources as outlined under paragraph 2.22 above was also used to update the most recent information pertaining to each site.

Recording the Site Surveys

- 2.26 All site survey results were recorded and updated on the master list. In the case of existing sites, this involved updating the existing records. New sites were recorded and written up in accordance with the master list, and included additional information as relevant. Original site survey maps, with further explanatory notes, were also kept.
- 2.27 This stage also provided the opportunity to classify sites according to source of supply. For this purpose, the classification of the HLLA - draft practice guidance was used, as this offers an update of the classification system used in TTP, and provides a further breakdown into sources in the existing stock, brownfield land and other sources.

Step 3: Policy Scenarios

- 2.28 When all sites identified in Step 2 had been surveyed, Step 3 discounted sites that would not be considered acceptable for housing development under Local Plan policy. If there is doubt as to whether a site should proceed into the next stage, the method encourages including the site and testing the potential, rather than excluding it.
- 2.29 It should be noted that sites were also excluded on the basis of information available at the time. Sites excluded at this point, and therefore not assessed for their potential, could at some point in the future be seen as acceptable. This study remains a snapshot, and also a product of particular assumptions made at the time. It also

highlights the need for regular monitoring and review and for a clear understanding amongst those conducting the survey as to why sites are included or excluded.

Step 4: Estimating the Potential of Sites and Buildings

2.29 Step 4 estimates the potential of the sites and buildings identified in the master list (current and new). For previous urban capacity studies undertaken in Swindon, a varied set of methods (sourced from TTP and Llewelyn Davies) for estimating potential were used:

- Design exercises on smaller sites and density multipliers on larger sites.
- Site surveys for living over the shop estimates, noting empty floors.
- Rule of thumb for conversion of non-residential buildings, backed up by assessments of completed flats to verify the rule of thumb.
- Estimates of average minimum and maximum density for intensification sites based on previous work on specific sites.
- Actual layouts and capacities coming through pre-application enquiries and planning applications.

2.30 For continuity with previous urban capacity site and building estimates, this Housing Land Availability Assessment applies similar methodology to new sites and those sites previously identified, but for which new information pertaining to the site is available and thus revised estimates will be applicable. For those sites that remain consistent with previous studies, the site and building estimates from the second review have been used.

Design Exercises and Density Multipliers

2.31 Work on the original study did not use the 'design exercises' of the Llewelyn Davies methodology because of the complexities in applying such exercises to cases in Swindon. However, because an accurate and realistic assessment was sought in the original study, individual exercises were carried out on smaller sites, using context and character as a guiding factor. Design exercises considered the context of the area in which the site was located; the spacing, parking and open space requirement and any further policy or practical matter which would affect the site's development.

2.32 For the update review, these exercises were reassessed and re-evaluated and the process applied to new sites. For the second review, the process was applied to new sites and those for which new information was available. Sites that remained consistent, used previous estimates.

2.33 Density multipliers were used on larger sites to estimate potential. For the previous urban capacity studies, density guidelines in PPG3 of 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare for residential development were used. In the update and second reviews, new sites and

existing sites where additional information was received applied similar density multipliers.

- 2.34 For this Housing Land Availability Assessment, similar density multipliers have been used in keeping with Policy DS9 under the Local Plan for new sites and those existing sites where additional information is available. In accordance with DS9, significantly higher densities of 120 to 150+ dwellings per hectare have been applied to the Central Area. Density multipliers from draft PPS3 and consideration of site area were also used to inform density multipliers.

Living over the Shop (LOTS)

- 2.35 During the update review (UCS-R - October 2003), a survey was undertaken in 26 areas that were defined as having a retail presence offering scope for upper floor residential accommodation. The areas all had at least four shops together. These areas were reviewed and revisited for the second review. Care was taken not to double count areas that are also included in the main list of sites.
- 2.36 Evidence was sought of vacancy above ground floor level and an assessment of capacity based upon availability of parking and a separate access was made. The survey was carried out on foot. The survey was unable to make an assessment about the number of units presently in commercial use that might be converted to residential use (such an assessment would be akin to estimating the number of houses that could be subdivided into flats).
- 2.37 For this Housing Land Availability Assessment, identified LOTS sites were revisited and reviewed. Urban capacity figures of LOTS in the town centre were reviewed to reflect lower numbers, as some of the potential urban capacity would be taken up in the figures of the New Swindon Company project areas.

Conversions of Buildings

- 2.38 The Llewelyn Davies methodology calculation for estimating the residential potential of non-residential buildings was used in the urban capacity studies for commercial buildings that were identified. The viability of sites identified in these previous studies was reviewed in this study, and in light of the emerging Central Area Action Plan, two identified sites were removed. No new sites within this category came forward within this study.
- 2.39 The Llewelyn Davies calculation methodology for conversion of buildings is set out in the Urban Capacity Study - Second Review (UCS-2) published in December 2004.

Estimates of Density on Intensification Sites

- 2.40 The Llewelyn Davies methodology suggests that in areas away from the sites identified in the study, estimates should be made about the potential available in the consolidated

areas of housing in the remainder of the town (this constituted Step 5 of the Llewelyn Davies approach). In most cases this leads to over-optimistic estimates of potential (because all houses could be sub-divided, and all gardens could be built in), and this approach was criticised by the Nathaniel Lichfield in the Swindon Urban Capacity Audit.

- 2.41 The audit instead suggested that realistic opportunities within consolidated residential areas should be sought out. The audit suggested that such sites would take the form of infill plots, garage court areas and backland/back garden sites and that once identified, estimates should be made based upon site design. This process was carried out, leading to the identification of nearly 30 new sites in the original study.
- 2.42 For both the update and second review of the urban capacity studies, these sites provided the starting point, but additional sites were also sought. A characteristic of these sites in the original study are the estimates made which, for speed, were calculated by applying average densities depending on the type of site they were. For example, in the case of garage court sites, the average density of all previously identified garage court sites was calculated and simply applied to the new sites. The reviews have considered that this was a sound method of making estimates, but new intensification sites had site assessments based on context and design matters. This is likely to provide a slightly more accurate assessment for these sites.
- 2.43 For this Housing Land Availability Assessment, identified intensification sites were revisited and reviewed. Sites that remained consistent with the update review used estimates from that review. For newly identified intensification sites and those previously identified, but had new information pertaining to them, the methodology described above was used.

Planning Applications and Pre-Application Enquiries

- 2.44 In the original Urban Capacity Study, subsequent reviews and this Housing Land Availability Assessment, sites have come forward through information obtained from applications and enquiries. These have provided a gauge about the numbers that could be accommodated on the site and, provided that the accompanying drawings are cross-referenced, negates the need for any site estimation. The applications and enquiries that come to the Council should be treated as maximum estimates, as it can be assumed that the agents and/or owners will be aware of constraints and will be seeking to maximise their return. It must also be accepted that some pre-application enquiries have to remain confidential and cannot be released as part of the background work to this study.

Completing Step 4

- 2.45 For this Housing Land Availability Assessment, estimates from the update review were used for those sites which remained consistent with the review. For new sites and

existing sites which had new information relating to them, a new minimum and maximum estimate was calculated. The minimum estimate was intended to closely reflect current constraints, whereas a maximum estimate would stretch what may be currently acceptable. In some cases it has been reasonable to assume a minimum estimate of zero, or to assume that the minimum and maximum estimates are the same.

2.46 Methodologies as described under Step 4 above were used depending on the site.

Step 5: Testing Constraints Imposed by the Market

2.47 The original Urban Capacity Study involved the House Builders Federation who commented on all sites from a commercial point of view. The Property and Development section of the Council also commented on these sites. The update and second review of the urban capacity study did not look into the market constraints affecting housing sites, as there had been recent involvement in many of the sites by those with some knowledge of the market and due to the expedience of the reviews for the purposes of updating the Local Plan.

2.48 For this Housing Land Availability Assessment, all new sites identified in this study, and new sites identified in the update and second review (all with a minimum potential yield of 5 units or more), were forwarded to the Home Builders Federation for circulation to members active in the Swindon Borough for comments on commercial viability of the new sites that have been identified since the original Urban Capacity Study.

2.49 The Home Builders Federation circulated a list of these sites to a member list of approximately 100 in the South West for comments. Comments were called for within a four-week period - on expiry of this time, no comments had been received.

3. Results of the Study

Overview

3.1 The master list from the original and updated urban capacity studies stood at 493 sites. For the purposes of this Housing Land Availability Assessment, sites that had been built or were in the process of being built were removed from the master list, as these offer zero potential. Allocated sites and commitments in the Local Plan were also separated from the list. Such sites will be reviewed under other sources of supply, but would generally offer zero potential.

3.2 Sites on the master list which have been granted planning permission, but which as yet have not been started, were also separated from the master list, as these sites are monitored bi-annually in the Housing Land Availability monitoring report. Such sites will

also be reviewed under other sources of supply, but here again would generally offer zero potential. For future Housing Land Availability Assessments undertaken by the Council, any sites which are identified in the Housing Land Availability monitoring report that come forward due to lapsed planning permission, will be able to be reconsidered for urban capacity.

- 3.3 Sites falling into the New Swindon Company project areas were also removed from the master list, as such sites would benefit from methodology to optimise urban capacity figures within the constraints of the regeneration framework. Such figures will be added to the overall housing land availability figures of the study. Capacity figures from this area will be considered under other sources of supply and will add significant urban capacity potential when added to the overall housing land availability figures of the study.
- 3.4 Information from other sources such as allotment and car park strategies, emerging action plans and internal departments such as Housing, Property, Education, Adult Services, Library Services and Transportation Planning, were used to exclude certain further sites from the master list.
- 3.5 After rationalization of the original master list, the updated master list stood at 236 sites. Through this Housing Land Availability Assessment, 47 new sites came forward and were added to the master list. These sites were sourced from current planning applications, planning application enquiries, land use surveys of the various wards within the Borough, and through liaison with internal Borough departments, as mentioned above, to identify sites from Swindon's assets register that could be brought forward for residential development.
- 3.6 Thus at the time of this study, 283 sites were considered for urban capacity potential. However, 99 of these sites currently offered no potential capacity, leaving 184 sites and six areas within The New Swindon Company project areas offering some capacity to the Borough in the form of urban land. Lists of the sites can be found at Appendix 4.

Sources in the Existing Stock

Subdivision of Existing Housing

- 3.7 Subdivision as a source category only produced minimal yield in previous urban capacity studies (5 sites in the original UCS, 6 sites in UCS-R and 3 sites in UCS-2), the methodology used for the Borough's assessment of urban capacity anticipated the subdivision of dwellings being calculated by making a trend based assessment of the potential that might come forward from consolidated housing areas rather than by making an assessment on specific sites.
- 3.8 In keeping with the methodology used in previous urban capacity studies to assess the anticipated urban capacity of the subdivision of dwellings - on perusal of the Borough's

CAPS system to log planning applications, the period 2004 - 2006 showed 51 additional units being produced from subdivisions. This rate equates to an annual rate of 17 units from subdivisions a year ($51/3=17$). Applying this rate to the remaining years of the plan period gives a total potential from this source of 68 units (17×4 years to 2011). This is assumed as a maximum rate, with the minimum rate being nil.

Flats Over Shops

- 3.9 Effectively, the Living Over the Shop (LOTS) survey showed some potential in the Town Centre, Old Town, Victoria Road and Gorse Hill and very little anywhere else, where space above shops appears on the whole to be already habited.
- 3.10 The maximum potential of LOTS represents full occupancy of the presently vacant above shop space. However, the survey takes no account of upper floors occupied but in non-residential use. A trend-based assessment has not been carried out, as this would seem to complicate the survey results unnecessarily. However, the implication of this is that the survey figure is likely to underestimate the total potential.
- 3.11 For this Housing Land Availability Assessment, identified LOTS sites were revisited and reviewed. Urban capacity figures of LOTS in the town centre were reviewed to reflect lower numbers, as some of the potential urban capacity would be taken up in the figures of the New Swindon Company project areas.

Empty Homes

- 3.12 The methodology used in the previous urban capacity studies with regards to empty homes, demanded that such a source be investigated for potential urban capacity. At present, there are approximately 83 477 dwellings within the Borough (2001 census figure plus completions from 2001 to October 2006).
- 3.13 There are no vacant public sector properties. Vacant properties arising are simply due to change over periods between old and new tenants. Due to long waiting lists properties are filled immediately, unless remedial works need to be undertaken. As the Council housing stock is in good condition generally, any works that need to be undertaken can be done so as soon as the property is vacant. The Council will often take steps to alter sites and properties that have had problems in the past, or are likely to be a problem to let.
- 3.14 Within the private sector, a survey of empty homes as identified from Council tax lists, showed 199 empty homes. Usually these homes are temporarily vacant pending repairs, modernisation or some other event.
- 3.15 In addition to this, any empty homes coming back into use would not be registered by the Council's monitoring system as this would only pick up new units that result from a planning application. Therefore empty homes and offices needing planning consent (e.g. where they were being sub-divided) would be picked up, but many returning into

use as homes would not. Whilst the study recognises that empty homes are available, they do not add to the housing stock of the Borough. For this reason, it is assumed for the purposes of this survey that the contribution of empty homes to the overall potential is effectively zero. However, one house surveyed fell most easily into this category, and produced a minimum estimate of 0 dwellings, and a maximum of 1.

Intensification of Existing Areas

- 3.16 Whilst the original Urban Capacity Study calculated a trend-based figure for this category, the Swindon Urban Capacity Audit recommended that specific intensification sites were identified and their capacity calculated using design exercises or density calculations. This was undertaken in the update and second reviews. The emphasis was on garage courts, backland and back garden development and infill plots.
- 3.17 For this study, intensification sites which remained on the master list were surveyed. For those sites which remained constant with previous reviews, minimum and maximum capacity figures from these reviews were used. For new sites, and those which had new information relating to them, design exercises and density calculations were used to inform minimum and maximum figures in keeping with the previous studies methodology.
- 3.18 Of the 115 sites identified in the master list, 98 of these sites could potentially yield a minimum capacity of 564 units and the maximum capacity of 1066 units.

Redevelopment of Existing Houses

- 3.19 Three sites were identified under this capacity source. All these sites were in Council ownership where one scheme (Marlowe Avenue) proposed a re-development of 25 units, resulting in a loss of 13 units (current) and thus a gain of 12 units as potential capacity. The other two re-development schemes incorporated existing residential capacity in the form of LOTS. These schemes at Sussex Square, Walcot East and Braydon Court, Penhill propose a minimum capacity of 29 units and a maximum of 65 units. Thus the overall yield from this source proposes a minimum yield of 41 and a maximum yield of 88. Generally though, in areas dominated by public sector housing, the right to buy has made ownership and site assembly more complicated and expensive, and the returns on this kind of development are likely to be limited. Additionally, some of the lowest price housing is already at high density. Thus the potential yield from such source would remain low.

- 3.20 From a private developer point of view, the likelihood of housing clearance and redevelopment at higher densities continues to be unattractive. Even considering housing in Swindon within the lowest price bracket, it is often in areas where people enjoy living and want to live, and so the price holds up

Brownfield Land

Previously Developed Vacant and Derelict Land and Buildings

- 3.21 Capacity from identified vacant land and buildings, 62 sites from an identified 93 sites, yielded a minimum capacity of 1192 and a maximum capacity of 1634. Although fewer sites than those identified for intensification, vacant land and building sites are generally larger than intensification sites as can be seen from the potential areas development of vacant land and building sites of 34.04 ha has as opposed to the intensification site area of 25.40 ha. (The vacant land and building category overlaps to some degree with intensification sites, which are also often vacant land and/or buildings. However, each site is only attributed to one category of sites in order to avoid double counting).
- 3.22 Previously developed vacant and derelict land and buildings are also generally the most straightforward to identify, measure and develop.

Redevelopment of Car Parks

- 3.23 In the original Urban Capacity Study and update and second reviews, car parks were considered as a potential capacity source. In all three studies, 20+ to 30+ car park sites for generation of urban capacity were identified, with yields ranging from a minimum of 233 to a maximum of 836.
- 3.24 Since the above studies, in keeping with the Council's emerging Car Park Strategy, only sites within the New Swindon Company project areas have been identified for redevelopment, which in some cases encompasses residential development. Thus urban capacity potential from this capacity source is considered under other sources as being part of the New Swindon Company project areas.
- 3.25 No other car parks have been identified in the emerging strategy for alternative uses, other than those within the project areas of the New Swindon Company, and so the yield from Council car parks under this source for residential development offers zero potential.
- 3.26 A new private car park site was however identified during land use surveys for this study, with a potential capacity yield of a minimum of 7 units and a maximum of 8 units.

Conversion of Commercial Buildings

- 3.27 For this study, four previous sites identified in the update review were surveyed and estimates for minimum and maximum capacity were used - minimum capacity of 39 and

a maximum capacity of 227. Two previously identified sites from the update review were however removed as urban capacity potential in light of the emerging Central Area Action Plan.

- 3.28 No new sites within this category came forward within this study.

Other Sources

Unimplemented and Outstanding Planning Permissions

- 3.29 According to the Housing Land Availability monitoring report - October 2006, there are 12 639 units with planning permission - 8 464 of which are unimplemented, within the Swindon Borough.
- 3.30 For the Housing Land Availability Assessment, any sites that come forward from the monitoring report due to lapsed planning permission can be reconsidered for urban capacity.
- 3.31 Currently, this source of supply offers zero potential.

Review of Existing Housing Allocations in Plans

- 3.32 A list of the adopted Local Plan 2011 allocations can be found in the above Housing Land Availability monitoring report.
- 3.33 Currently, this source of supply offers zero potential. However, all of the Local Plan Housing allocations will be re-assessed as part of the work on preparing the forthcoming Site Allocations Local Development Document in light of the policy approach in PPS3.

Review of Other Existing Sites and Allocations in Plans

- 3.34 Under this category, existing employment sites and allocations are considered. Whilst previous urban capacity studies showed some potential urban capacity from this source, it was considered that as Swindon's employment land quantum was high, the search for residential potential in undeveloped industrial and employment allocations was questionable. Only seven sites were considered in the update review offering a potential minimum capacity of 348 units and a maximum of 718 units.
- 3.35 Concurrent with this Housing Land Availability Study, consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners have undertaken an Employment Land Review for Swindon on behalf of Swindon Borough Council. From this emerging Review, it is evident that there are no employment sites available within Swindon that could be used for alternative land uses. Even those sites identified in the Review as being of a poorer quality provision, still provide an important role for niche employment uses (e.g. waste management facilities). Further, it is emerging that there would be the need to retain existing

employment sites and allocations to achieve the Wiltshire Structure Plan's employment land quantum to 2011.

- 3.36 This source of supply now offers zero potential.

Land Not Previously Developed Including Greenfield Sites

- 3.37 This capacity source encompasses land that has not been previously developed, and allows for the inclusion of urban greenfield land.
- 3.38 For this Housing Land Availability Study, five sites were identified from the 28 in the master list as having potential urban capacity, generating a minimum yield of 76 units and a maximum of 123 units.

The New Swindon Company Project Areas

- 3.39 The New Swindon Company was established in 2002 as starting point for the process of developing a 'strategic' planning framework (regeneration framework) for the central area. As part of the redevelopment plan, a substantial amount of residential development is envisaged for the central area. Both the regeneration framework and more detailed framework plans/development briefs should provide the basis for new development proposals in the central area and in light of this, housing land availability has been projected using the most recent development information from developer frameworks and in consultation with The New Swindon Company.

Potential Housing Land Availability for The New Swindon Company Project Areas

Project Area	Residential Area		Capacity		Notes
	m ²	ha	minimum	maximum	
North Star Village	82,600	8.26	517	750	Assumes a density of 60-90+ units.
The Exchange	22,920	2.29	274	450*	Assumes a density of 120-195+ units.
Swindon Central	25,980	2.60	312	400	Assumes a density of 120-150+ units.
The Promenade	43,800**	4.38**	525	657	Assumes a density of 120-150+ units.
The Hub	6,810	0.68	100	200	Assumes a density of 150-290+ units.
			1728	2457	

		Capacity	
		minimum	maximum
Local Plan Allocation within project area	less 333 units***	1395	2124
Commitment within project area	less 189 units	1206	1935
Housing Land Availability		1206	1935

* Maximum figure from The Draft Exchange Master Plan.

** Residential area as per The Promenade SPD.

*** Local Plan allocation CA5A - 88 units and CA6B - 245 units.

(Maximum figures, excluding, The Exchange, The Promenade and The Hub, and commitment figures sourced from The New Swindon Company - Submission by The New Swindon Company (NSC proof 5) Housing Numbers in the Central Area).

Summary

3.41 The table below shows the distribution of sites and capacities amongst the sources described above. This relates to the 184 sites from the master list of 283 sites that currently offer housing land availability potential.

Source	Number of Sites	Total Area (ha)	Minimum Capacity	Maximum Capacity
Sources in the existing stock				
Subdivision of existing housing : sites : trends	0 -	0 -	0 0	0 68
Flats over shops (LOTS)	10	26.13	0	227
Empty homes	1	0.02	0	1
Intensification of existing areas	98	25.40	564	1066
Redevelopment of existing housing	3	1.94	41	88
Brownfield land				
Previously-developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non housing)	62	34.04	1192	1634
Redevelopment of car parks	1	0.20	7	8
Conversion of commercial buildings	4	1.70	39	227

Other sources				
Unimplemented/outstanding planning permissions	0	0	0	0
Review of existing housing allocations in plans	0	0	0	0
Review of other existing sites and allocations in plans	0	0	0	0
Land not previously developed including greenfield sites	5	2.50	76	123
The New Swindon Company project areas	5 project areas	18.69	1206	1935

3.42 Thus in summary, the table below shows the urban capacity potential from this Housing Land Availability Assessment in comparison to previous urban capacity studies.

Urban Capacity Study Housing Land Availability Assessment	Number of Sites	Total Area (ha)	Minimum Capacity	Maximum Capacity
UCS (2002)	318	250.93	4 269	7 945
UCS-R (2003)	235	161.67	3 269	8 053
UCS-2 (2004)	222	113.80	2 156	5 732
HLAA (2007)	189 (including 5 project areas)	110.14	3 125	5 377

4. Housing Land Availability Assessment Requirements

Establishing the Process with Partners

- 4.1 HLAA - draft practice guidance proposes that as Step A, a process is established with partners such as developers, Registered Social Landlords and other agencies such as the Environment Agency and English Partnerships.
- 4.2 PPS3 encourages assessments to be carried out at the sub-regional housing market area, which would involve local authorities within the same area working together. Whilst a sub-regional partnership is the preferred approach, it does not preclude an individual local authority undertaking the assessment - sites are fixed and so the

geographical scale at which assessments are carried out should not matter. However, it is important that the methodology and outputs are consistent with those assessments undertaken in the rest of the sub-regional housing market area.

- 4.3 For this Housing Land Availability Assessment, there was liaison with internal Borough departments to identify sites from Swindon's assets register that could be brought forward for residential development. Such departments included Housing, Property, Education, Adult Services, Library Services and Transportation Planning.
- 4.4 There was further consultation with the New Swindon Company in determining potential urban capacity yield from the project areas within the central area subject to a regeneration framework.
- 4.5 As Step 5 of this HLAA, new sites from this study and the update and second review were forwarded to the Home Builders Federation for comment.
- 4.6 Liaison also took place with Wiltshire County Council and Kennet District Council regarding collaborative working. On publication of this study, these Councils had gone out to tender for Housing Land Availability Assessments for their districts. Swindon Borough would hope to liaise with these Councils on preparation of their HLAA regarding assessment methodology to maintain consistency of approach throughout the sub-regional area.
- 4.7 Once final guidance for housing land availability assessments is published, further Housing Land Availability Assessments within the Borough should look to 'establishing the process with partners' as Step A.

Outcomes

- 4.8 According to PPS3, a Housing Land Availability Assessment should:
 - Assess the likely level of housing that could be provided if unimplemented planning permissions were brought into development.
 - Assess land availability by identifying buildings or areas of land (including previously-developed land and Greenfield) that have development potential for housing, including within mixed-use developments.
 - Assess the potential level of housing that can be provided on identified land.
 - Where appropriate, evaluate past trends in windfall land coming forward for development and estimate the likely future implementation rate.
 - Identify constraints that might make a particular site unavailable and/or unviable for development.
 - Identify sustainability issues and physical constraints that might make a site unsuitable for development.
 - Identify what action could be taken to overcome constraints on particular sites.

- 4.9 The bi-annual Housing Land Availability report monitors unimplemented planning permissions. Any sites which come forward from lapsed planning permission can be reconsidered for urban capacity.
- 4.10 Within this Housing Land Availability Assessment, potential housing land sites have been identified, and minimum and maximum housing land availability figures have been generated.
- 4.11 Within the Local Plan, windfall sites have been identified.
- 4.12 It is for the housing land availability assessment to identify potential sites and their constraints and for the plan making process to assess constraints and make a judgement as to the extent to which they are developable. Within this Housing Land Availability Assessment, any constraints to site development have been noted within the master list as supporting documentation to this study.