

A Local Plan for

Lancaster South Area Action Plan



**ASSESSMENT OF LAND FOR
DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL
METHODOLOGY PAPER [November 22]**

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1. Introduction and Purpose of the Methodology Paper

Background

- 1.1 Lancaster City Council adopted its new Local Plan in July 2020. Policy SG1 of the Strategic Policies & Land Allocations DPD identified a 'Broad Location for Growth' in South Lancaster which would be investigated for future development through the preparation of an Area Action Plan. The Plan committed the Council to exploring the delivery of substantial residential development which would be focused on a new garden village (figure 1).

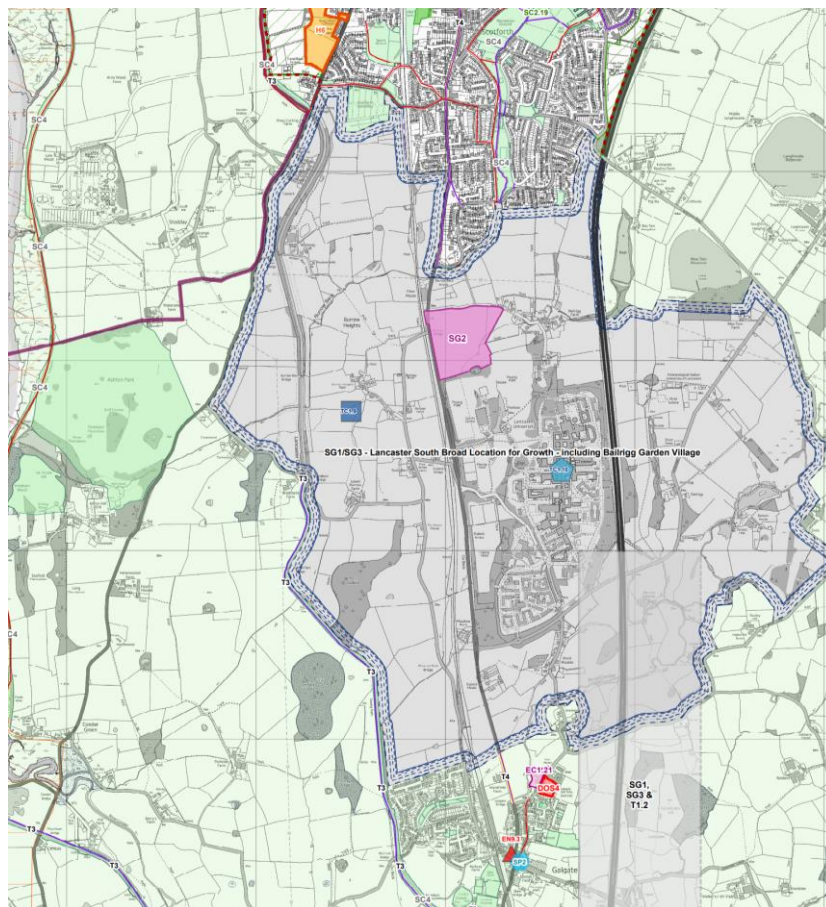


Figure 1.1 – Lancaster South Broad Location for Growth

- 1.2 Following the adoption of the Plan in July 2020, the Council (through appointed consultants JTP) began to explore how a new garden village could evolve in South Lancaster. This work cumulated in the endorsement of a Bailrigg Garden Village Masterplan by Cabinet Members in February 2022.

- 1.3 The endorsed masterplan provides a positive starting point to preparing the Area Action Plan (AAP), providing a wide range of visions, concepts, ideas and ambitions. However, it is now for the AAP to consider how the aspirations of the masterplan can be delivered in reality through a formal, evidentially based, planning framework for the South Lancaster area.

Purpose of the Methodology Paper

- 1.4 The masterplan has identified broad areas which, if developed, could form core components of a future garden village. However, these potential development parcels do not at this stage have sufficient planning weight or evidential basis to justify their formal allocation in the AAP. To ensure a robust planning framework it is now the role of the Local Planning Authority to examine how development could evolve in South Lancaster using evidence to guide and refine development parcels in this locality.
- 1.5 The purpose of this paper is to highlight the mechanism and process which will be involved in reaching a robust understanding over what land in South Lancaster could and should be allocated for development, including for residential, employment, commercial and community purposes. In parallel the Council will also be assessing the role and purpose of land which should be allocated for non-development purposes (i.e. land's role in delivering green and blue infrastructure which will be essential to the delivery of sustainable development in the broad location for growth). This is the subject of a separate paper.
- 1.6 The draft methodology was consulted on for a six-week period in June 2022. The Council have considered the responses made and where appropriate have amended the methodology. This document represents the final methodology which the Council will use to assess the development potential of sites within the broad location for growth.

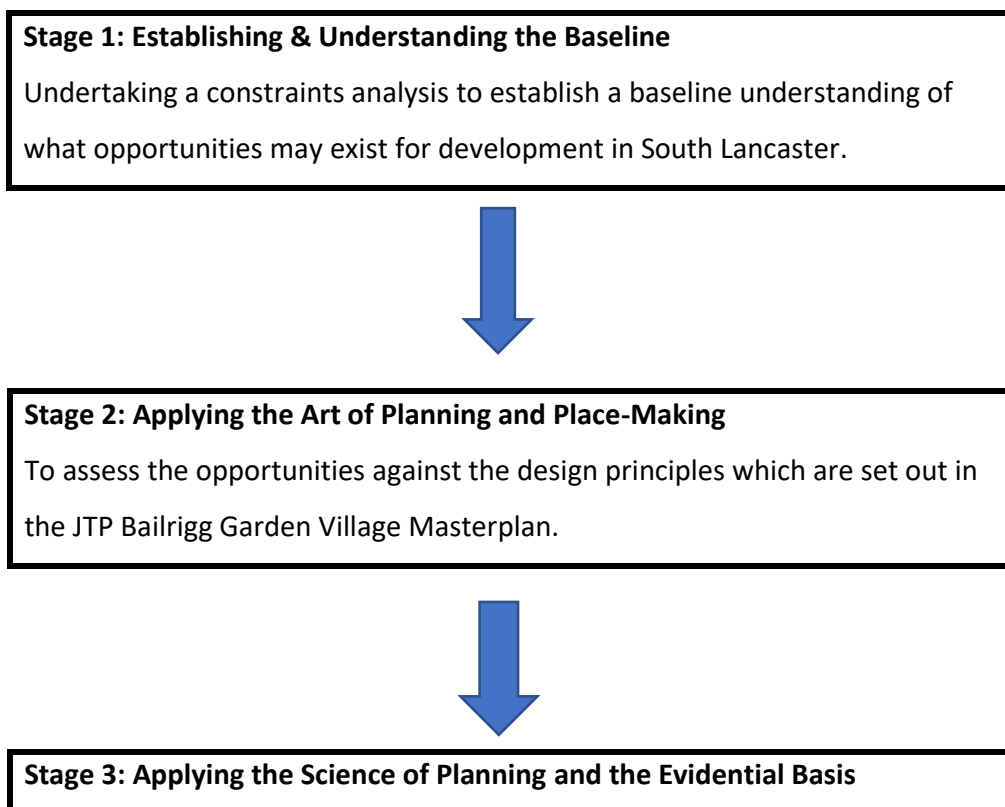
Summary of Approach

- 1.7 The Council propose that the assessment of sites will be achieved via a four-stage process which aims to critically analyse the suitability and deliverability of land with the 'Broad Location for Growth'. Specifically, the methodology will be looking to test the following principles:
- To **understand the baseline**. The assessment will be looking to set out the constraints which affect the South Lancaster area which, by their very nature, would rule out potential development in that area.

- To apply the **art of planning**. Importantly the assessment will consider the key guiding principles which have been set out in the JTP masterplan and ensure that formal development patterns in the South Lancaster area adhere to those principles.
- To apply the **science of planning**. The assessment will make use of a robust and comprehensive evidence base which guides in detail how development should be achieved in the South Lancaster area.
- Finally, to **monitor and review**. The final stage will bring together the strands described above to make robust and transparent decisions on how sustainable development patterns can be achieved, including concluding on the scale of development which can be accommodated and what types of development should be located where in the 'Broad Location for Growth'.

1.8 The assessment process described will be prepared cognisant of parallel work which will take place for green and blue infrastructure (the methodology for which is set out in a separate paper). Together both pieces of work will allow the local planning authority to come to holistic decisions on the allocation of land for both development and non-development purposes.

1.9 The assessment process is summarised in the diagram below:



To assess a sites availability, suitability and achievability, having due regard to the detailed evidence base which has been prepared to support the AAP.



Stage 4: To Review and Monitor the Outcomes

To conclude on the development potential and capacity of emerging allocations having regard to site size, topography and other development plan requirements (for instance open space, roads, green and blue infrastructure potential, community facilities, employment opportunities etc).

Figure 1.2: A Summary of the Site Assessment process for the Lancaster South Area Action Plan.

2. Stage One: Establishing & Understanding the Baseline

Identifying the Constraints

- 2.1 The first stage of the assessment process will involve establishing an understanding of the constraints which affect the 'Broad Location for Growth' as identified in Policy SG1 of the Local Plan. These constraints will provide a broad starting point in terms of identifying areas which are not subject to constraints and which in principle present opportunities for development. As part of this stage the Council will assess land within SG1 against the following constraints.

Land within Flood Zone 3a & 3b (FZ3) & Flood Zone 2 with Climate Change Allowance	Land in Flood Zone 2 (FZ2)	Water Courses and 8m Buffer zones, Other Water Assets such as Ponds and the Canal
Biological Heritage Sites (BHS)	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Ancient Woodland
12 m Gas Pipe Easement	High and Medium Surface Water Flood Risk with Climate Change Allowance	National Grid Overhead Line easement (exact details are subject to confirmation from National Grid)
National Grid tower easements (exact details are subject to confirmation from National Grid)	Land buffer for Spine Road	Water Supply Infrastructure Assets
Waste Water Infrastructure Assets	West Coast Mainline	

- 2.2 The constraints outlined in the table above will be mapped into a 'Baseline Constraints Layer' which will be made publicly available to support proposed allocations in the draft AAP.

Identifying the Development Parcels

- 2.3 The Council propose to assess the SG1 area on the basis of the development land parcels identified in figure 2.1 below. The parcels have been identified using clearly defined boundaries. Development parcels will be redefined following the stage 1 assessment. This will allow for new boundaries to be drawn where part of the site has been shown to be subject to constraints which would prevent it from coming forward for development, but other areas remain potentially developable.

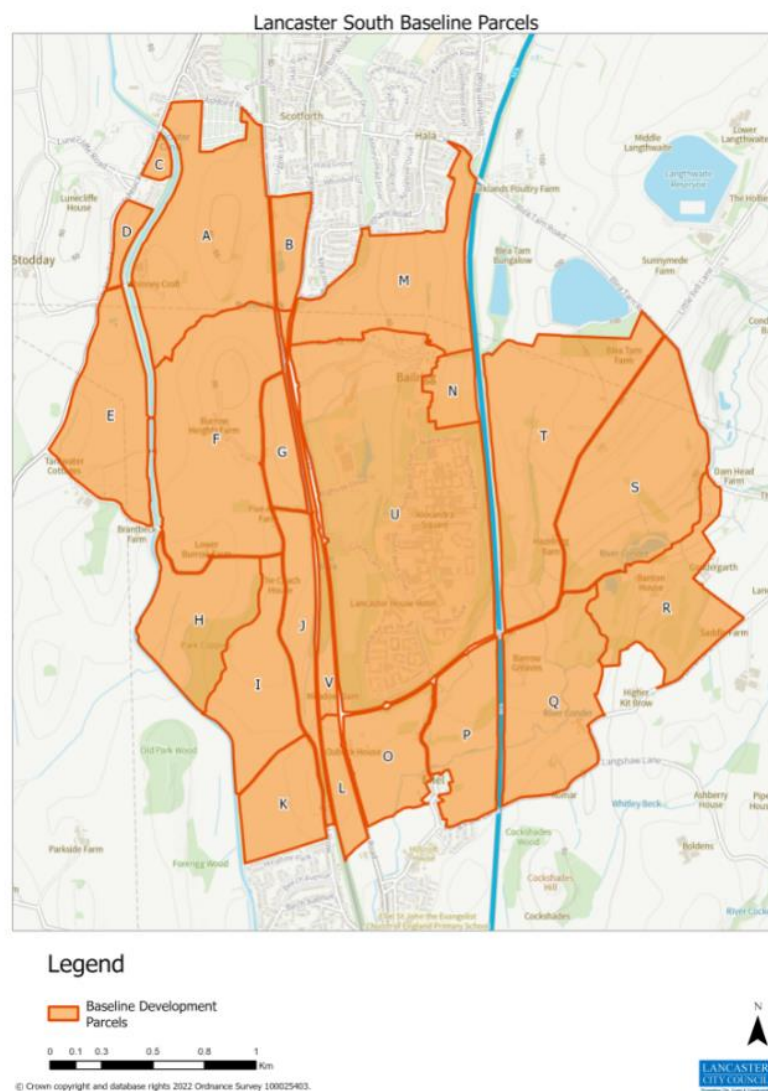


Figure 2.1: A map to show the development parcels which will form the starting point for the Site Assessment process.

- 2.4 The development parcels identified above will be overlaid and compared against the constraints identified. At the end of this stage the Council will be in receipt of a map of development parcels which subject to further analysis could come forward for development through the AAP process.

3.0 Stage 2: Applying the Art of Planning & Place-Making

- 3.1 The second stage of the assessment recognises the considerable work that has already been undertaken in respect of Bailrigg Garden Village via the preparation of the Bailrigg Garden Village Masterplan.
- 3.2 Prepared by JTP architects on behalf of the Council, the Masterplan sets out a clear vision for the Garden Village, establishing clear design principles and priorities for this central area of the AAP. The Masterplan follows the key growth principles for development contained in Policy SG1 of the Local Plan and builds on these to develop a coherent framework for growth in the Garden Village.
- 3.3 The Masterplan has been prepared in consultation with the community and development industry and utilises best practice and experience in place making by qualified professionals. It sets out clear parameters for how growth in this area should be taken forward and represents the cumulation of many hours of work studying and assessing the characteristics of the area and assessing the potential to bring forward a proposal that is consistent with the principles of a Garden Village and Policy SG1.
- 3.4 The Council will use the masterplan in the next stage of the site selection process for the AAP, seeking to apply the visions, concepts, ideas and ambitions to the process. The Council will seek to ensure that the patterns of development proposed in the Action Plan are reflective of these ambitions and that ultimately, they lead to a high-quality development as expected from the Local Plan.
- 3.5 Having identified those areas of the AAP area which are not subject to constraints which would render them undeliverable, Stage 2 will involve a critical analysis of the development areas against the guiding design principles of the Masterplan. Development parcels identified through stage 1 of the analysis will be assessed against these design principles. Sites which the Council conclude fail to meet these principles will not be taken forward to the next stage of the assessment process.

Key Design Principles

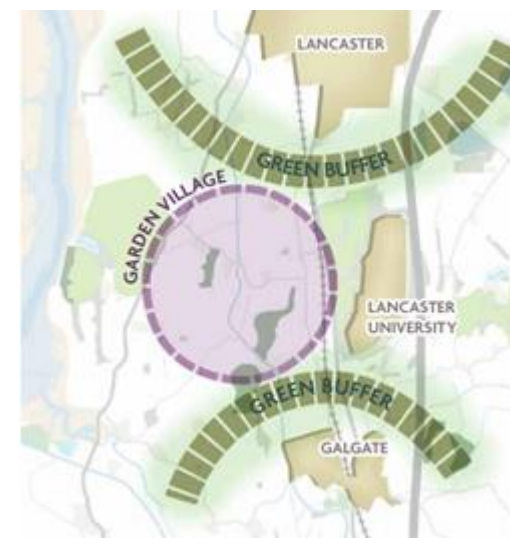
Making the Garden Village a distinct place; physically and visually separate from both Lancaster and Galgate with large areas of landscape between.

This is one of the fundamental principles of a Garden Village and is something that is recognised as being important within Policy SG1 of the Local Plan. Criteria 6 of Policy SG1 requires the creation of sufficient areas of high-quality open space to provide a distinct sense of place and deliver a network of green corridors and walking and cycling routes across the South Lancaster area to the benefit of the local environment and residents. The delivery of such spaces and routes should make for distinct areas of separation between the new development and the urban edge of Lancaster, Bailrigg Village and Galgate and give potential to bring forward a new Country Park.

In line with this criteria, the Masterplan is very clear that there should be separation between existing settlements and the Garden Village both physically and visually. Whilst some extension to the urban edge of South Lancaster is proposed through the AAP the full extent of this extension and the separation of this from the Garden Village is yet to be determined.

The Council propose to utilise the services of qualified landscape consultants to assist it in interpreting this design principle and establishing an appropriate and robust undeveloped buffer between a newly defined urban edge and the Garden Village. In defining this buffer, the Council will look to secure multi-functional benefits which as a priority address the need for physical and visual separation, but which also recognise the ecological value of the landscape and the opportunities that might exist for enhancement. The Council's GBI and wider ecological evidence base will help in assessing this.

Following the conclusions of this work the development parcels identified from stage 1 will be redefined.



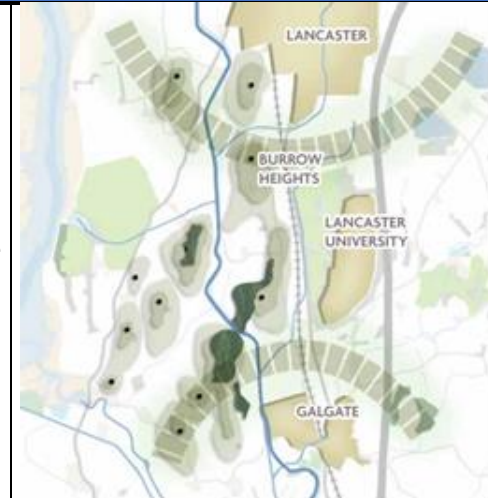
Key Design Principles

Protecting the existing character of the landscape including the Lancaster Canal; the tops of the drumlins and the associated views; the ancient woodland areas and other key trees.

The Masterplan is very clear that development should start with the natural environment with development parcels shaped by the natural characteristics of the landscape which preserves and enhances existing blue and green features.

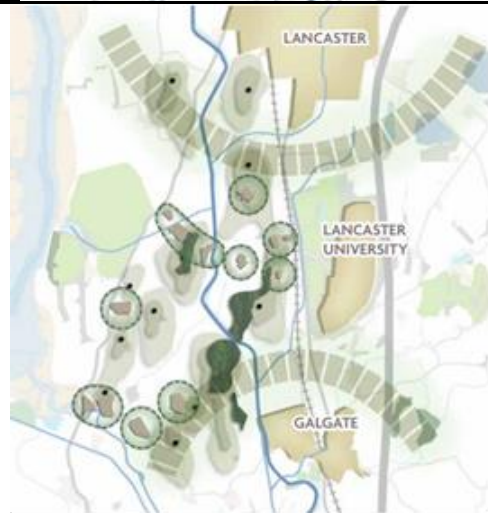
The Council agree that the AAP should follow a landscape led approach to development which works with the distinct drumlin landscape, watercourses and woodlands. It should protect the existing character of the landscape including the Lancaster Canal as well as ensure the protection of key viewpoints and features.

The extent to which development parcels identified under stage 1 are compatible with this principle will be assessed with the assistance of professional landscape consultants. Boundaries may need to be redrawn following this assessment.



Responding sensitively to the interface with other existing dwellings within the 'Area of Search' to retain visual separation and landscape buffers.

The need to ensure that development is sensitive to existing developments within the SG1 area is well recognised by the Council. The Council recognise that the development parcels identified from Stage 1 may need to be redrawn in some instances to take account of place making opportunities within the SG1 area.



Key Design Principles

Connect existing woodland and creating a 'Green Halo' landscape and biodiversity network around the Garden Village

As already noted the Masterplan is very clear on the need to work with the natural environment. It recognises the need for development parcels to be set within a productive and resilient GBI network. In creating a Green Halo the Masterplan has identified the existence of key ecological features and corridors and recognises the opportunities that exist to strengthen these corridors and enhance connectivity between them.

The Council will look to use its own GBI strategy for the AAP area to identify key GBI corridors and will be looking to strengthen these through the AAP process. The extent to which development parcels are compatible with this will be assessed through this assessment and where necessary may be redrawn. The Council's ecological evidence will be used to support this. As identified through the Masterplan the Council will seek to deliver a Green Halo around the Garden Village with this providing a core element of the GBI strategy and a defining feature for the Garden Village.



Moving the landscape from relative monoculture to permaculture, with a more varied and mixed landscape that offers something for everyone

Whilst the Council will be mindful of this principle when preparing the AAP it is not proposed to use this to influence the location and extent of development parcels identified via stage 2. The Council will look to secure multi-functional benefits wherever it is possible to do so.

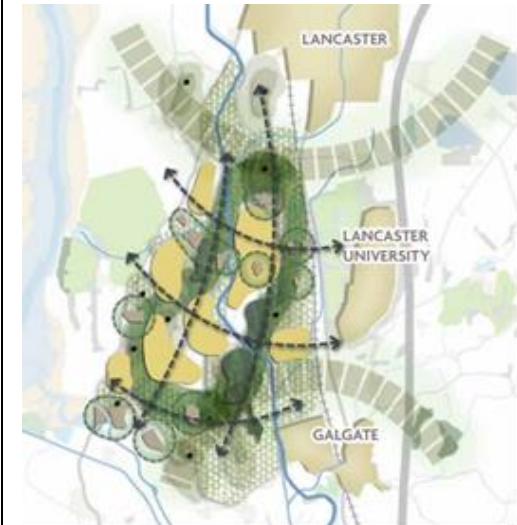


Key Design Principles

Sensitively position a cluster of new neighbourhoods to be in harmony with the existing landscape, supported by a network of sustainable routes (i.e. bus, pedestrian, cycle and bridle).

Following the assessment of earlier principles, the Council will again look to utilise the expertise of landscape professionals to advise on the sensitive location of development parcels both within and outside of the Garden Village.

This stage of the assessment will also be influenced by the transport strategy which is being prepared to support the AAP and is being prepared in dialogue with the County Council. The AAP will need to ensure development is supported by excellent sustainable transport connections that provide residents with easy pedestrian, cycling and public transport access. The City Council have identified an active travel network for the AAP based on the Masterplan in consultation with the County Council. This work has been informed by the emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan being developed by the County Council. The compatibility of the development parcels with proposed transport linkages and routes will need to be assessed. Parcels will again be redefined following this assessment.



Integrate a comprehensive drainage strategy across the Garden Village including areas for water attenuation and retention.

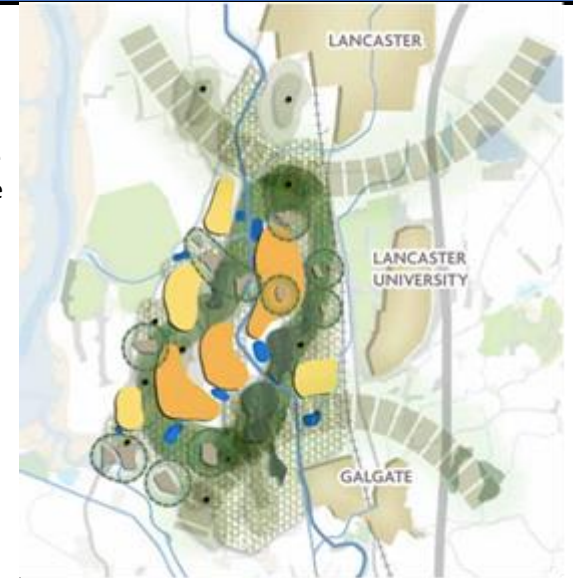
Development parcels that remain will be assessed against the Council's flood risk and water management evidence and the drainage strategy which is being prepared by external consultants JBA. Sites or parts of sites that are identified at risk from all sources of flooding and/or have been identified as necessary for flood mitigation/protection/to reduce flood risk to existing and new communities or for water management will not be taken forward.



Key Design Principles

Create distinctive character areas with denser and more regular development parcels inside the 'Green Halo' and countryside hamlets outside

Using a density study of nearby areas, the Masterplan identifies appropriate densities for different locations within the Garden Village. In the interests of place making this identifies denser and more regular development parcels within the Green Halo and in areas where accessibility and the level of activity will be highest. Lower levels of development are proposed outside of the Green Halo. The Council will follow this approach as the final stage of assessing sites under stage 2 of the site assessment.



- 3.21 The capacity of sites will be assessed in further detail under stage 3 of the assessment where sites will be assessed in more detail in relation to the evidence base.

4.0 Stage 3: Applying the Science of Planning and the Evidential Basis

- 4.1 Following the conclusions of stages 1 and 2 the Council aim to be in receipt of a list of redefined development parcels which could be brought forward for development through the AAP process. These parcels will then be subject to a more detailed assessment to confirm their deliverability and determine the exact site boundaries which should be included within the AAP.
- 4.2 Individual site constraints will also be identified which whilst not making the site undeliverable do represent factors that will need to be worked with within the AAP and which will influence the design and location of specific development proposals.

- 4.3 For each site the following information will be provided

Assessing the Availability of Land for Development

- 4.4 Landowners of identified plots will be contacted to determine the availability of sites and determine whether there are any legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownership, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of the landowners.
- 4.5 If the Council is unable to confirm availability sites will not be taken forward to the next stage of the assessment.

Not Available	The absence of evidence or evidence submitted confirms that the site is not available for development
Potentially available	<p>Evidence submitted indicates that the site is potentially available for development.</p> <p>There are noted to be some issues that could impact on deliverability and as such officers are unable to confirm that the site is available for development now. This may include multiple ownerships or other legal issues.</p> <p>Whilst noting this officers are confident that there is a reasonable prospect that the site will be available and could be developed.</p>
Available	To the best of officer's knowledge the site can be considered to be available for development now. In such instances officers would normally expect sites to have had some involvement in the planning system whether that be initial developer interest, pre-application or Local Plan input.

Assessing the Suitability of Land for Development

- 4.6 In determining the suitability of sites the factors below will be considered. The identification of these factors to consider has been informed by guidance contained within the National Planning Practice Guide. As part of this assessment the Council will also have regard to any past planning history, the current and surrounding land uses, the character and topography of the area.

Highways Assessed through site visit and supporting evidence. This will include input from highway professionals. The requirements for any off-site provision will be considered as part of this process. The location and implications of the link road will be considered through this process.	Not suitable	Access into the site is not possible with no potential for addressing highways safety and capacity issues.
	Potentially suitable	Access and/or capacity issues have been identified. Potential measures to overcome concerns have been identified and could be implemented or further assessment work is required to determine its suitability.
	Suitable	Site survey and supporting evidence confirm that the site is a suitable location for development.
Sustainability Assessed through site visit and supporting evidence including information contained in the JTP Masterplan regarding future service and infrastructure provision.	Not suitable	The site is located in an unsustainable location with poor access to key services and facilities running contrary to the Local Plan. Opportunity to address this and improve access does not exist.
	Potentially suitable	Whilst currently located in an unsustainable location officers consider there to be potential to improve the sustainability performance of the site e.g. through on-site service provision, contributions to public transport provision and cycle and pedestrian provision.
	Suitable	Site survey and evidence base confirm that the site is a sustainable location for development.
Flood risk Assessed through the Councils evidence base and following engagement with the Environment Agency and United Utilities.	Not suitable	Evidence collected identifies land within flood zones 3a, 3b (functional flood plain) or flood zone 2, high or medium risk of surface water flooding. These areas of land will be screened out at stage 1. Land identified as being at risk of flooding from other sources as identified by the evidence (including at risks arising from climate change), areas required for flood mitigation or safeguarding or flood. As these areas of land will be screened out at stage 2 it is therefore unlikely sites will need to be ruled out in their entirety due to these constraints at this stage.
	Potentially suitable	Subject to design and layout it is identified that any low-risk present (from any source, including risks arising from climate change) may be appropriately avoided and measures to mitigate and reduce flood risk can be included within the scheme.

	Suitable	Land which is not at risk of flooding from any source, including risk arising from climate change and development can incorporate measures to mitigate and reduce flood risk.
<u>Ecology</u> Assessed through site visit and supporting ecological evidence.	Not suitable	<p>The assessment will consider the proximity of the site to local, national and international designations. Sites located within such designations are unlikely to be suitable for development and in most instances will have already been screened out.</p> <p>The conclusions of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal undertaken by the RSK Wilding will also be considered. Where this identifies ecological concerns unless mitigation measures are identified it is unlikely that the site will be considered suitable for development.</p>
	Potentially suitable	This will include sites where potential ecological concerns have been identified and negative effects can be mitigated or as a last resort compensated for. Further survey work/assessment may be required in order to determine the sites suitability.
	Suitable	Site survey and evidence base confirm that the site is a suitable location for development.
<u>Heritage</u> Assessed through site visit and desk top survey together with professional advice provided by conservation officers within the council and archaeological professionals.	Not suitable	<p>The assessment will consider the proximity of the site to known heritage assets and potential impacts on the asset and/or its setting. This will be informed by professional advice provided by the council's conservation officer.</p> <p>Proposals which would result in substantial harm or loss of significance are considered to be unsuitable for development.</p>
	Potentially suitable	This will include sites which while potential heritage concerns have been raised they are not viewed to represent sites which would result in substantial harm or loss of significance, or where concerns can be overcome through appropriate design. Further assessment/survey work may be required.
	Suitable	Site survey and evidence base confirm that the site is a suitable location for development.
<u>Landscape</u> Assessed through site visit and desk-based survey undertaken by landscape professionals. Together this work will inform the	Not suitable	In view of the stage 2 work it is considered unlikely that any sites will be ruled out in their entirety at this stage based on landscape concerns.
	Potentially suitable	This will include sites where potential landscape concerns have been identified and where with appropriate mitigation and design these concerns can be overcome. Further assessment may be required.

landscape assessment of sites.	Suitable	Site survey and evidence base confirm that the site is a suitable location for development.
<u>Green and Blue Infrastructure</u> This will be assessed against the council's GBI strategy for the AAP.	Not Suitable	In view of the stage 1 and 2 work it is considered unlikely that any sites will be ruled out in their entirety at this stage based on GBI concerns.
	Potentially suitable	This will include sites where potential GBI concerns have been identified and where with appropriate mitigation and design these concerns can be overcome.
	Suitable	The site is not located in identified areas of GBI.
<u>Utility infrastructure</u> Assessed through existing utility mapping and consultation with providers.	Not suitable	Sites will not be considered suitable where there are known utilities which prohibit development e.g. pipelines, substations or there are deficiencies in capacity or connectivity that cannot be overcome as indicated by utility providers.
	Potentially suitable	Sites where constraints can be overcome through sensible design and siting or where deficiencies in provision can be overcome
	Suitable	Site survey and evidence base confirm that the site is a suitable location for development.
<u>Hazards</u> Assessed through dialogue with Environmental Health, the council's contamination land officer and the AAP Noise Assessment.	Not suitable	Sites will be considered unsuitable where there are known pollution or other hazardous concerns (e.g. land instability, land contamination) which cannot be mitigated against.
	Potentially suitable	Sites identified as having potential pollution or hazardous concerns may continue to be considered suitable for development provided it can be demonstrated that appropriate mitigation measures can be delivered to help alleviate and minimise impacts to acceptable levels.
	Suitable	Site survey and evidence base confirm that the site is a suitable location for development.
<u>Tree Preservation Orders/Hedges</u> Assessed through the council's constraints mapping and dialogue with the council's Tree Officer.	Not suitable	Sites will be considered unsuitable where the proposal would result in the unacceptable loss or damage to protected or potentially significant trees, hedgerows and ancient woodland and where potential impacts cannot be mitigated.
	Potentially suitable	Sites where trees and hedgerows are affected but where design and mitigation measures can overcome concerns or where further assessment is required e.g. ecology, historic environment, landscape implications
	Suitable	Site survey and evidence base confirm that the site is a suitable location for development with no potential impacts identified.

Neighbouring Land Uses Assessed through site visit and desk-based assessment.	Not Suitable	Site visit and desk-based analysis confirm that the development would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the surrounding area or that existing uses would have a detrimental impact on any future development proposed.
	Potentially suitable	Design and mitigation measures exist to mitigate potential impacts from the proposed development and from adjacent land uses.
	Suitable	Site survey and evidence base confirm that the site is a suitable location for development.

- 4.7 Whilst individual conclusions will be reached under each of the topic areas Officers will need to consider the suitability of development parcels in the round, having regard to the overall suitability of a development parcel and individual constraints. It may well therefore be the case that development parcels identified as not suitable under some topic areas are identified as suitable in the final conclusion on the basis of the overall assessment and specific nature of the parcel. In such circumstances officers will clearly identify the reasons for the assessment detailing specifically the measures required to address the issues that have been raised.

Assessing the Achievability of Land for Development

- 4.8 In the context of deliverability, a site is considered achievable when there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be delivered on the site at a particular point in time. The National Planning Practice Guidance confirms that 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 at a certain point in time.
- 4.9 Critical to this understanding will be work around development viability which will support the content and direction of the AAP. A key component of any viability assessment is a robust understanding of the capacity of development proposed, the underlying costs of development and the policy / infrastructure expectations arising for the development proposed.
- 4.10 Understanding over development viability is an iterative process and therefore in the context of this assessment process the achievability of development will be inherently tied to the findings and outcomes of the next stage of the site assessment process which will conclude on the scale, capacity and type of development proposed for each development parcel.

4.11 The economic viability of sites will be determined by the AAP Viability Assessment which will assess phases of development and will include a selection of development parcels.

5.0 Stage 4: Review and Monitor – Estimating the Development Potential

5.1 Having concluded on the deliverability of development parcels the capacity of parcels will be based on an assessment of the following considerations:

- The capacity detailed as part of the submission of a parcel if a notional layout and/or supporting information has been provided;
- The capacity of any parcel to accommodate different development typologies, for instance the capacity to accommodate employment, commercial and community uses which will all be critical elements of creating a cohesive community in South Lancaster.
- Specific constraints affecting a site as identified in stage 3 of the assessment (e.g. flood risk, TPO, ecological considerations)
- The role of phasing new development to ensure that development evolves in a sustainable and holistic manner.
- The character of the area (design principle 8 of the Masterplan);
- Comparable schemes in the surrounding area;
- Consistency with the NPPF and PPG;
- The density multipliers contained within the Masterplan.
- The application of appropriate development densities in the context of both the ambitions of the Garden Village Masterplan and the evidence collected to support the Area Action Plan.

5.2 Further adjustments will also be necessary to take account of other policy requirements within the AAP. This will include the provision of open space, on site/at source SuDS, highway infrastructure, community facilities, affordable housing provision, Biodiversity Net Gain etc. The need for adjustments will be made in line with the emerging evidence base being prepared to support the AAP.

5.3 The Council recognise that the assessment does not limit what can be constructed on sites and is included for guidance only. Detailed site layouts which accord to the content and direction of the AAP are a matter for consideration at the planning application stage. To ensure the delivery of appropriate development patterns for a new settlement the AAP will look to include a

minimum density threshold. This will be informed by work undertaken as part of this assessment and having regard to the conclusions of the JTP Masterplan.

- 5.4 Following the conclusion of this stage the Council aim to be in receipt of a comprehensive assessment of development opportunities across the AAP area. This work will be used to inform the allocation of sites within the AAP together with any specific policy requirements that might be required. This will include generic policy requirements for all parcels as well as specific policy requirements for individual development parcels where the evidence base has identified this as necessary.
- 5.5 The assessment will also be used to inform the phasing of sites having regard to the evidence collected, the principles of place making and the delivery of infrastructure.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 This document sets out the methodology for the assessment of land in the South Lancaster 'Broad Location for Growth'. The Council will now use this methodology to undertake a detailed assessment of development potential across South Lancaster.