

Great Easton Sustainable Housing Development Sites - Site Fourteen Castle View Stables

1. Introduction

The Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Group are preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Great Easton in Harborough District, Leicestershire. A key priority of the Neighbourhood Plan is ensuring the Parish remains sustainable in the long term by a balanced residential expansion that meets identified local needs. A plan for up to about 25 units is required to meet the known housing need identified by Harborough District Council in May 2016 as between 17 and 32 units to 2031. Windfall sites will provide about 7 units over the next 15 years based upon past performance. The residual target is therefore to allocate new sites for between 10 and 25 units. This comprehensive analysis sets out the size and relative sustainability of the potential housing sites and ranks those in order of which are the most and which are the least sustainable over the term of the plan (15 years). The ranking of the sites allows comparative priorities to be agreed. Following the analysis the Castle View Stables site is scored red and ranked **seventh** of the fourteen prospective locations and can now be presented for community consultation as not requiring an allocation in the neighbourhood plan.

2. Site Selection Criteria

The sustainable development criteria for the selection and allocation of sites for new dwellings were identified using best practise methodology, supplemented with evidence from Harborough District Council, other approved Neighbourhood Plans, issues from the consultations on the Neighbourhood Plan and relevant plans and documents including referencing the National Planning Policy Framework. A scoring system, based on a traffic light (i.e. Red, Amber or Green - RAG) scores has been used. This reflects best practice and is a robust methodology to understand and use. After analysing the fourteen sites the one with the most green ratings and the least red and amber scores is the one which is most sustainable. The fourteen sites have been professionally ranked and the intention is that only the highest green scoring sites should be developed and that red sites should not be developed in the next 15 years, subject to community consultation and support to the proposals.

- Red is scored for a negative assessment where significant mitigation is required and/or there is a “deal-breaker” concern;
A red scoring site should not be developed.
- Amber is scored where there are negative elements to the site and costly/disruptive mitigation measures will be required;
An amber scoring site will require significant remediation works to allow development, it may be developed at some future date.
- Green is scored for a positive assessment with no major constraints on future development.
A green scoring site can be developed subject to owner and community support, market demands, planning and a viable cost achievement. Within the green scoring category, the site with the highest green score will be ranked first.

Contact Details	
Name of Assessor	Derek Doran BSc (Hons) MCIH MBA
Site - Details	
Site reference : (SHLAA)	Not in the SHLAA.
Site name and address:	Castle View Stables, off Great Easton Road.

Site – Sustainability criteria relating to Location, Surroundings & Constraints		RAG Rating
Site capacity: 3 bed houses with garden and in-curtilage parking.	Approximately 0.75 HA – not measured to scale. 6 Units but potentially access to a much larger site of 40 plus units.	Red
Current Use:	House and stables block with associated paddocks – currently in full use. Open Countryside to about half of the site.	Red
Adjoining Uses:	Open Countryside to the South and West of the site with the village Primary school along the Eastern border. Totally outside of the current village envelope and the new intended Limit To Development (LTD) boundary, to be adopted in the settlement development policy of the Neighbourhood Plan. Extensions in this location will undermine the existing settlement pattern that is historically significant.	Red
Topography:	Gently sloping land.	Green
Greenfield or Previously Developed Land?	About half of the site is in use as a commercial equine establishment which is a traditional source of countryside employment and rural diversity. The buildings are in good order and it would be environmentally perverse to demolish and rebuild in this location. About half of the site is open countryside.	Amber

Site – Sustainability criteria relating to Location, Surroundings & Constraints		RAG Rating
Good Quality Agricultural Land?	<p>The High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area covers this site and ranks it as only having a low to medium capacity to accommodate new development.</p> <p>The bottom half of the site (approximately) is grade 3 agricultural land of a good to moderate quality.</p>	Amber
Site availability - Single ownership or multiple ownership?	One owner Mr and Mrs Uppal.	Green
Landscape Quality/Visual impact assessment (VIA) ?	<p>The draft Neighbourhood Plan shows the view in to the village at this location as a historically significant and important one to be protected from new development.</p> <p>The traditional, open countryside elements to this site separate it totally from the village visually and physically. The panoramic vistas are of exceptional quality.</p> <p>Overall, the site is partly modified but the setting is still of high quality, with vistas and views to the South and East.</p>	Red
Important Trees, Woodlands & Hedgerows?	Significant hedgerows to two boundaries of the site and a stand of trees separating the stables from the adjacent school buildings, overall of a high quality that should be preserved.	Amber
Relationship with existing pattern of built development?	Not linked to the current built form and if built in isolation would maintain the significant “gap” between the Primary School and the village residential boundary (unless sub plots A, B and C were also built out from the village first). Totally outside of the current village envelope and an incongruous site to redevelop. Unacceptable to proceed with this location given the housing need and adverse community opinion.	Red
Local Wildlife considerations?	<p>Nesting birds.</p> <p>Foxes.</p>	Green
Listed Building or important built assets?	None in or near to this location.	Green

Site – Sustainability criteria relating to Location, Surroundings & Constraints		RAG Rating
Impact on the Conservation Area or its setting?	Sufficiently outside of the current conservation area and as a redevelopment of a small scale would not undermine the quality of its historical setting and integrity with adequate mitigation measures.	Amber
Safe pedestrian access to and from the site?	A right of way already exists along Great Easton Road, fairly straightforward to extend this in to the site in a safe and financially viable manner.	Amber
Safe vehicular access to and from the site?	A turning circle in to the stables already exists but this is not suitable to service up to 8 units of residential accommodation. A new access can probably be provided and built with sufficient visibility splays to meet current Highways safety standards. The nearness to the school is an important safety concern as this section of highway already exhibits severe congestion at school start and drop off times. All these issues will need to be accommodated by a sensitive design solution.	Amber
Impact on existing vehicular traffic?	Additional vehicle flows from this fairly small number of units would have a minor effect upon vehicular movements in this small village. The problems at school drop off and collection times need to be addressed, even if additional on-site school car parking could be provided at a future date.	Amber
Safe access to public transport? Specifically a bus stop.	No, bus stops in the village centre are more than a 300m walk.	Amber
Distance to community facilities, specifically 2, High Street, the designated village centre.	Walking distance to the community facilities is fairly reasonable at between 300 and 400m.	Amber
Current existing informal/formal recreational opportunities on site?	Used extensively for horse riding on a commercial basis providing a valuable rural service for the Parish. The schools games pitch is immediately adjacent to the Western boundary of the site and should not be overlooked by any potential new development. The existing buildings do not directly overlook the school premises.	Red

Site – Sustainability criteria relating to Location, Surroundings & Constraints		RAG Rating
Ancient monuments or archaeological remains?	None within a reasonable distance of the site boundary.	Green
Any public rights of ways/bridle paths?	Yes, a part of the Jurassic Way is found very close to the site boundary and this is a major Regional right of way. A very sensitively designed residential scheme could mitigate this issue.	Amber
Gas, oil, pipelines and networks & electricity transmission network?	No a high pressure gas transmission pipeline is buried to the South of the site, but would not be affected by development at this location. Telephone/electricity supply cables cross the site but are easily resited.	Amber
Any known noise issues?	Yes, although highways noise can be ameliorated by planting bunds and acoustic barriers.	Amber
Any known contamination issues?	No major issues identified, although open air silage piles found on site.	Amber
Any known flooding issues?	None reported to the developable top section of the site.	Green
Any known drainage issues?	No problems identified at the top end of this location due to the fall off the land.	Green
Issues related to planning history on the site?	The owners have a successful history of developing other residential sites in the village, maintaining the economic vibrancy of the Parish.	N.A.

Site – Sustainability criteria relating to Location, Surroundings & Constraints		RAG Rating
Summary	<p>A site of this scale in this sensitive location is not required in the initial phase of the Neighbourhood Plan, to 2031. The risk is that if this location adjacent to the Barnsdale sub plot, A is developed then a further incursion in to open countryside is more likely. There may be development pressure in the medium term, with interested parties pressing to allow development of between 125 and 145 units in total (the SHLAA identified 169 units).</p> <p>This site should be recommended to the community as not requiring a residential allocation in the neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>In effect unrequired development on this potentially larger scale would increase the size of the village by almost half.</p> <p>Red – 6</p> <p>Amber – 13</p> <p>Green - 7</p>	GREEN scoring 1.