

**BITTESWELL WITH
BITTESBY
SUSTAINABLE SITE
ASSESSMENT (SSA)
February 2021**

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Bitteswell with Bittesby Parish Council has been produced by the Bitteswell with Bittesby Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee (NPAC) on behalf of the Parish Council. The NPAC is supported by a number of sub-groups where local people influence the detail of the policy discussions, one of these is the Housing Theme Group (HTG). An important objective of the NDP is to set out the housing need and where the new residential development should be built within the Parish to meet this need and to protect the Parish from future unsustainable development proposals. Undertaking a SSA is a proven technique to compare the different potential locations for new residential development and has been successful in a large number of communities.
- 1.2. The SSA process is a refinement and update of the findings of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) sites report published by Harborough District Council (HDC) in 2016, a local call for sites by the parish council in late 2019 generated a further four additional potential residential sites.
- 1.3. There is a housing target set for Bitteswell with Bittesby in the HDC adopted local plan, based upon a proportionate population and economic development increase in numbers for the District. The objectively assessed need is therefore for a minimum of 30 additional dwellings to be built before 2031, based upon the settlement hierarchy and agreed for the parish in the adopted local plan. As sites for 15 units already had a residential planning consent the target to 2031 was for an additional 15 units. The HTG considered this target and agreed to a 25% increase in the minimum to meet local housing need, the aim is therefore to allocate a residential site(s) for at least 18 units.
- 1.4. This SSA report sets out how the Bitteswell with Bittesby NPAC, identified sustainable sites for the allocation of land for housing development. The recommendations made by the advisory committee were informed by evidence collected and assessed by the HTG,

supplemented by information from the Environmental Theme Group (ETG) and supported by an independent consultant from YourLocale, a planning consultancy specialising in supporting communities to adopt NDP's.

- 1.5. The NDP supports the provision of sustainable housing in the Parish to meet local need and has embraced the desire to exceed the District-wide housing provision target by identifying potential housing sites within the Parish to meet these requirements within a location (s) that is deliverable, developable and most importantly is acceptable to the local community.

2. Where did the site suggestions come from?

- 2.1 HDC has prepared a SHLAA which identifies the potentially available sites put forward by landowners for residential development. This exercise was substantially updated in 2016 and identified potential residential development sites within Bitteswell with Bittesby parish. A parish council call for sites in 2019 was successful, landowners offered a further four sites that in total would yield approximately 105 units.

The four sites were then subjected to a professional Sustainable Site Assessment (SSA) exercise conducted by YourLocale against scoring criteria agreed with the HTG members. Three further "sub-sections" of these larger sites were re-assessed at the request of the owners or their planning agent, so a total of seven SSA's were completed.

- 2.2 A scoring matrix based upon the methodology supported by the National Planning Policy Frameworks (NPPF's) was agreed by HTG members.
- 2.3 The total of seven sites were assessed for residential suitability through a robust SSA process and the highest two scoring sites have been negotiated with site owners for potential inclusion in the NDP.

3. The SSA Site Selection Criteria

- 3.1. The initial site assessments were undertaken by Derek Doran BSc (Hons) MCIH MBA the Lead Associate from YourLocale to ensure a professional approach based upon past experience of similar assessments and to ensure a high level of objectivity and consistency in scoring.
- 3.2. The assessment included a comprehensive desk top study and on line research followed by a visit to each of the sites. This led to some amendments being agreed by all members of the HTG and it was then possible to rank each site in order of overall sustainability.
- 3.3. The policy position of HDC in terms of their assessment of the developability of the sites was a material consideration in the discussions of scoring and their informal planning opinion and the views of the HDC conservation officer were sought and these responses affected the outcome of the process.

34. The sites were then re-visited to ensure that all factors and information were considered in the assessments that were sent as drafts to the owners/agents for their comment and input.

4. The Criteria and the RAG Scoring System

- 4.1. The SHLAA methodology jointly agreed between the Local Planning Authorities (including HDC) of Leicester and Leicestershire was used, coupled with the experience of the consultant in recommending past “made” NDP residential site allocations that have been supported through a number of independent planning examinations.
- 4.2. The HTG members agreed twenty six scoring criteria that are relevant to the selection and allocation of sites for new dwellings using amended criteria from the NPPF’s (the core planning principles).
- 4.3. The SSA scoring system, based on a Red, Amber or Green (RAG) score was applied to each criterion and listed for each identified site. Red was scored for a negative assessment; Amber was scored where mitigation might be required; Green was scored for a positive assessment. A different methodology for scoring to give varying weights to different criteria was considered by the HTG but rejected as it would have been more complicated, less transparent to the community and could possibly be too subjective.
- 4.4. The following site assessment scoring matrix was used to compare each site in terms of developability.

Table 1 – Sustainable Site Assessment (SSA) framework for Bitteswell with Bittesby

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Green</u>	<u>Amber</u>	<u>Red</u>
1. Site capacity (3 bed houses)	Small capacity of up to 5 dwellings	Medium capacity of 6 to 10 dwellings	Large capacity of more than 11 dwellings
2. Current Use	Vacant	Specific existing use needs to be relocated(not land)	Loss of important local asset
3. Adjoining Uses	Site wholly within residential area or village envelope	Site joined to village envelope or residential location	No physical direct link to village envelope or residential location

4. Topography	Flat or gently sloping site	Undulating site or greater slope that can be mitigated	Severe slope that cannot be mitigated
5. Greenfield or Previously Developed Land	Previously developed land (brownfield) more than 50% site area	Mixture of brownfield – between 25% & 50%, with the balance greenfield land	Mainly greenfield land, less than 24% brownfield
6. Site availability - Single ownership or multiple ownership	Single ownership	Multiple ownership	Multiple ownership with one or more unwilling partners
7. Landscape Character Assessment and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) #	No harm to quality.	Less than substantial harm to quality.	Substantial harm to quality.
8. Important Trees, Woodlands & Hedgerows #	None affected	Mitigation measures are required	Site would harm or require removal of Ancient tree or hedge (or TPO)
9. Ridge and Furrow #	None or grade 1	Grade 2 or 3	Grade 4
10. Relationship with existing pattern of built development	Land visible from a small number of properties	Land visible from a range of sources mitigated through landscaping or planting	Prominent visibility Difficult to improve
11. Listed Building or important heritage asset and their setting #	No harm to existing building	Less than substantial harm	Substantial harm
12. Impact on the Conservation Area or its setting	No harm	Less than substantial harm	Substantial harm
13. Local Biodiversity score#	A score of 1	A score of 2-3	A score of 4-5
14. Safe pedestrian access to and from the site	Existing footpath linked to the site	No footpath but can be easily created with significant improvements	Third party consent required or no potential for footpath

15. Impact on existing vehicular traffic	Impact on village centre minimal	Medium scale impact on village centre	Major impact on village centre
16. Safe vehicular access to and from the site.	Appropriate access can be easily provided	Appropriate access can only be provided with significant improvement	Appropriate access cannot be provided
17. Distance to public transport (specifically a bus stop with current service)	Walking distance of 200m or less	Walking distance of 201-400m	Walking distance of greater than 401m
18. Distance to designated village centre-village green	Walking distance of 200m or less	Walking distance of 201-400m	Walking distance of greater than 401m
19. Current existing informal/formal recreational opportunities on site	No recreational uses on site	Informal recreational uses on site	Formal recreational uses on site
20. Ancient monuments or archaeological remains	No harm to an ancient monument or remains site	Less than substantial harm to an ancient monument or remains site	Substantial harm to an ancient monument or remains
21. Any existing public rights of ways/bridle paths	No impact on public right of way	Detriment to a public right of way	Re-routing required or would cause significant harm
22. Gas and/or oil pipelines & electricity transmission network (Not water/sewage)	Site unaffected	Re-siting may be necessary or reduces developable area	Re-siting required or may not be feasible
23. Any nuisance issues (Noise, light, odour?)	No nuisance issues	Mitigation may be necessary	Nuisance issues will be an ongoing concern
24. Any contamination issues	No contamination issues	Minor mitigation required	Major mitigation required
25. Any known flooding issues.	Site in flood zone 1 or 2 or no flooding for more	Site in flood zone 3a or flooded once	Site in flood zone 3b (functional flood

	than 25 years	in last 25 years	plain) or flooded more than once in last 25 years
26. Any drainage issues.	No drainage issues identified.	Need mitigation. for	Need substantial mitigation. for

5. The SSA outcome

- 5.1. The SSA's were considered at a number of meetings of the HTG with active support from ETG members to ensure that adequate local knowledge was central to the process. This led to a reassessment of some sites by the YourLocale Consultant with amendments subsequently agreed with the HTG members to ensure an objective and transparent approach prior to the assessments being agreed with the NPAC members.
- 5.2. The assessments were amended to reflect this input and they were circulated as drafts to the relevant site sponsors, usually the land owner or a professional agent working on their behalf. All parties have responded to the drafts and several site visits and meetings with owners have taken place to ensure all detailed matters were considered.
- 5.3. The final SSA reports were then produced and adopted by the Parish Council.
- 5.4. The outcome of the SSA process is recorded in the following table. The RAG Rating is obtained by deducting the "Red" scores from the "Green" scores. Amber remains a neutral score.

Table 2 – SSA outcomes

Site Location & units	HTG SCORE	Rank
1. Rear of the Croft (11 units) *	Green Eight	2nd
2. Ashby Lane South (32 units)	Green Five	4th
2a. Part of Ashby Lane South (10 units)	Green Nine	1st
3. Ashby Lane Central (25 units) **	Amber	5th

3a. Part of Ashby lane Central (10 units)	Green Eight	2nd
4. Ashby Lane North (37 units)	Red two	6th
4a. Part of Ashby Lane North (10 units).	Green seven	3rd

5.5 The sites marked with * and ** have received a residential planning consent (for 4 and 8 units respectively) so the NDP could not include these sites as new residential allocations.

5.6 The parish council having considered all of the evidence have allocated the two highest scoring green sites for residential development;

- Land is allocated at Ashby Lane South for around 10 units of residential accommodation.
- Land is allocated at Ashby Lane North for around 10 units of residential accommodation.

Allocating these sites exceeds the HDC target by up to 5 units and both of the sites are confirmed to be developable and deliverable within the lifetime of the NDP by the owners.