

Cheltenham Borough Council

**Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment:
Methodology**

November 2007

Introduction

- 1.1 The Government's objective for planning for housing is to '*ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live.*'¹ A top priority for Government is to ensure that land availability is not a constraint on the delivery of homes.
- 1.2 Planning Policy Statement on Housing (PPS3)² sets out the Government's approach to housing and requires all local authorities to produce a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to evaluate the availability of land for housing within their area.
- 1.3 '*Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance*'³ has been prepared by POS Enterprises and Llewelyn Davies Yeang for the Department for Communities and Local Government, in partnership with the Local Government Association, the Home Builders Federation, the Planning Officers Society and the Planning Inspectorate. Cheltenham's SHLAA will be based upon this guidance.
- 1.4 SHLAAs are a key component of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing to meet the community's need for more homes. The SHLAA will inform Cheltenham Borough Council's Local Development Framework, in particular, the Core Strategy.

Purpose of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

- 1.5 The primary role of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is to:
 - identify sites with potential for housing;
 - assess their housing potential;
 - assess when they are likely to be developed
- 1.6 The SHLAA should aim to identify sufficient specific sites for housing development for at least the first 10 years of a plan, from the anticipated date of its adoption, and ideally for longer than the whole 15 year plan period. Where this is not possible, the SHLAA should provide the evidence base to support judgements around whether broad locations should be identified and/or whether there are genuine local circumstances that mean a windfall allowance may be justified in the first 10 years of the plan.⁴ **The SHLAA does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for housing development.**

¹ PPS 3 CLG November 2006

² PPS 3 CLG November 2006 www.communities.gov.uk

³ Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance, CLG July 2007

⁴ Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance, CLG July 2007

Core Requirements of the Assessment

1.7 The SHLAA should provide the following core outputs:

- 1 A list of sites, cross-referenced to maps showing locations and boundaries of specific sites (and showing broad locations, where necessary)
- 2 Assessment of the deliverability/developability of each identified site (ie in terms of its suitability, availability and achievability⁵) to determine when an identified site is realistically expected to be developed
- 3 Potential quantity of housing that could be delivered on each identified site or within each identified broad location (where necessary) or on windfall sites (where justified)
- 4 Constraints on the delivery of identified sites
- 5 Recommendations on how these constraints could be overcome and when

1.8 The assessment should meet the requirements of the following process checklist.

- 1 The survey and assessment should involve key stakeholders including house builders, social landlords, local property agents and local communities. Other relevant agencies may include the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships (a requirement in areas where they are particularly active)
- 2 The methods, assumptions, judgements and findings should be discussed and agreed upon throughout the process in an open and transparent way, and explained in the assessment report. The report should include an explanation as to why particular sites or areas have been excluded from the assessment.

1.9 In following the methodology set out in the practice guidance, Cheltenham Borough Council will meet the requirements of the SHLAA.

Purpose of Scoping Report

1.10 The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed scope and methodology of the SHLAA to be prepared by Cheltenham Borough Council in support of its emerging Local Development Framework.

1.11 This document is a scoping report and should not be confused with a full SHLAA. The full SHLAA will be developed following this stakeholder consultation.

1.12 This scoping report states how Cheltenham Borough Council intends to implement the methodology contained within the practice guidance in the production of a SHLAA for Cheltenham. **Your views on the proposed methodology are invited.**

⁵ See paragraph 54 PPS3

Proposed Methodology

1.13 The *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Practice Guidance* has identified eight main stages, with two further optional stages covering 'broad locations' and 'windfalls' to be followed in preparing a SHLAA. For a full version of the Practice guidance, please see the following link:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/landavailabilityassessment>

Stage 1: Planning the Assessment

1.14 Cheltenham Borough Council is working closely with the other Gloucestershire authorities regarding methodology criteria, areas of search, thresholds and to manage the on going quality of the project. This working group is engaging with the Government Office for the South West and the Home Builders Federation. Due to differing Local Development Schemes, each Gloucestershire authority is undertaking their own SHLAA.

1.15 The SHLAA is to be carried out by Cheltenham Borough Council Strategic Land Use Team, drawing on information from other departments, such as Development Control, Asset Management, Cheltenham Borough Homes and others, where appropriate. It is also envisaged that the knowledge of local developers, land owners and agents will be obtained through consultation.

1.16 The SHLAA shall be completed by January 2008 in order to inform the evidence base of the Core Strategy.

Stage 2: Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment

1.17 The practice guidance suggests the following sources of sites with potential for housing for inclusion within the SHLAA:

Sites in the planning process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land allocated (or with permission) for employment or other land uses which are no longer required for those uses;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing housing allocations and site development briefs;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unimplemented/outstanding planning permissions for housing;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning permissions for housing that are under construction.
Sites not currently in the planning process
Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vacant and derelict land and buildings;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surplus public sector land;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land in non-residential use which may be suitable for re-development for housing, such as commercial buildings or car parks, including as part of mixed-use development;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional housing opportunities in established residential areas, such as under-used garage blocks;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large scale redevelopment and re-design of existing residential areas;

• Sites in rural settlements and rural exception sites ⁶ ;
• Urban extensions ⁷ ;
• New free standing settlements ⁷ .

1.18 Since 1991, Cheltenham Borough Council has annually recorded the residential completions and commitments within particular categories. Due to local policy changes in 1999 following the approval of the Gloucestershire County Council Structure Plan Second Review which affected the rate at which planning permissions were granted, only data from 1999 will be used to assess past trends. It is intended that this assessment will include information within the same categories, as such, in addition to those sources above, this SHLAA will assess housing potential within those sources within Table 1, Appendix A.

1.19 The guidance states that particular types or areas of land may be excluded from the assessment. Cheltenham is a compact and largely urban borough that includes no isolated settlements. The area identified for assessment within the SHLAA is the Principal Urban area, including Greenfield sites (see Appendix B).

1.20 All Greenfield sites outside of the Principal Urban Area, within Cheltenham's boundary, are being assessed through a parallel evidence base called the Comparative site assessment. In Summer 2006 Cheltenham Borough Council wrote to Developers and Agents registered on our Local Plan/Local Development Framework database requesting that any potential development sites be submitted to the Council to be assessed as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework. The identification of sites via consultation with developers, agents and interested bodies has been on going through 2006/07. All sites submitted through this process which fall within the PUA are to be assessed within this SHLAA, see www.cheltenham.gov.uk 'Our Plans' for further information.

1.21 An urban extension to the north west of the Borough, crossing into Tewkesbury Borough has been identified within the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West. Cross boundary working has begun for the area of north west Cheltenham in light of this. This SHLAA does not cover this area.

Stage 3: Desktop review of existing information

1.22 The following table, taken from the practice guidance, sets out some of the data sources that can be used to identify sites with potential for housing and any relevant information they might provide, such as any constraints. These sources will be used to identify potential sites within Cheltenham, where the information is available.

Sites in the planning process	Purpose
Site allocations not yet the subject of planning permission	To identify sites
Planning permissions/sites under construction (particularly those being developed in phases)	To identify sites

⁶ Paragraph 30 PPS3, CLG 2006

⁷ Broad location for which will normally have been identified by the Regional Spatial Strategy

Site specific development briefs	To identify sites and any constraints to delivery
Planning application refusals	To identify sites – particularly those applications rejected on grounds of prematurity
Dwelling starts and completion records	To identify the current development progress on sites with planning permissions
Other sources of information that may help to identify sites	
Local planning authority Urban Capacity Study	To identify buildings and land, and any constraints to delivery
Local Planning authority Empty Property Register	To identify vacant buildings
English House Condition Survey ⁸	To identify buildings
National Land Use Database ⁹	To identify buildings and land, and any constraints to delivery
Register of Surplus Public Sector Land ¹⁰	To identify buildings and land
Local planning authority Employment Land Review	To identify surplus employment buildings and land
Valuation Office Database ¹¹	To identify vacant buildings
Local planning authority vacant property registers (industrial and commercial)	To identify vacant buildings
Commercial property databases, e.g. estate agents and property agents	To identify vacant buildings and land
Ordnance Survey maps ¹²	To identify land
Aerial photography	To identify land

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, Practice Guidance, page 12, CLG 2007

In addition to the above sources, other local documents may also be able to provide information for consideration when undertaking the desktop review, such as the Comparative Site Assessment work.

1.23 All of the sites will be mapped using GIS.

Stage 4: Determining which sites and areas will be surveyed

1.24 All of the sites identified within the assessment will be visited and surveyed in accordance with Stage 5 of the process.

1.25 When considering additional areas which could be surveyed, consideration will be given to development hotspots, the pedestrian catchment areas of Town and District centres and of principal public transport corridors. The catchment area is defined as 800m.

1.26 Aerial photographs, the use of GIS and OS maps may help to identify areas of potential for housing development which were not previously identified either through the desktop review or Comparative Site Assessment work. The use of local knowledge may also lead to particular areas being surveyed.

⁸ See www.communities.gov.uk

⁹ See www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/publications.htm

¹⁰ See www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/rsppl.htm

¹¹ See www.voa.gov.uk

¹² See www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite

- 1.27 For the areas identified above a walking survey will be carried out using the checklist within Appendix C, in accordance with Stage 5. In accordance with the guidance, for the remainder of the study area, a general examination will be carried out.

Site Size

- 1.28 This assessment has a 'site size threshold'. Small sites are considered as under 10 dwellings and large sites as those capable of accommodating 10 dwellings or over, irrespective of site area. This is consistent with the threshold used within Cheltenham Borough Council's Residential Land Availability Study, previous urban capacity studies, and was discussed at the Gloucestershire working group as being suitable for urban areas. However, if sites have been identified to Cheltenham Borough which are under 10 dwellings, these will be considered.

Stage 5: Carrying out the survey

- 1.29 The guidance recommends certain characteristics to be recorded on site. Table 2, in Appendix C shows the proposed site checklist to be used by Cheltenham Borough Council when surveying the sites.

Stage 6: Estimating the housing potential of each site

- 1.30 Stages 6 and 7 can be carried out in parallel.
- 1.31 Stage 6 is to estimate the potential of each of the identified sites to accommodate housing and the guidance suggests a number of ways in which to do this:
- Use of existing or emerging policy;
 - Use of sketch schemes, or use relevant existing schemes as the basis for an identified site;
 - Comparison of the site with a sample scheme, where the form of development would be desirable.
- 1.32 This SHLAA will use a combination of methods to estimate the potential of each site, as follows:
- Existing information
 - Urban design approach
 - Density Multiplier
- 1.33 **Existing Information:** Where existing information exists regarding the potential capacity of a site this information will be used, for example if pre-application discussions have taken place regarding a site, or if the information has been submitted by a promoter of a site.
- 1.34 **Urban design approach:** For larger, or more complex sites, a design approach will be applied, this will involve the Council's Urban Design Team considering suitable densities and mix of use for a site based on the individual characteristics of the site and surrounding area, including potential constraints, such as listed buildings and the need for open space.
- 1.35 **Density Multiplier:** For any remaining sites the use of a density multiplier will be used to estimate the potential. The Draft RSS Development Policy F *Masterplanning* suggests that within SSTCs developments of at least 50/dph and higher wherever possible should be incorporated within urban areas. As such, this assessment uses a density multiplier of 50/dph.

- 1.36 Whilst recognising that this density will not necessarily be appropriate on all sites, when considered across the borough its use provides a reasonable average. Past developments show that some urban sites are able to accommodate much higher densities, whilst other areas will be lower. This is supported by Cheltenham Borough Council's adopted Local Plan which requires, within Policy HS2, that developments can demonstrate the efficient use of land between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare, with a greater intensity of development at places with good transport accessibility.
- 1.37 In order to take account of land needed for the provision of infrastructure, open spaces etc on larger sites, the density multiplier will use a 'Gross to Net Ratio' as follows:

Site size	Gross to Net Ration used
Up to 0.4 hectares	100%
0.4 to 2 hectares	83%
Over 2 hectares	63%

Stage 7: Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed

- 1.38 Assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of a site will provide information on which the judgement can be made in the plan making context as to whether a site can be considered deliverable, developable or not currently developable for housing development.
- 1.39 The definition of **Deliverable** is that a site is available now, offers a suitable location for housing development now and there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years from the date of adoption of the plan.
- 1.40 The definition of **Developable** is that a site should be in a suitable location for housing development, and there should be a reasonable prospect that it will be available for and could be developed at a specific point in time.
- 1.41 The definition of **Not currently developable** is where it is unknown when a site could be developed, this may be for example, because one of the constraints to development is severe, and it is not known when it might be overcome. See Table 3, Appendix D for further information on the above.
- 1.42 It is anticipated that the views of the Home Builders Federation and its members, including the local property and development market, officers and the Gloucestershire working group will help inform this process.
- 1.43 Where constraints have been identified, the practice guidance suggests the SHLAA should consider what action would be needed to remove them. This SHLAA will include reference to possible actions that could be taken to overcome any identified constraints.

Stage 8: Review of the Assessment

- 1.44 Following initial survey of sites and the assessment of their deliverability/developability, the housing potential of all sites can be collected to produce an indicative housing trajectory that sets out how much housing can be provided, and at what point in the future.

- 1.45 This SHLAA is being produced as part of a plan review and will consider Gloucestershire Structure Plan housing requirements and the requirements of the draft RSS.
- 1.46 Following the review, if there are insufficient sites identified to meet the above targets for the first five years, it will be necessary to investigate how this shortfall should best be planned for. The two options suggested in the practice guidance are:
- the identification of **broad locations** for future housing growth, within and outside settlements;
 - and/ or the use of a **windfall** allowance.

Stage 9: Identifying and assessing the housing potential of broad locations (where necessary)

- 1.47 Broad locations are areas where housing development is considered feasible and will be encouraged, but where specific sites cannot yet be identified. The practice guidance states that the advantage of identifying broad locations is that the community will be clear about where future development will be directed and there will be greater certainty for developers about where development will be encouraged.
- 1.48 Examples of broad locations include:
- **Within and adjoining settlements** – for example, areas where housing development is or could be encouraged, and small extensions to settlements.
 - **Outside settlements** – for example, major urban extensions, growth points, growth areas, new free standing settlements and eco-towns. The need to explore these will usually be signalled by the regional spatial strategy.
- 1.49 As previously mentioned, the draft RSS identifies an urban extension to the north west of Cheltenham crossing into Tewkesbury Borough. This area will be assessed as part of the Comparative Site Assessment work.
- 1.50 Other areas with potential for housing development, or where development is or could be encouraged will also have been identified earlier in the assessment, when determining where to survey. Areas where site surveys weren't able to identify specific sites, but where it was considered that there was housing potential could then be included for consideration as a broad location.
- 1.51 Where broad locations have been identified, estimates of potential housing supply should be developed having regard to:
- any evidence underpinning the RSS
 - the nature and scale of potential opportunities within the broad location
 - market conditions

Stage 10: Determining the housing potential of windfalls (where justified)

- 1.52 PPS3 is clear that the supply of land for housing should be based upon specific sites, and where necessary, broad locations. However, it also

recognises that there may be genuine local circumstances where a windfall allowance is justified.

1.53 Where a windfall allowance can be justified, this should be based on an estimate of the amount of housing that could be delivered in the area on land that has not been identified in the list of deliverable/developable sites, or as part of broad locations for housing development. One way to determine a realistic windfall allowance is to estimate the housing potential from each source, as the rate will be different between them. One method to estimate potential from each source is by calculating the average annual completion rate from the source, taking care to avoid double counting and come to an informed view as to:

- whether the annual rate is likely to increase or decrease;
- whether the pattern of redevelopment is likely to remain the same, grow or decline;
- whether current market conditions are likely to stay the same, worsen or improve in the future.

Monitoring and updating of the assessment

1.54 The SHLAA is not a one-off study and in accordance with the practice guidance, this SHLAA will be regularly updated as part of the Annual Monitoring and Residential Land Availability Reports in order to support the updating of the housing trajectory and the five-year supply of specific deliverable sites. This first SHLAA will contain a comprehensive assessment, however, future full re-survey's will not be required until plans have to be reviewed and rolled forward for a longer time period, or another significant change makes it necessary.

Appendix A**Table 1**

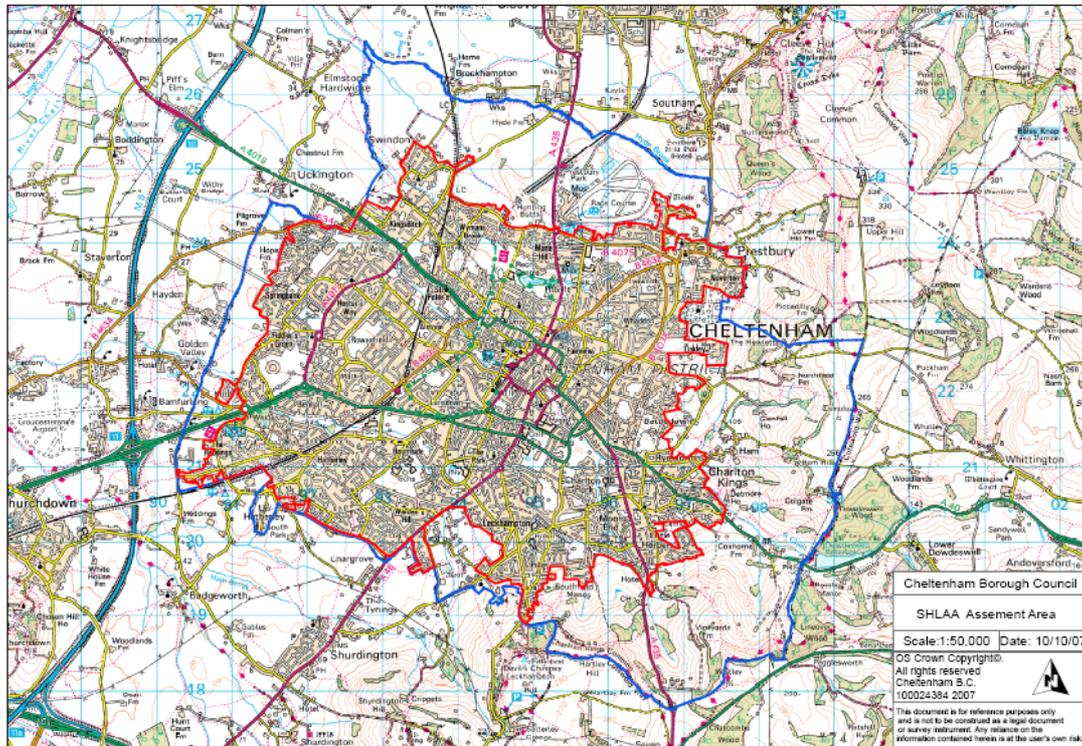
This table shows the categories which Cheltenham Borough Council's Residential Land Availability Report records annual completions and commitments and which will be used within the SHLAA in addition to the sources proposed within the practice guidance.

Categorisation of Potential sources of housing supply
<i>Subdivision of existing housing</i> The division of existing dwellings into a greater number of self-contained units
<i>Flats over shops</i>
<i>Intensification of existing areas (infill)</i> Intensification of a site or area by development within the curtilage of existing buildings
<i>Redevelopment of existing housing</i> Redevelopment of existing housing at a different density
<i>Previously-developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non housing)</i> Redevelopment of non-residential land and buildings by housing
<i>Redevelopment of car parks</i>
<i>Changes of use</i> Including Conversion of commercial buildings/Land in employment use, Creation of housing from buildings/land in non-residential use.
<i>Other redevelopment*</i> Redevelopment of non-residential land and buildings by housing. (Different to Change of Use in terms of conversion of publicly owned land and buildings)
<i>Review of other existing allocations in plans</i> Sites allocated for non-residential development in the local plan

Table 1: Potential sources of housing supply as categorised within Cheltenham Borough Council's Residential Land Availability Report.

Appendix B

Plan showing the SHLAA Assessment area. The boundary is defined by the red line which shows the Principal Urban Area.



Appendix C

Table 2

Checklist of Site details

Site Characteristics		
Site Size (or range if appropriate)		
Current Land Use(s)		
Surrounding Land Use(s)		
Greenfield / Brownfield		
Ownership/Landowner intentions		
Current Policy / Physical Constraints		
Policy Context/Designations		
	Yes	No
Do you consider the site to be within an Urban Area?		
Does the site fall within the Green Belt?		
Does the site fall within the Flood Plain? (Zone 1, 2, 3)		
Does the site fall within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?		
Does the site fall within a Special Landscape Area?		
Does the site fall within an Area of Local Landscape Value?		
Does the site fall within a Site of Special Scientific Interest?		
Does the site impact on cultural heritage? (e.g. Listed Buildings, Conservation Area)		
Is there any known contamination on site?		
Other		
Accessibility		
Public Transport Accessibility (e.g. range of means of transport and frequency of service)		
Access to Primary Services, Facilities & Jobs (e.g. employment, retail, leisure)		
Access to key Local Services & Facilities (e.g. Post Office, health, primary school, village hall, pub, general store)		
Infrastructure		
Water Supply		
Drainage		
Electricity		
School Places		
Strategic Transport Infrastructure		

Appendix D

Table 3

The following table sets out the range of information that could be used in assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of a site for housing.

<p>Suitability <i>if it offers a suitable location development and contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities</i></p>
<p>Sites allocated in existing plans for housing or with planning permission for housing will generally be suitable, although it may be necessary to assess whether circumstances have changed which would alter their suitability</p>
<p>Consider:</p>
<p>Policy restrictions – such as designations, protected areas, existing planning policy and corporate, or community strategy policy</p>
<p>Physical problems or limitations – such as access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination</p>
<p>Potential impacts – including effect upon landscape features and conservation</p>
<p>The environmental conditions – which would be experienced by prospective residents</p>
<p>Availability</p>
<p>A site is considered available, when on the best information available, there is confidence that:</p>
<p>There are no legal or ownership problems, such as multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners.</p>
<p>Is it controlled by a housing developer who has expressed an intention to develop?</p>
<p>Has the land owner expressed an intention to sell?</p>
<p>If problem have been identified, could they realistically be overcome?</p>
<p>Achievability</p>
<p>A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete and sell the housing over a certain period. It will be affected by:</p>
<p>Market factors – such as adjacent uses, economic viability of existing, proposed and alternative uses in terms of land values, attractiveness of the locality, level of potential demand and projected rate of sales</p>
<p>Cost factors - including site preparation costs relating to any physical constraints, any exceptional works necessary, relevant planning standards or obligations, prospect of funding or investment to address identified constraints or assist development</p>
<p>Delivery factors – including the developer's own phasing, the realistic build out rates on larger sites, whether there is a single, or several developers offering different housing products, and the size and capacity of the developer.</p>

Appendix E Consultees

The following shows organisations that will be specifically consulted on this Strategic Housing Land Availability Methodology Scoping Report. This is not intended to be exhaustive and the consultation is extended to a wider audience through the Council's website.

Government Office for South West	Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce
South West Regional Assembly	Home Builders Federation
Gloucestershire County Council	Barton Willmore Planning
Gloucester City Council	Persimmon Special Projects Western
Tewkesbury Borough Council	Barwood Land Holdings
Cotswold District Council	Newland Homes Ltd
Forest of Dean District Council	Boyer Planning
Stroud District Council	Countryside Properties (Southern) Ltd
Cheltenham Borough Council's Local Development Framework Board	Laing Homes
Cheltenham Strategic Partnership	Linden Homes Ltd
Cheltenham Borough Homes Parish Councils	David Wilson Estates
Housing Associations	Robert Hitchens Ltd
The Environment Agency	J A Pye (Oxford) Holdings Ltd
Relevant Electricity, Gas & Telecommunication Companies	Bovis Homes (South West) Ltd
Highways Agency	Hallam Land Management
Natural England	Redrow Homes (South West) Ltd
Severn Trent Water	Hannick Homes
Strategic Rail Authority	Linden Development
Network Rail	Miller Strategic Land
Woodstone Land and Property	DPDS Consulting Group
Scott Brownriggs	CGMS Consulting
John Ryde Commercial	Hunter Page Planning
RMB Building & Refurbishment Contractors	RPS Planning
J Evans Planning	Bruton Knowles
J S Bloor (Tewkesbury) Ltd	Knight Frank
Galliard Developments	J G Land and Estates Limited
	GL Hearn
	Dha Planning

Appendix F

Useful References

Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West, 2006. South West Regional Assembly

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, 2006. Department of Communities and Local Government

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks, 2004. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance, 2007. Department of Communities and Local Government

Cheltenham Borough Local Plan, Second Review, Adopted July 2006. Cheltenham Borough Council

Residential Land Availability Survey, 2007. Cheltenham Borough Council

See www.cheltenham.gov.uk 'Our Plans' for further information about the other evidence base documents.