

City Plan 2040 Proposed Site Appraisal Methodology

Introduction

This document sets out the site appraisal methodology for City Plan 2040. The site appraisal methodology will form part of the Evidence Report. It will be used to assess potential development sites and inform allocations during the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

The methodology has been devised taking into account:

- NPF4
- Scottish Government's Local Development Planning Guidance (May 2023)

The Scottish Government's Local Development Planning Guidance (paragraph 108) states: "Detailed policies and site proposals should not be included in the Evidence Report. Detailed site appraisal will not be appropriate at the Evidence Report stage, but the authority could usefully establish a site appraisal methodology that will be used to appraise sites and inform allocations for the Proposed Plan. This could also be linked or ideally integrated with the approach to SEA assessment".

Additionally, the following appraisal methodologies have been provided to the Council and have also been taken into account in finalising the site appraisal approach.

- Key Agencies site assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) checklist
- City Plan 2040 SEA Methodology
- Homes for Scotland site assessment matrix
- Homes for Scotland deliverability checklist

The key agencies framework combines the SEA and site appraisal process. For City Plan 2040 the Council has taken a similar approach to avoid unnecessary duplication and the SEA forms Part 1 of the appraisal process.

The details of the site appraisal methodology are set out in Appendix 1.

Identifying sites for assessment

Potential sites will be identified from the following sources:

- sites proposed through a 'Call for Ideas'
- sites identified in urban capacity study to be carried out as part of the City Plan 2040 preparation process
- Vacant and derelict land
- All greenfield land surrounding Edinburgh up to the Council boundary
- sites allocated as housing proposals in City Plan 2030 yet to be consented

The appraisal approach

The methodology comprises a number of key elements.

This methodology is considered appropriate to be used for residential and economic uses. Deliverability matters will only be applied to sites which are being considered for housing proposals.

To appraise the suitability of sites a red, amber, green (RAG) scoring approach will be applied.

Red- Development of the site is likely to have significant environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated e.g. is not compatible with international, national, historic and/or natural environment designations, has significant deliverability/infrastructure constraints that cannot be mitigated, or is in conflict with NPF4 principles.

Amber – Development of the site may have some environment impacts e.g. impact on locally designated sites, and/or some deliverability/infrastructure constraints, contributes positively to the NPF4 principles however mitigation is required to address the constraints.

Green – Development of the site contributes positively to NPF4 principles and there are no obvious environmental or deliverability/infrastructure constraints which require mitigation.

Part 1: Environmental Assessment

The first step is to carry out an environmental assessment of all sites under the following eight environmental topics:

- Biodiversity/fauna/flora,
- Population and Health,
- Soil,
- Water,
- Air and climatic factors,
- material assets,
- Cultural heritage,
- Landscape and
- Townscape

The assessment will utilise a desk top approach using a range of data sources, many of which are already on the Council's GIS system, largely based on the format of the SEA assessment.

Information sources are various and will include; the open space study, the landscape character appraisal, Historic Environment Scotland mapping, the strategic flood risk assessment, and the transport assessment.

Part 2: Deliverability and Infrastructure

NPF4 requires sites for housing to be deliverable. It defines “deliverable land” as land that is free from constraints or there is a commitment to overcome constraints, and development is able to be delivered in the period identified for the site within the Deliverable Housing Land Pipeline.

Scottish Government Housing Land Audit Guidance, January 2025, provides factors to be used in the preparation of the Housing Land Audit (HLA) to determine the deliverability of a site and suggests that it may be helpful to also use these factors alongside the site appraisal methodology.

Therefore, the second part of the proposed appraisal methodology is based upon the consideration of the following factors as set out at paragraph 66 of the guidance:

- Land use status
- Ownership
- Physical conditions
- Infrastructure
- Financial

With regard to infrastructure, Local Development Plans are required to be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach. Plans should:

- be informed by evidence on infrastructure capacity, conditions, needs and deliverability, including cross boundary infrastructure,
- set out the infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy informed by the evidence base, identifying the infrastructure priorities, and where, how, when and by whom they will be delivered; and
- indicate the type, level (or method of calculation) and location of the financial or in-kind contributions, and the types of development from which they will be required.

Therefore, the site assessments will draw on infrastructure appraisals undertaken as part of the preparation of the Evidence Report and subsequent Proposed Plan, and other sources of data supplied by key agencies with regard to the following:

- Communications
- Transport Infrastructure
- Water management (water supply, drainage systems and flood risk)
- Heat Networks

- Energy supplies
- Health and Social Care
- Education
- Green and blue infrastructure
- Spaces for play and recreation
- Community facilities

Appendix 2 contains the details of the infrastructure criteria that will be considered in appraising sites.

Part 3: NPF4 Assessment

The third part of the methodology incorporates aspects of NPF4 considered most relevant to the site selection process. For example, whether the site will contribute towards delivery of national developments. It is not considered necessary to include the individual policies of NPF4 within the appraisal. Cognisance has been taken of the level of information which will be available for all sites during the appraisal process to allow a robust comparative assessment.

As part of a call for ideas the information required to be submitted for proposed sites will be set out.

Site selection

The outcome of the assessments will allow sites to be compared consistently against each other and those sites which score favourably to be considered further, in the context of the emerging LDP strategy. Site selection stage will examine the relationship between, and the cumulative impacts of sites at a strategic level.

Spatial Strategy Assessment

The spatial strategy for City Plan 2040 will be developed as part of the process of developing the proposed plan and will take account of the spatial aspects of NPF4, Local Place Plans, the existing spatial strategy along with any other relevant considerations.

Appraisal of sites, and the appropriate selection of a quantum of sites, will be based not only on their immediate environmental implications or deliverability/infrastructure requirements (as set out under this methodology?), but also on how they contribute to the resulting spatial strategy. However, this stage of assessment can only be carried out once a new draft spatial strategy has been prepared.

Sites will be assessed for alignment with the strategy but may also inform the spatial strategy, as a result of the data acquired through the site appraisal process itself.

Appendix 1: Part 1 Environmental Assessment – Utilising Strategic Environmental Assessment

NPF4 Policy Outcomes	Policy Ref	Criteria	Data Source
Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora			
Sustainable Places: Natural Places	4	Would site protect and or enhance the integrity of a European and/or national designated biodiversity site?	GIS Data: LDP proposals map
Sustainable Places: Biodiversity	4	Would the site protect and or enhance the integrity of local designated biodiversity sites or geodiversity sites or wider geodiversity interests?	GIS Data: LDP proposals map
Sustainable Places: Biodiversity	3	Would the site protect or enhance habitat features of value, or restore degraded habitats supporting ecological connectivity and strengthen nature networks?	GIS Data: LDP proposals map, CEC Habitat Map and CEC Nature Network Map
Sustainable Places: Biodiversity	3	Would the site protect and or enhance protected species?	GIS Data: Notifiable Species
Sustainable Places: Forestry, woodland and Trees	6	Would the site protect and or enhance ancient woodland, semi natural and long-established plantation woodland, native woodland or mature trees and hedgerows?	GIS Data: Ancient woodland Inventory, Native Woodland Survey of Scotland, CEC Habitat Map, LDP Proposals Map, Forestry and Woodland Strategy
Population and Health			
Liveable Places: Health and safety	23	Would the site be located away from a (e.g. SEPA regulated) site which would increase the population affected by nuisance (odour, noise), poor air quality	GIS Data: AQMAs and HSE

		or regulated hazard (e.g. gas pipeline, electricity pylons etc)?	
Liveable Places: Health and safety	23	Would the site have an impact on designated quiet areas or noise management areas?	GIS Data: Noise management areas and quiet areas
Sustainable Places: Sustainable transport	13	Would the site provide opportunities for active travel or recreation?	GIS Data: Active travel routes and safeguards
Liveable Places: Blue and Green infrastructure	20	Would the site provide opportunities for social interaction and inclusion?	Existing land use map
Liveable Places: Local Living and 20 min Neighbourhoods	15	Would the site promote local living by way of proximity to services/facilities?	Existing land use map
Soil			
Sustainable Places: Brownfield, vacant and derelict and empty buildings	9	Would the site be located on brownfield land?	Existing land use map
Sustainable Places: Brownfield, vacant and derelict and empty buildings	9	Would the site help decontaminate previously used land e.g. vacant/derelict/brownfield land?	GIS data: Vacant and derelict land
Sustainable Places: Soils	5	Would the site result in loss of prime agricultural land or carbon rich soil?	GIS data: Land capability maps
Sustainable Places: Soils	5	Would a site result in soil sealing?	Existing land use map
Water			

Liveable Places: Flood Risk and water management	22	Does the site protect and enhance the water status of major water bodies?	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
Liveable Places: Flood Risk and water management	22	Is the site at flood risk or reduce flood storage capacity?	GIS data: SEPA data
Liveable Places: Infrastructure First	18	Does the site cause waste water treatment capacity to be exceeded?	Scottish Water
Air and Climatic Factors			
Sustainable Places: Sustainable transport	13	Does the site provide good accessibility to public transport?	Public transport services heat mapping
Sustainable Places: Sustainable transport	13	Does the site provide good accessibility to active travel networks?	GIS data: Active travel routes and safeguards
Liveable Places: Health and safety	23	Does the site affect existing AQMAs and air quality?	GIS data: AQMAs
Liveable Places: Flood Risk and water management	22	Does the site prevent increased flooding or instability as a result of climate change?	SEPA: water catchment maps
Material Assets			
Liveable Places: Blue and Green infrastructure	20	Does the site result in the loss of/have adverse effects on open space?	Open space study
Liveable Places: Play, recreation and sport	21	Does the site provide access to open space, greenspace/recreational provision?	Open space study
Liveable Places: Blue and Green infrastructure	20	Does the site result in a loss/have adverse effects on green/blue infrastructure?	Open space study/existing land use map
Productive Places: Minerals	33	Does the site result in sterilisation of potential minerals?	Existing land use map
Cultural Heritage			
Sustainable Places: Historic assets and places	7	Does the site have significant effects on Listed buildings and their settings?	GIS data: Listed Buildings

Sustainable Places: Historic assets and places	7	Does the site have significant effects on scheduled monuments and their settings?	GIS data: Scheduled monuments
Sustainable Places: Historic assets and places	7	Does the site have significant effects on conservation areas?	GIS data: LDP proposals map
Sustainable Places: Historic assets and places	7	Does the site have significant effects on the outstanding value of the World Heritage Sites?	GIS data: LDP proposals map
Sustainable Places: Historic assets and places	7	Does the site have significant effects on Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes?	GIS data: LDP proposals map
Sustainable Places: Historic assets and places	7	Does the site have significant effects on non-designated heritage assets?	HES data/Council Archaeology service
Landscape and Townscape			
Sustainable Places: Natural Places	4	Does the site have significant effects on the landscape setting of the city or its townscape?	Landscape character appraisals
Sustainable Places: Green belts	8	Does the site enable clear and defensible green belt boundaries to be formed?	Landscape character appraisals/green belt review
Sustainable Places: Natural Places	4	Does the site have significant effects on the designated landscape areas?	GIS data: special landscape areas
Liveable Places: Blue and Green infrastructure	20	Does the site support the delivery of the green/blue network?	Open space study/existing land use maps, Green Blue Network Map, LDP Proposals

Appendix 2: Part 2 Deliverability and Infrastructure

Deliverability Factor	Criteria	Data source
Land use Status	Is housing the preferred use of the site?	Call for ideas/other marketing data
Ownership private	Is the site in the ownership of a party which can be expected to develop it or release it for development?	Call for ideas/other marketing data
Ownership public	Is the site in a disposal programme and being marketed?	CEC estates/other data
Physical conditions	Is the site or relevant part of it free from constraints related to: slope, aspect, flood risk, contamination, existing features including hazards establishments and substances, ground stability or access, which would preclude its development for housing?	Part 1 Environmental Assessment
Infrastructure	Is the site free from the following infrastructure constraints or can new infrastructure be provided to facilitate development?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications: digital and telecommunications 	Telecommunication mapping (external)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Infrastructure and services: existing or new 	Transport Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Management: supply, drainage and sewerage and flooding 	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Scottish Water and SEPA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat Networks: existing or new 	Heat network zone mapping
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy supplies/generation: distribution and transmission 	Scottish Power Energy Networks distribution and transmission network mapping (external)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and social care 	Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership GP capacity assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education 	Council Education appraisal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green and blue infrastructure 	Council Open Space Study/Existing land use map
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaces for plan and recreation 	Council Open Space Study/play sufficiency appraisal	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facilities 	Place profile mapping/Council records of community facilities and resources
Financial	<p>Are there wider economic matters likely to have impacts? Such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of finance, labour, expertise and materials • Deficit funding being committed from public sources • Marketability 	<p>Call for ideas Known committed funding sources Call for ideas</p>

Appendix 3: Part 3 NPF4 Assessment

NPF4	Criteria	Data Source
National Developments		
National Developments	Would development of the site contribute towards the delivery of National Developments?	NPF4
Does the LDP Strategy comply with NPF4 Spatial Principles?		
Just Transition	Facilitate transition to net zero fairly and inclusively?	GIS data: SMID maps
Conserving and recycling assets	Make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services?	Existing land use maps
	Locks in carbon and minimises waste and builds a circular economy?	Relates to proposal details including design not site.
Local Living	Ensures people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally?	GIS data: open space study, existing land use maps, community facilities etc
Compact urban growth	Limits urban expansion to optimise the use of land to provide services and resources, including carbon storage, flood risk management, blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity?	Existing land use maps
Rebalancing development	Creates opportunities for communities and investment in areas of decline?	GIS data: SMID maps
	Manages development sustainably in areas of high demand?	Relates to proposal density and therefore layout and design not site.
Does the LDP Strategy comply with NPF4 Regional Spatial Priorities for Central Region?		
Aim 1	Provides net zero energy solutions including extended heat networks and improved energy efficiency, together with urban greening and improved low carbon transport?	

Aim 2	Pioneers low carbon resilient urban living by rolling out networks of 20 minute neighbourhoods, future proofing city and town centres, accelerating urban greening, investing in net zero homes and managing development on the edge of settlements.	
Aim 3	Targets economic investment and builds community wealth to overcome disadvantages and support a greener wellbeing economy?	