

**COSSINGTON**  
**SUSTAINABLE SITE ASSESSMENT (SSA)**  
**October 2021**

**1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The parish council has always believed that meeting future housing need is a central element of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Undertaking a Sustainable Site Assessment (SSA) has allowed the comparison of potential housing land supply options and informed process. This has resulted in a positive decision to make a residential site allocation in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).
- 1.2 Through undertaking the SSA local people were involved in identifying the least environmentally damaging and therefore, the most sustainable locations for potential residential development. The approach used publicly available data including from the local authority Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), Natural England, the Environment Agency, Rowmaps and Googlemaps etc. A site visit has been undertaken to determine the locational context but the site itself has not been professionally surveyed in detail during the SSA.

**2. Overview**

- 2.1 One of the important objectives of the NDP is to set out the amount of residential development to meet local need and where this new residential development should be built to protect the parish from future large scale unsustainable development proposals. Undertaking a SSA is a proven technique to compare the different potential locations for new residential development and has been very successful in delivering residential sites in a large number of parishes.
- 2.2 The SSA process is a refinement and update of the findings of the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) sites reports published by Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) in 2020. To ensure that smaller, local sites were considered a local call for sites was undertaken by the parish council. This local call for sites generated an additional four locations in addition to the three SHELAA sites submitted to CBC, these seven sites were then assessed.
- 2.3 There is no additional housing target for Cossington in the adopted Local Plan as a large site for 70 units has already been allocated for residential use in that plan. Following full consideration of local housing need a site for about 8-10 units was sought.
- 2.4 This SSA report sets out how an independent consultant from YourLocale, a planning consultancy specialising in supporting communities to develop NDP's, worked with local people to appraise the residential site options.

**3. Involving land owners and site promoters**

- 3.1 CBC had prepared a SHELAA which identifies the potentially available sites put forward by landowners for residential development. The SHELAA in 2020 offered 3

sites and two of these were consulted upon as residential allocations in the CBC Local Plan.

- 3.2 A scoring matrix based upon the methodology supported by the National Planning Policy Frameworks (NPPF's) was agreed by NDP housing group members.

#### **4. Site Selection Criteria**

- 4.1 The initial site assessments were undertaken by Derek Doran BSc (Hons) MCIH MBA the Lead Associate from YourLocale to ensure that a professional approach based upon past experience of similar residential site assessments and to ensure a high level of objectivity and consistency in scoring.
- 4.2 The site 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 members of the parish council and it was then possible to initially rank each site in order of overall sustainability.
- 4.3 The policy position of CBC in terms of their assessment of the developability of the sites was a material consideration in the discussions of scoring and the informal planning opinion of CBC planning officers were sought and these responses affected the outcome of the process.
- 4.4 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. Again, as a result of the owners/agents comments the draft SSA reports were amended where additional factual information was provided.

#### **5. The Criteria and the RAG Scoring System**

- 5.1 The SHELAA methodology jointly agreed between the Local Planning Authorities (including CBC) 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.
- 5.2 Parish council members agreed twenty six scoring criteria that are relevant to the selection and allocation of sites for new dwellings using policy criteria from the National Planning Policy Frameworks.
- 5.3 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 but rejected as it would have been more complicated, less transparent to the community and could possibly be too subjective.
- 5.4 The following site assessment scoring matrix was used to compare each site in terms of overall developability.

**Table 1 – Sustainable Site Assessment (SSA) framework for Cossington**

<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Green</u></b>	<b><u>Amber</u></b>	<b><u>Red</u></b>
1. Site area and capacity (3 bed houses)	Small capacity up to 2 dwellings	Medium capacity of between 3-5 dwellings	Large capacity of 6 or more dwellings
2. Current Use	Vacant	Existing uses need to be relocated	Loss of important local asset
3. Adjoining Uses	Site wholly within LTD and no apparent land use issues	Site adjoining LTD and/or requires mitigation	Extending build outside LTD or unable to mitigate adjoining use
4. Topography/ground condition	Flat or gently sloping site	Undulating site or greater slope that can be mitigated	Severe slope that cannot be mitigated or unmade ground
5. Greenfield or Previously Developed Land	Previously developed land	Mixture of brownfield & greenfield land	Greenfield land
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 required	Site would harm or require removal of Ancient tree or hedge (or TPO)
9. Good Quality Agricultural Land ( Natural England classification)	Land classified 4 or 5 (poor and very poor)	Land classified 3 (good 3a to moderate 3b)	Land classified 1 or 2 ( Excellent and very good)
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. Local wildlife corridors affected	No harm	Less than substantial harm	Substantial harm
12. Listed (& local listed) building or important built assets and their setting	No harm to existing building	Less than substantial harm	Substantial harm

13. Impact on the Conservation Area(s) or their setting	No harm	Less than substantial harm	Substantial harm
14. A pavement access to and from the site	Existing pavement	No pavement but can be created	No potential for pavement
15. Impact on existing vehicular traffic	Impact in the parish minimal	Medium scale impact on the parish	Major impact in the parish
16. Adequate 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 designated village centre (war memorial)	Walking distance of 200m or less	Walking distance of 201-400m	Walking distance of greater than 401m
18. Distance to primary school entrance	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	Re-siting may not be possible
23. Any nuisance issues (Noise, light, odour?)	No nuisance issues	Mitigation may be necessary	Nuisance issues will be an ongoing concern
24. Any known contamination issues	No contamination issues	Minor mitigation required	Major mitigation required
25. Any known flooding issues	Site in flood zone 1	Site in flood zone 2 or flooded once in last 25 years	Site in flood zone 3 or flooded more than once in last 25 years
26. Any drainage issues.	No drainage issues identified.	Need for mitigation.	Need for substantial mitigation.

## 6. The SSA outcome

6.1 The SSA reports were considered at a number of meetings of the housing group of the NDP and the parish council 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 confirmed.

- 6.2 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. Most parties have responded to the draft SSA reports and correspondence with owners has taken place to ensure all matters have been considered.
- 6.3 The final SSA reports were then produced by YourLocale and adopted by the parish council.
- 6.4 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**

<b>Site Location &amp; units</b>	<b>HTG SCORE</b>	<b>Rank and outcome</b>
1. Rear reservoir house – 39 *	Red negative 1	Position third No further action.
2. Rear of Derry’s garden centre - 225	Red negative 6	Position fifth No further action.
2A Part of Derry’s site	Red negative 1	Position third No further action
3. Churchfield Meadow - 65	Red negative 9	Position eighth No further action.
4. Floodplain opposite Derry’s - 111	Red negative 8	Position seventh No further action.
5. Garden of Cossington Mill -12	Red negative 7	Position sixth No further action
<b>6. Field East of recreation ground – 12**</b>	<b>Green 4</b>	<b>Position first Allocate in the NDP</b>
7. Land West of Main Street - 54	Green 3	Position second No further action.

\* Owners would consider a smaller site area and yield.

\*\* The whole site could yield up to 20 units so a smaller land area will be allocated in the NDP.

- 6.5 The sites were assessed for residential suitability through a robust SSA process and the highest scoring site has been negotiated with site owners for inclusion in the NDP.
- 6.6 The parish council having considered all of the evidence have allocated the highest green scoring site for residential development;
- Land is allocated for the field East of the recreation ground for a maximum of 12 units of residential accommodation, at least five of which will be affordable units.