

Strictly embargoed until 9am on Mon 30th June

Study reveals suitable areas for new sustainable communities around Greater Nottingham

A report published today (30th June) outlines the areas where new sustainable communities could be built around Greater Nottingham.

The Government requires all local councils to identify areas where new housing could be built over the next 25 years as the population and the demand for housing continues to grow.

In the Greater Nottingham area local councils need to provide for around 60,000 new homes, although the exact numbers are not yet confirmed.

It is expected that over two-thirds of these homes could be accommodated in existing built up areas and on smaller sites that are already planned for. However, some new and larger sites are likely to be needed. The sites will need to be suitable to provide sustainable places for people to live. Developments may include new homes, schools and other services such as sports facilities, shops and doctors surgeries. Some of them will also have their own transport links and create new jobs.

The report, called the Sustainable Urban Extension Study, was commissioned by all the local councils in the Greater Nottingham area and carried out by independent planning consultants.

The consultants looked at the whole Greater Nottingham

area and have identified a number of possible locations for housing development, setting out the pros and cons of each site. The study recommends that some areas are ruled out for reasons such as environmental sensitivity, heritage, risk of flooding and transport and congestion.

No decisions have been taken at this stage about where housing may be built. The relevant local council will make these decisions following consultation with residents and other stakeholders.

It is highly unlikely that all the areas identified in the report would be developed because almost double the amount of land that may be needed has been identified.

Ken Rigby, of Broxtowe Borough Council, chair of the Joint Planning Advisory Board, said: "The report was jointly commissioned by all the local councils in the Greater Nottingham area.

"I am pleased that the report represents an independent view of potential areas for development that has not been influenced by outside sources.

"This information, together with work being undertaken to identify available land in urban areas, will enable Councils to begin preparation of their local housing plans and consult with their residents. Local councils will be working together to ensure that the need for new housing is addressed across the conurbation."

The areas identified in the report could, altogether, accommodate between 25 and 40 thousand homes. The sites are:

Site	Approx size in Hectares	Local Authority
Top Wighay Farm, Hucknall	85	Gedling
North of Papplewick Lane, Hucknall	15	Gedling
Rolls-Royce, Hucknall	20	Ashfield
Whyburn House Farm, Hucknall	180	Ashfield
North of Redhill, Arnold	45	Gedling
Edwalton	60	Rushcliffe
Clifton Pastures	250	Rushcliffe
Between Toton and Stapleford	55	Broxtowe
Toton Sidings	20	Broxtowe
North of Stapleford	190	Broxtowe
West of Ilkeston	60	Erewash
Stanton Ironworks, Ilkeston	240	Erewash

Ends

Notes to Editors:

The report, "Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions" is available from 30th June on Nottinghamshire County Council's Web Site:
<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/regionalspatialstrategy.htm>

The report was commissioned by Ashfield District, Broxtowe Borough, Gedling Borough, Nottingham City, Rushcliffe Borough, Erewash Borough and Nottinghamshire County Councils.

Nottingham Regeneration Ltd were employed to project manage the study.

The report will form part of an evidence base for the authorities' joint working in preparing their Local Development Frameworks.

Local authorities are required to prepare Local Development Frameworks that will indicate the areas of land allocated for development. These documents, subject to full public consultation and then public inquiry, are where decisions are made on where housing (and employment and other land uses) should be built.

The Regional Spatial Strategy is otherwise known as the Regional Plan, and is awaiting proposed changes from the Secretary of State, following an Examination-in-Public in June 2007. This is expected to set out suggested house building rates for each district.

FAQs

Why is this study needed?

The East Midlands Regional Plan (or Regional Spatial Strategy) will set out the Government's intention for how much housing is needed to accommodate the expected population across Greater Nottingham. Although it is not yet finalised, a draft version of the Plan indicates that more housing will be needed than the local authorities have currently been able to plan for.

In addition, the authorities are currently assessing how much housing can be built on other sites already known about. This study helps to complete the picture to prepare for the decisions that have to be made.

What has happened to the '22 sites' mentioned at the beginning of this work?

Those 22 sites were sites that the local authorities had to bring to the attention of the consultants, as they had previously been suggested for development, mainly by private developers. They amounted to a lot more land than might be needed eventually. Some of those sites fall within the areas now recommended as suitable for development. Others, while the study has not recommended them, will still need to be considered through the local authorities' LDF process, including the public consultation.

How did the consultants do their work?

The consultants used a process they have used elsewhere in the country and which had proved a robust basis for assessment, splitting the study into two parts.

They first of all, in Part A of the study, identified 'Directions for Growth' all around the conurbation. From these, they identified areas that had some potential (or none) for further investigation.

Each Direction for Growth was assessed against criteria to establish suitability for development. The consultants used a wide factual evidence base that was fully referenced and sourced. The results were checked with the responsible bodies, for example the Environment and Highways Agencies.

The criteria first established was to eliminate the land that was environmentally not suitable for development no matter what the remaining criteria indicated (e.g. flood risk). The rest below were applied to all remaining areas:

- Infrastructure capacity and potential
- Geoenvironmental considerations
- Transport and accessibility
- Housing affordability
- Economic development
- Regeneration potential
- Green Belt and/or strategic policy

From this, Part B used a similar process to define the most suitable sites for development within each Direction for Growth, adding more site-specific issues to be taken into account. In Part B, information from site visits by the consultant team is included for the first time. Other useful sources include the various local planning documents that cover each site, including local plans, and Inspectors' reports. In order to maintain neutrality

of the study, information submitted by developers, landowners, and local authorities, whether seeking to promote their own sites or discounting alternative sites, was not used.

This is the first document to deal with **all** potential sites consistently across the entire study area rather than sites in isolation or within only one local authority.

The result is a comprehensive analysis of the area, with robust and traceable reasoning for the resulting table of sites that are considered appropriate for sustainable development.

How many homes will be built in each of the areas identified?

We do not know yet, possibly none, possibly the maximum suggested by the consultants. The consultants have presented their findings in terms of ranges of numbers that might be accommodated on the whole of the recommended sites. The study report gives full details.

What happens next? When will decisions be made about where the new homes will be built?

There will be a period for the report to be considered, and its recommendations tested. Following that, some options will be prepared which accommodate the overall housing numbers needed in the wider area. These will be consulted upon and the public will get an opportunity to comment. This is likely to be by the end of the year.

Who will make the decisions?

The Local Authorities will decide as part of their plan-making. The first stage of this will be a joint process, with agreement hopefully between all the authorities involved.

It is up to the local authorities, working jointly, to advise on an approach for the whole of Greater Nottingham, The local authority will later decide on the best solution for each particular area in its individual Local Development Framework.

Have politicians, the public, developers or others influenced the Study?

No, The Study is entirely technical and impartial.

Will the public have a say? Can I comment on the report?

The Public will be able to comment as part of the local planning process to prepare the Local Development

Framework. There will be a separate public consultation for the joint approach, and later, for each individual authority. Later still a planning application will be needed for every site allocated in a plan. The local authorities have made the report public now, although the right time to comment on it will be when the public consultation takes place on the Local Development Frameworks. There will be notices in all the local press when this happens. Any comments made up to now, or before then will be put on record until that time.

As part of the statutory planning process, the councils have to undertake wide ranging public consultation before preferred options for development are chosen. At the preferred options stage it will be clear which sites can be ruled out of the process and which sites require further consideration. There will be two stages where the councils' joint, and then individual core strategies will be subject to consultant and a Public Examination presided over by an Independent Government Inspector.

What is a 'sustainable urban extension' and 'sustainable development'? Does this mean building new road, schools, bus services etc?

Yes. It will be very important that the appropriate services and infrastructure are provided, to make the areas both pleasant areas to live, and sustainable.

Sustainable development is intended to reduce the impact of the development as much as possible, even potentially, to make it more 'carbon neutral'. People will be encouraged by the design of the areas to use cars less, to work closer to home. The quality of life in these areas will be improved as a result. They will also contribute to making the whole of Greater Nottingham more sustainable.

Who has decided that 60,000 new homes are needed?

The Regional Assembly, which has representation by all the local authorities, voluntary and business organisations, has prepared the Regional Plan. In doing so it recognises the Government's intention to provide a home for everyone who needs one, backed up by careful projection of the needs of the population. This was done for the Wider Nottingham area (known as the Nottingham Core Housing Market Area).

What about increased levels of traffic?

It is important that detailed traffic assessments are carried out for every area recommended in this study. They will be a later stage of the process. This will

certainly include the need to improve public transport and minimise traffic problems.

Are These 'SUEs' ECO-towns?

No, Eco-towns are free-standing and remote from the City. These developments are intended to have the same approach as Eco-Towns, however, by reducing their Carbon Footprint and creating places where people may live and work with reduced impact on the environment.

What is the County Council's role?

The County Council has jointly commissioned this work along with the City and District Councils. The County Council assists the Regional Assembly in preparing the Regional Plan (or Regional Spatial Strategy - RSS) and therefore has a role in ensuring that the Regional Plan is implemented. Part of this includes joining together with districts and the City to ensure the work is co-ordinated.

What is the district, borough, city role?

The City and District Councils have jointly commissioned this work along with the County Council. The districts have a responsibility for local planning (known as Local Development Frameworks, or LDFs) which sets out how their areas should develop over the next 15-20 years. Amongst other things they have to identify land for housing, to accommodate the number of houses that the Regional Plan indicates need to be built.

What is Nottingham Regeneration Ltd (NRL) and what was its role?

NRL is the urban regeneration company for Greater Nottingham. NRL manages the City of Nottingham's regeneration areas and regeneration in the wider city region of Greater Nottingham. It was set up as a public/private partnership in 1998, Nottingham City Council, East Midlands Development Agency, English Partnerships and members of the private sector are on its board.

NRL has managed the process for the Local Authorities, acting as consultants and project managers. Their officers have taken their instructions for this work from a Local Authority steering group.

How were the consultants chosen?

There was an open competitive tender for the work under local authority procedures. Three highly reputable consultants firms were interviewed.