SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOUTH HAMS URBAN HOUSING CAPACITY STUDY

NOVEMBER 2001

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Introduction

1. The latest government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (PPG3), revised 2000, changed the emphasis of housing studies away from Housing Land Availability Studies to Urban Capacity Studies. All local planning authorities should undertake an urban housing capacity study. This study was carried out during the preparation of the review of the South Hams Local Plan. The purpose of this study is to establish how much additional housing can be accommodated within urban areas in order to reduce the need for greenfield land.

2. The urban housing capacity study for the South Hams has been carried out in accordance with the government's best practice guide, 'Tapping the Potential - Assessing Urban Housing Capacity: Towards Better Practice', DETR 2000. It has examined the potential of land within the district's Area Centres and Local Centres to accommodate housing development. It has sought to quantify the likely contribution from various sources of capacity as set out in 'Tapping the Potential' and provide an estimate of the number of dwellings likely to be achieved within 5, 10 and 15 year periods.

General Principles

3. The Government is committed "to maximising the re-use of previously-developed land and empty properties and the conversion of non-residential buildings for housing, in order both to promote regeneration and minimise the amount of greenfield land being taken for development" (PPG3 para. 22). The national target is that by 2008, 60% of new homes should be built on previously-developed land and through conversions of existing buildings.

4. The South West Region has a land recycling target of 50% to contribute to achieving the national target. At a local level, the South Hams Local Plan Review Deposit version (January 2002) aims to achieve a 30% housing land recycling target for the plan period 1995-2011. This target is much lower than the national and regional targets, but the Plan states, "the need to advance such large scale greenfield development to meet the needs of Plymouth will make the achievement of a 30% target very challenging". The last 5 year average of percentage of new units completed on previously developed land is 40%, which is high for a rural area. This rate cannot be maintained in the face of the scale of housing development required in South Hams by the Structure Plan.

5. Urban Capacity Studies are an essential part of the development plan process and should underpin the process of planning for housing. Essentially, the studies are designed to identify potential housing sites within urban areas which are previously-developed land, to help achieve the recycling targets. If urban capacity studies are to influence change, they need to identify the possible constraints that exist in order that potential capacity may be unlocked, and identify provision from all sources.

6. Sustainability should be at the heart of the study process. The primary aim is to develop residential areas that promote sustainable living patterns. This is unlikely to be achieved by considering the physical potential of an urban area alone (i.e. where there is physically space for development). Whilst it is essential that local planning

authorities promote the most efficient use of land, urban capacity studies should also consider the quality of life in urban areas. A greater emphasis should be placed on quality and design to create places where people will want to live. These places should also have a greener environment, be within walking distance of local facilities, and have links with public transport.

Key Objectives

7. The study addresses all of the sources of capacity identified in the best practice guide, 'Tapping the Potential', in order to achieve the following outputs (the capacity sources are listed in Annex 2):-

- a list of potential housing development sites;
- an appraisal of sites to identify any possible sustainability, environmental or economic constraints;
- an assessment of the viability and potential housing yield of sites, taking into account the identified constraints associated with them;
- an understanding of the likely timescale for the development or redevelopment of these sites, including potential constraints which will need to be overcome.

8. 'Tapping the Potential' highlights the importance of transparency to the study process. The study should be easily understood and demonstrate that it has been rigorous in its approach. A brief for the South Hams Urban Housing Capacity Study was produced by the Council in July 2001, setting out the study methodology. A number of organisations/bodies who expressed an interest in the South Hams UCS were consulted on this brief. The Council received a number of comments and where possible these have been taken on board.

Methodology

9. The survey methodology to assessing the urban capacity is consistent with that set out in 'Tapping the Potential' and has four main stages:

i) identifiying and listing the capacity sources;
ii) surveying and quantifying the capacity;
iii) assessing the potential unconstrained housing yield;
iv) discounting the potential to provide an assessment of the constrained capacity.

i) Identifying the Capacity Sources

10. The study includes the district's Area and Local Centres (see Annex 1). These are those towns and larger villages that may be considered for housing development in the local plan review and could contribute to sustainable patterns of development. The extent of the survey area for each settlement is the land within the defined development boundaries as shown on the Insets of the Local Plan adopted in 1996. This study does not address rural windfall potential capacity which exists in the rural areas of the district outside the Area and Local Centres. The Council has undertaken a separate analysis of rural windfalls.

11. After establishing the areas of search, the sources of capacity were identified largely in accordance with the 11 sources included in 'Tapping the Potential' Annex 2.

ii) Surveying the Capacity

12. Having identified the different sources of housing capacity and the areas to be included in the study, the next step was to quantify each of these individual sources. The opportunities for provision from each source were examined using a variety of techniques, chosen according to the nature of the source and the type of information already available. The techniques that were used are shown in Annex 2.

13. The Study was based on a comprehensive study of all existing information sources, including sites with planning permission not yet started and areas of known potential. A desk top exercise was undertaken at the outset using the Council's residential land availability data, the National Land Use Database (NLUD), aerial photography, map-based information, local knowledge and previous local plan survey work before carrying out the site survey work.

14. The National Land Use Database (NLUD) South Hams returns for 1999 were based on the residential land availability (RLA) records. No site survey or additional research above and beyond that related to the RLA process was used in putting together the NLUD returns. Therefore, in relation to the urban capacity study, NLUD has been of limited use, however, in compiling the desk top background data, RLA have been extensively used and in doing so an analysis of the NLUD element has been undertaken.

iii) Assessing the Potential Unconstrained Housing Yield

15. Having addressed each capacity source, through site survey and residential land availability past trend data, the next stage assessed the number of units that could be accommodated through each source (i.e. the unconstrained potential capacity). The unconstrained housing capacity of an area is the theoretical total number of dwellings that it could accommodate if all the identified potential capacity was developed optimally. The sites which were identified through the site survey as having opportunities for additional housing, were entered into the Council's Geographical Information System (GIS) and measured. With site measurements, a range of capacity estimates were produced, based on low, medium and high densities (30, 40 and 50 dwellings per hectare respectively), in line with the development standards set out in PPG3.

16. Where potential capacity was identified through past trend data it was only possible to estimate a constrained yield. The unconstrained potential capacity of some sources is unknown and would be very difficult to calculate. Therefore, a constrained yield for these sources was estimated by calculating the annual average number of dwellings completed from these sources over the last 9 years and then multiplying the average by 5, 10 and 15 to produce an estimated yield from each source for the 5, 10 and 15 year time period.

iv) Discounting the Potential to Provide an Assessment of the Constrained Capacity

17. The final part of the study looked at how much of this unconstrained capacity identified through the site survey, could be brought forward over 5, 10 and 15 years. This was undertaken by applying discounting measures to produce an informed estimate of the proportion of the unconstrained capacity that can realistically be

expected to come forward and be developed. This procedure goes beyond the identification of sites, and involves an appraisal of their potential considering different development options, physical constraints, policy scenarios and planning history.

18. Where discounting has been necessary the following general principles have been applied:

- Developability - Not all the yield from sites identified as suitable for housing, is likely to be realised. Factors that will determine the release or timing of release of sites will include:

  i) willingness of an owner to release the site;
  ii) infrastructure capacity, including the provision of access.

- Market viability - this will be affected by a range of factors including national and local planning policies.
- Local character - this will be taken into account particularly when considering capacity sources such as conversions and intensification in conservation areas where further development should take place without any effect on their character.
- Planning policy and standards - these will affect capacity in several ways; for example through employment policy which safeguards land for employment use and through parking standards, overlooking distances, etc.

These discounting principles were applied to each site identified to determine the realistic capacity that is expected to come forward. This assessment reflected professional judgement based on experience and local knowledge.

Study Findings

19. As explained in the methodology above, a variety of techniques were used to identify the housing capacity of each source. In summary, there were two key techniques: one focussing on site survey and the other using past trend data. An extensive site survey was undertaken to address the following sources:

- Previously-developed, vacant and derelict land and buildings (non-housing).
- Intensification of existing areas.
- Redevelopment of car parks.
- Conversion of commercial buildings.
- Vacant land not previously developed.

20. Past trend data was used to establish the potential capacity through the following sources:

- Subdivision of existing housing.
- Flats over shops.
- Redevelopment of existing housing.

21. Of the three remaining categories 'Empty homes' was addressed through Council Tax data, 'Review of existing housing allocations in plans' and 'Review of other existing allocations in plans' were almost negligible since there are very few

allocations that remain undeveloped within the existing plan. However, the few allocations that do remain were considered through the site survey.

i) Site Survey Results

22. Nine settlements (Area Centres and Local Centres) were surveyed during summer 2001 and a proforma was completed for each site identified including details of existing use, site area and potential capacity (a copy of the proforma is provided at Annex 3). The survey considered the scope for intensification of existing areas through infill and redevelopment. It identified a number of backland areas which were used as garage courts or large gardens, redevelopment of existing housing at higher densities and development of plots not currently in residential use. However, the difficulties in developing some areas were recognised - in particular, backland areas where site assembly could be a constraint or where any development would require the cooperation of more than the landowner or where it could require the demolition of property to gain access.

23. The survey also sought to identify other potential capacity sources including the redevelopment or conversion of land currently occupied by commercial uses, and the conversion of barns, mills and warehouses. The conversion of more modern office space was also considered but this source of capacity is not expected to yield many units since the current local plan policies seek to retain such uses in employment use.

24. Almost all of the settlements surveyed have Conservation Areas. Although this status does not exclude housing development, it is an important constraint. Significant additional capacity was not found in the Conservation Areas although it is assumed that there could be some scope for additional conversion activity.

25. The survey work identified 113 sites with potential unconstrained capacity. The sites which were identified included sites which currently have planning permission, sites with potential capacity for housing or, in very few cases, sites which are allocated for housing. After applying the discounting measures, 32 of these were considered to be realistic and likely to come forward for development over the next 15 years. Table 1 shows the results of the site survey work which examined four of the capacity sources (excluding car parks). It shows that there is an unconstrained housing capacity over 15 years of 3,382 units if developed at a high density of 50 dwellings per hectare, and a constrained capacity of 482 units. Taking a 5, 10 and 15 year time period, the realistic capacity is estimated to yield 115 units over 5 years, a further 239 in 10 years and a further 128 units in 15 years.

26. A larger number of sites were discounted, therefore the constrained capacity is significantly lower than the unconstrained capacity. The discounting process reflected professional judgement based on past transfers to residential use and assumptions on further land use requirements. For example, some identified sites were discounted because there would be an overwhelming environmental objection to the development of housing. A large number of potential sites identified are currently in employment use. These sites were discounted from the study because the Council has a local plan policy to protect land in employment use since there is a limited supply of employment opportunities across the district. Sites were discounted on the basis that they would result in the loss of important open space. A few sites were also discounted because they were found to be within a flood plain.

ii) Car Parks Site Survey Results

27. Table 2 shows the results of the public car park site survey work. It shows that if all the public car parks identified were developed at a high density (50 dwellings per ha), the unconstrained capacity would be 277 units. However, due to the rural nature of the district and the degree of reliance placed on the motor car, car parks are considered to be an essential facility. In some towns, especially Dartmouth and Salcombe car parking is particularly a problem especially through the summer months. Therefore, the potential yield from this source of capacity is limited. It is estimated that 15 dwellings could come forward over 15 years through the development of a town centre car park site in Ivybridge.

iii) Analysis of Past Trends

28. Past trends from the Council's residential land availability records have been analysed to estimate the future yield which is likely to come forward. This analysis was primarily undertaken to investigate the capacity of three sources:

    i) subdivision of existing housing;
    ii) flats over shops;
    iii) redevelopment of existing housing.

29. The results of the past trend data analysis is shown in Table 3, however, the Council's data is recorded by categories that are not easily matched with the three sources above. The Council has monitored the sub-division of existing housing. The sub-division of larger houses to flats has traditionally been an important source of dwellings within the urban areas. Flats over shops have not been separately monitored and any units completed through this source would be entered in the conversions/change of use category. The Council has also monitored the redevelopment of sites, but this has included employment and commercial sites, as well as residential areas.

30. Despite the disparities in categories, all of the data monitored by the Council has been included in the study to provide an accurate picture of the potential capacity. However, it is not possible to quantify the potential capacity of each source individually. The results show that if past trends continue, over 15 years a further 489 units could come forward from the redevelopment of sites and 60 units could be provided within the grounds of residential properties (i.e. on gardens).

31. Table 4 provides a summary of the results of the Urban Capacity Study. It is recognised that there is likely to be a diminishing supply of urban windfall sites, and therefore it is assumed that between 70-75% of the former past trends will actually continue to come forward. It shows that the study has identified a potential constrained capacity of 1,272 dwellings over 15 years of which there is capacity for 882 additional dwellings within the 10 year plan period. The past trend data analysis produces the highest yield of over 750 dwellings which could come forward over the next 15 years through the redevelopment of sites and conversions. Public car parks are only estimated to yield around a 15 dwellings in 15 years.

32. Although the site survey exercise identified an unconstrained capacity of 3,382 through considering previously developed, vacant land and buildings, intensification

and opportunities for the conversion of commercial buildings, these sources are only estimated to yield 482 dwellings in 15 years. This reflects the nature of the settlements, which include relatively small rural towns and villages with very little disused land and buildings. There is limited scope for infill and the potential for redevelopment (of non-housing land uses) is also limited because of the importance and requirement to retain land in other uses, such as employment.

Conclusion

33. The results of the Urban Capacity Study indicate that the identified capacity within the Area Centres and Local Centres is 882 dwellings over the 10 year plan period. This broadly accords with the Council's previous estimates for urban windfalls over the plan period.

34. The Devon Structure Plan divides the South Hams between the "Plymouth Area of Economic Activity (PAEA) and "Elsewhere". For statistical purposes the PAEA is defined as the six parishes of Bickleigh, Brixton, Ermington, Ivybridge, Sparkwell and Yealmpton. The remainder of the district falls within the area defined as "Elsewhere". 732 dwellings have been identified in the Urban Capacity Study as likely to come forward on urban sites in the "Elsewhere" part of the district, outside the PAEA. Within the PAEA only 150 dwellings urban sites are estimated as likely to come forward within the plan period.

35. The results of the Urban Capacity Study should be used to inform the local plan process and consideration should be given to the policy implications, such as land allocations. The local plan should aim to maximise the potential of urban capacity through setting new development standards. For example, improved design and layout, densities and car parking standards can assist in achieving higher yields and maximising the land recycling targets.

Table 1

Results of Site Survey Work to Examine 4 of the Capacity Sources
- **Previously-developed, vacant land and buildings (non-housing).**
- **Intensification of existing areas.**
- **Conversion of commercial buildings.**
- **Vacant land not previously developed.**

Settlement	***Unconstrained Capacity (dwellings)***	***Constrained Capacity over 5, 10 and 15 years (dwellings)***		
		5	**10**	**15**
Stokenham/ Chillington	90	0	8	13
Dartmouth	365	14	55	55
Ivybridge	586	0	15	15
Kingsbridge	594	63	116	153
Modbury	271	19	54	76
Salcombe	350	19	19	29
Totnes	907	0	22	76
Yealmpton	145	0	8	8
Woolwell	74	0	57	57
TOTAL	**3,382**	**115**	**354**	**482**

Table 2

Results of Site Survey Work to Examine One of the Capacity Sources - Redevelopment of Car Parks

Settlement	*Unconstrained Capacity (dwellings)*	*Constrained Capacity over 5, 10 and 15 years (dwellings)*		
		5	**10**	**15**
Stokenham/ Chillington	0	0	0	0
Dartmouth	33	0	0	0
Ivybridge	63	0	15	15
Kingsbridge	58	0	0	0
Modbury	0	0	0	0
Salcombe	14	0	0	0
Totnes	109	0	0	0
Yealmpton	0	0	0	0
Woolwell	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**277**	**0**	**15**	**15**

Table 3

Analysis of Past Trends Data Incorporating Three of the Capacity Sources
- **Sub-division of existing housing**
- **Flats over shops**
- **Redevelopment of existing housing**

Settlement	***Sub Division***			***Conversions/ Change of Use***			***Barn Conversions***			***Redevelopments***			***New Dwellings Built in Residential Gardens***		
Potential Yield over 5, 10 and 15 Years	**5**	**10**	**15**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**5**	**10**	**15**
Stokenham/ Chillington	1	1	2	2	3	5	3	6	9	1	1	2	0	0	0
Dartmouth	6	11	17	15	30	45	1	1	2	45	89	134	2	4	6
Ivybridge	1	2	3	17	34	51	0	0	0	17	33	50	2	4	6
Kingsbridge	7	14	21	20	39	59	0	0	0	39	77	116	6	12	18
Modbury	2	3	5	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	4	6	1	2	3
Salcombe	5	10	15	20	39	59	0	0	0	4	7	11	4	8	12
Totnes	6	12	18	65	130	195	2	4	6	57	113	170	4	8	12
Yealmpton	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Woolwell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**28**	**53**	**81**	**141**	**278**	**419**	**7**	**12**	**19**	**165**	**324**	**489**	**20**	**40**	**60**

Table 4

Summary of Urban Capacity Study Results (incorporating results of tables 1, 2 and 3)

Settlement	*Potential Constrained Capacity over 5, 10 and 15 years*									*Total Potential Constrained Capacity over 5, 10 and 15 years*		
	Site Survey (Table 1)			*Car Parks (Table 2)*			*Past Trends (Table 3) Assuming 70-75% will come forward*					
	5	**10**	**15**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**5**	**10**	**15**
Stokenham/ Chillington	0	8	13	0	0	0	5	8	13	5	16	26
Dartmouth	14	55	55	0	0	0	50	98	148	64	153	203
Ivybridge	0	15	15	0	15	15	27	53	80	27	83	110
Kingsbridge	63	116	153	0	0	0	52	103	155	115	219	308
Modbury	19	54	76	0	0	0	5	9	14	24	63	90
Salcombe	19	19	29	0	0	0	24	46	70	43	65	99
Totnes	0	22	76	0	0	0	97	194	291	97	216	367
Yealmpton	0	8	8	0	0	0	1	2	4	1	10	12
Woolwell	0	57	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	57	57
TOTAL	**115**	**354**	**482**	**0**	**15**	**15**	**261**	**513**	**775**	**376**	**882**	**1,272**

ANNEX 1

The Settlements included in the Urban Capacity Study

SETTLEMENT	***POPULATION (2000 PARISH ESTIMATE)***
Area Centre	
Dartmouth	5,766
Ivybridge	12,210
Kingsbridge	5,772
Totnes	8,058
Local Centre	
Modbury	1,684
Salcombe	2,101
Stokenham/Chillington	2,090
Woolwell	3,500
Yealmpton	1,986

ANNEX 2

Tabulating the Capacity Sources

CAPACITY SOURCE	*SURVEY APPROACH*
Subdivision of existing housing	South Hams RLA/NLUD records and use of 'yardsticks'.
Flats over shops	Use 'yardsticks' based on previous trends (from RLA/NLUD records)
Empty homes	Council tax data and 1991 Census
Previously-developed, vacant and derelict land and buildings (non housing)	Aerial photography records, RLA/NLUD records, desk-top plans and site survey work.
Intensification of existing areas	Site survey work
Redevelopment of existing housing	RLA/NLUD records and site survey work
Redevelopment of car parks	Desk-top study and site survey work
Conversion of commercial buildings	Use of 'yardsticks' and site survey work
Review of existing housing allocations in plans	Site survey work
Review of other existing allocations in plans	Site survey work
Vacant land not previously developed.	Aerial photography records, desk-top plans and site survey work.

Key:

RLA - Residential Land Availability
NLUD - National Land Use Database

ANNEX 3

URBAN CAPACITY 2001 SURVEY RECORD SHEET

SETTLEMENT: ***SITE REF:***

SITE LOCATION: ***MAP REF:***

AREA (HA):

SURVEY DATE:

SITE DESCRIPTION:

CAPACITY SOURCE:

Subdivision of existing housing	☐	Redevelopment of car parks	☐
Flats over shops	☐	Conversion of commercial buildings	☐
Empty houses	☐	Review of existing housing allocations in plans	☐
Previously-developed, vacant & derelict land & buildings(non housing)	☐	Review of other existing allocations in plans	☐
Intensification of existing areas	☐		
Redevelopment of existing houses	☐	Vacant land not previously developed	☐

UNCONSTRAINED DENSITY (i.e. high density - 50 dwellings per hectare): ☐

OPPORTUNITIES/CONSTRAINTS (e.g. Policy Issues, DB, access, etc.):

MARKET VIABILITY:

DISCOUNT: YES ☐ NO ☐

CONSTRAINED CAPACITY:

Potential Density (Dwellings)

High (50 per ha): ☐ Medium (40 per ha): ☐ Low (30 per ha): ☐

Potential Yield (Dwellings): ☐

TIME BAND: 5 Years: ☐ 10 Years: ☐ 15 Years: ☐

REQUIREMENTS TO ACHIEVE A HIGHER YIELD:

CONCLUSION (Suitability of site, yield/period for inclusion):