



Alternative Site Assessment Guidance

This guidance seeks to assist applicants and planning officers in understanding the purpose of and process for undertaking an Alternative Site Assessment (ASA) to support a planning application in the context of inappropriate waste management development in the Green Belt.

What is an Alternative Site Assessment?

The purpose of an ASA is to support a planning application for inappropriate waste management development in the Green Belt by identifying the most appropriate site for the development, and demonstrating that all other suitable and available land outside of the Green Belt has been properly considered and discounted in selecting the application site.

Essentially an ASA should: (1) establish and justify the area in which it is appropriate to search for an alternative site; (2) set out the search criteria to assess potential sites against; and (3) evaluate the suitability of alternative sites using objective weighting criteria. The ASA should be sequential in nature and focus on non-Green Belt land before considering other alternative sites within the Green Belt. It should also be proportionate to the nature and scale of the development proposed.

required?

The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) explains that the Government attaches great importance to the Green Belt. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open (paragraph 133). Paragraph 143 of the NPPF establishes a presumption against inappropriate waste management development in the Green Belt¹ because it

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Policy 9 of the Surrey Waste Local Plan 2020 (SWLP) states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate waste development in the Green Belt, unless it is shown that very special circumstances exist. It states that ¶HU\ VSHFLDO FLUXPVWDQFHV¶ ZLOO QR
harm caused to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposal is clearly outweighed by other considerations associated with the proposal, either on their own or in combination. This policy approach is consistent with paragraph 144 of the NPPF

The preamble to Policy 9 explains that the following considerations may contribute to very special circumstances:

1. The lack of suitable non-Green Belt sites;
2. The need to find locations well related to the source of waste arisings;
3. The characteristics of the waste development including the scale and type of facility;
4. The wider environmental and economic benefits of sustainable waste management, including the need for a range of sites;
5. The site is identified as suitable for waste development under Policy 10 or Policy 11 of the SWLP;

catchment area it may also be relevant to consider sites in neighbouring counties, which will also need to form part of the identification and assessment of sites and will contribute to the development of a robust ASA.

2) Initial Site Identification

This stage of investigation should commence with an identification of a

Criteria	Considerations (See Appendix B of NPPW for further information)
	managed particularly if night-time working is involved. Potential light pollution effects also need to be considered.
Litter	Can be of concern at some waste management facilities
Potential land use conflict	Likely proposed development in the vicinity of the location under consideration should be taken into account in considering the site suitability.

3a) Scoring and site ranking

To rationalise the list of sites a scoring or ranking exercise should be undertaken, using objective weighting criteria (for example, those set out above) to score/rank each site.

Example 1 ±Site scoring

This scoring system is based on the degree of difficulty in overcoming a particular constraint by mitigation or design rather than how the constraint is measured against other constraints. The site

4) Site Preference and Deliverability

The final stage of the evaluation process should comprise of an overview of the identified alternative sites and the preferred option. An individual assessment should be provided for each site identified, which is likely to be informed by a site visit, and details of the availability of the site for development should also be discussed.

Overview of document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to applicants and agents on the preparation of an Alternative Site Assessment, the advice contained within this document does not prejudice, nor is binding upon, any future decision taken by Surrey County Council or its Planning Committee.

This document will be regularly monitored and subject to periodic review.

Should you have any feedback or questions relating to this document and the information contained please contact our Technical Support Team on 020 8541 9897 or mwcd@surreycc.gov.uk