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AMBULANCE  
CHIEF EXECUTIVES**

# **Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Areas**

**A Guide to the Identification, Inspection and  
Establishment of Multi-Agency Strategic Holding  
Areas**

Produced by: Representatives from the Fire and Rescue Service, Police Service and Ambulance Service.

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## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	4
<b>Chapter 1</b> Introduction and Context	6
<b>Chapter 2</b> The Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area Process	9
<b>Chapter 3</b> Identification of Potential Locations	10
<b>Chapter 4</b> Inspection and Reporting Process	12
<b>Chapter 5</b> Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area plan	14
<b>Chapter 6</b> Establishment of a Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area in an emergency	16
<b>Annexes</b>	
Annex A Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area Site Specific Inspection Questionnaire	21
Annex B Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area Site Specific Plan	32

## Executive Summary

This document seeks to set out a common approach to the identification, inspection and establishment of Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Areas (MASHAs) to assist in the coordination of a multi-agency response at national major incidents.

A MASHA is a pre-identified space which is large enough to accommodate and coordinate the logistical support structures of all emergency services and agencies required for a national response. It is recognised that single agency Strategic Holding Areas (SHAs) have already been identified by individual emergency services, in conjunction with Local Resilience Forums, throughout England, and in some areas Multi-Agency SHAs have also been identified. This guide has been developed to support and embed the multi-agency process which will enable a consistent approach to identifying, inspecting and establishing MASHAs across the country.

Adopting and implementing a multi-agency process will enhance further existing emergency preparedness arrangements and make best use of resources, avoid duplication and achieve common standards.

Emergency planners involved in any aspect of the MASHA process, in particular representatives from the Police, Fire & Rescue and Ambulance Services, should use this document to support them in the development of flexible and scalable MASHA plans. Joint working, within and between the emergency services, in conjunction with the Local Resilience Forum when developing MASHA plans enables all emergency responders, along with other partners, to work efficiently and effectively with one another when responding to an incident.

This document is designed to:

- set out and support the process of identifying suitable multi-agency strategic holding areas;
- assist in the inspection and reporting process of multi-agency strategic holding areas; and
- provide guidance and templates for developing a site specific plan.

This document has been produced by the Fire and Rescue Service, Police and Ambulance Services in conjunction with the former National CBRN Chairs Group. The Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office has supported the development of this guide and encourages all emergency planners to use the document to assist in the development of MASHAs to ensure a coordinated, effective and efficient response.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Guidance on Police Mobilisation (2010) and the FRS National Coordinating Centre mobilising protocol.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Context

### What is a Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area (MASHA)?

1.1 A Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area (MASHA) is a pre-identified space which is large enough to accommodate the command and logistical support structures of all agencies required for a national response to an emergency. When a large scale incident occurs, or intelligence suggests that an incident is about to occur, the emergency services will deploy significant resources in order to respond effectively. A suitable site is required to accommodate the potentially large volume of resources deployed from all of the emergency services and, in some cases, other agencies.

1.2 The MASHA should also have sufficient space to provide welfare facilities necessary to meet the needs of the personnel deployed for the duration of the response, such as catering and overnight accommodation. The MASHA should include a marshalling area where personnel responding to a call of mutual aid or intelligence received can standby, rest, and receive briefings whilst awaiting deployment or redeployment to the incident.

The overall objective for creating a MASHA is to ensure the most effective and efficient response possible. Additional objectives include:

- to assemble sufficient resources from all the blue light services and others to serve the need of incident commanders;

- to accommodate multi-agency coordination and logistical support structures, such as communications equipment; and
- to ensure the welfare of emergency responders.

1.3 Each emergency service is responsible for deploying their own resources as required when responding to an emergency. However, it is recommended that emergency responders work together to ensure the identified site is suitable for the large numbers of resources being deployed from all emergency services, not just a single service, to avoid duplication of effort.

1.4 This document focuses on the processes of identifying, establishing and mobilising a MASHA for a major incident. However, it is recommended that emergency planners apply the same principles when identifying, planning and establishing smaller scale MASHAs or strategic holding areas (SHAs), where the mobilisation of resources to host emergency services can still be considerable (particularly for flooding, mass decontamination incidents or building collapse).

### **Background and Purpose of MASHAs**

1.5 The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) requires the assessment of risk and the development of plans to mitigate the effects of an emergency and / or take action to respond to it. Undertaking work to identify and ensure MASHAs are in place contributes to ensuring suitable plans are established. In addition, national guidance specific to each of the emergency services requires all Fire & Rescue, Police and Ambulance Services to have strategic holding area capabilities in place.

1.6 This document complements the work already undertaken by the emergency services to identify single and MASHAs and further promotes the concept of a multi-agency process to accommodate the requirements of all three of the emergency services. Requirements of other organisations such as the Environment Agency or transport operators should be fed in through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). A

pre-identified multi-agency site will help ensure an efficient and synchronised response in the event of an emergency.

1.7 The pre-planning of these sites is vital to allow assets and operators from across the emergency services to integrate effectively into the incident command structure and contribute towards a co-ordinated and efficient response.

1.8 Taking a collaborative approach to identify MASHAs ensures that all those involved in the response to an incident are fully aware of:

- where the preferred site is located;
- that the site is fully fit for purpose; and
- where each service/agency would locate their people and equipment in the event of an emergency.

1.9 To prevent confusion and duplication when designating key sites for MASHA use, it is highly recommended that emergency planners conduct the necessary checks to ensure that the chosen site is available and not already pre-identified for use in an emergency, such as for a national mortuary site, by another emergency service, agency or organisation. This document sets out guidance and templates on how to undertake these checks.

### **Who is this document for ?**

1.10 This document aims to assist emergency planners across the country to develop a co-ordinated process for identifying, inspecting and establishing MASHAs in an emergency. Although this document is primarily aimed at the coordination between the emergency services involved in a MASHA, this does not preclude the inclusion of other agencies, such as transport operators, who should be considered when developing a MASHA plan. Discussing the plan through the LRF should help to facilitate the input of other partners' requirements.



## Chapter 2

### The Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area Process

2.1 Those involved in any aspect of the MASHA process should follow the steps below in order to assist in the successful establishment of a MASHA in the event of an emergency. The following sections provide further detail on each step.



## Chapter 3

# Step One: Identification of Potential Locations for a Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area

### Step One: Identification Process

3.1 When identifying a potential location consideration needs to be given to a wide range of factors in order to provide suitable facilities on site or nearby. This includes:

- access, security and resilience;
- accommodation;
- parking;
- communications;
- health and safety;
- catering;
- services;
- finance; and
- activation process

3.2 The attributes under these headings are fully described within the MASHA Inspection Questionnaire (see Annex A). The list is not exhaustive and it may be necessary for emergency services to consider various bespoke and specialist requirements.

3.3 It is recommended that organisations through the LRF should use local knowledge and consult the National Risk Register<sup>1</sup> and their Community Risk Registers to determine what types of risks and what levels of consequences they should be planning for. Each area faces different risks which may be limited to specific parts of the country. The nature of these risks will impact on decisions about locating a suitable site, for example in areas at risk of flooding, MASHAs should be located on high ground. Community Risk Registers can be found at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

3.4 In addition, consideration should be given to scheduled future events, such as sporting events, concerts and football matches which may result in an identified MASHA site being used for these events.

3.5 It is recommended that each LRF area identify at least one location that is suitable for use as a MASHA. In order to avoid duplication of identified sites it is important that emergency planners liaise with other organisations to ensure there is no other interest in the site. Local emergency services should work together to form a multi-agency inspection team to investigate the suitability of each identified location.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Risk Register outlines the Government's current assessment of the likelihood and potential impact of a range of different civil emergencies (including naturally and accidental occurring hazards and malicious threats) that may directly affect the UK. The updated 2012 version of the NRR can be viewed at the following link: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-risk-register>

## Chapter 4

# Steps Two & Three: Inspection and Reporting Process

### Steps Two and Three: Inspection & Reporting Process

4.1 Once a suitable site has been identified, the Multi-Agency Inspection Team should make arrangements to meet with key individuals such as the site owner, the site manager, the catering manager, and the facilities manager to complete the Multi-Agency Site Specific Questionnaire. The questionnaire has been developed to assist the team in ensuring the proposed site meets the relevant requirements and is suitable; it is important the inspection team gather as much information about the proposed site as possible.

4.2 The content of the inspection questionnaire has been approved following extensive consultation with the Police (ACPO, Police National Mobilisation Plan Implementation Manager & Police National CBRN Centre), the Fire Service (CFOA and National Resilience Assurance Team) and the Department of Health Emergency Preparedness Division.

4.3 Following a comprehensive site inspection, the Multi-Agency Inspection Team should report their findings and recommendations to the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) for approval of the site as a MASHA. Organisations working through the LRF should, wherever possible, seek to ensure a memorandum of understanding or similar agreement is put in place with the site owner(s) or manager(s) concerning arrangements for use of their site and facilities to ensure the site is prioritised for use as a MASHA in the event of an emergency. The organisation(s) will need to determine the appropriate means by which this may be achieved.

4.4 The completed questionnaire is the property of the LRF and should be maintained and reviewed on a regular basis by the relevant organisations working through the LRF.

## Chapter 5

# Steps Four & Five: Developing, Validating and Exercising the Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area Plan

### Step Four: Developing the MASHA Plan

5.1 Once a site has been formally agreed by organisations through the LRF, a MASHA plan should be produced. A template can be found in Annex B which has been developed to assist with the completion of this plan.

5.2 When developing the plan, consideration should be given to all agencies who maybe involved in the management of response and recovery phases of an incident. These could include the following, although this list is not exhaustive:

- Police service;
- Fire and Rescue service;
- Ambulance service;
- Local Authority;
- Environment Agency;
- Military;
- Highways Agency;
- Central Government; and the
- Government Decontamination Service.

5.3 The recommended security level for these plans is 'Restricted' and therefore all documents should be held and maintained in accordance with the Cabinet Office "HMG Security Policy Framework" guide. An electronic copy of each plan should be uploaded onto the National Resilience Extranet (NRE)<sup>2</sup>, where a list of approved MASHA locations will also be held.

#### **Step Five: Exercising and Reviewing of the plan**

5.4 The plan should be exercised wherever possible. Any lessons learned from the exercise, and from any live emergencies, should be incorporated into subsequent revisions of the plan. Significant changes in capability and related planning arrangements should also instigate a review of the plan. Maintenance of the plan will help to ensure that in the event of a major incident, the emergency services and other partners are able to perform their functions within the MASHA.

5.5 The plan should state review dates and a process for incorporating lessons learned from live incidents, exercises and post incident reviews. In addition, when reviewing the plan, checks should be carried out to ensure the identified site is still available for use.

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<sup>2</sup> The NRE is a secure web based browser tool that enables responders to have access to key information up to and including RESTRICTED level, for multi-agency working and communication.

## Chapter 6

# Establishment of a Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Area in an Emergency

6.1 The trigger for activation of a MASHA plan in an emergency will be at the discretion of the Police Gold / Silver Commander, in consultation with relevant partners. In the first instance contact should be made with the venue.

6.2 Agencies intending to utilise the MASHA must send suitable representative(s) to the designated area to receive and manage their organisation's resources.

6.3 Access to MASHAs will be restricted and coordinated by the Police; however each agency will take responsibility for the management and control of their resources once on site.

On arrival at the MASHA responders should:

- report to the MASHA access control point/s in order to register their details;
- report to their respective commander/control point to register their personal and vehicle details;
- park vehicles only as directed by entry control unit staff, in accordance with the pre-agreed site template. Vehicles must not be parked in areas allocated to other agencies;
- carry appropriate identification at all times and comply with any instructions given concerning allocated areas for standby, feeding, briefing, dress code etc;
- remain available at the MASHA until directed by the relevant commander; and
- comply with logging out procedure.





# Glossary

An extensive glossary can be found in the Lexicon of UK Civil Protection Terminology. The Lexicon can be viewed at [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cplexicon](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cplexicon)

## CBRNE

A term used to describe Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive materials. CBRNE terrorism is the actual or threatened dispersal of CBRN material (either on their own or in combination with each other or with explosives), with deliberate criminal, malicious or murderous intent.

## Strategic Holding Area (SHA)

A pre-defined location providing sufficient space and facilities for the reception and co-ordination of mutual aid and other supporting resources at major incidents.

## Major Incident

Event or situation requiring a response under one or more of the emergency services' major incident plans

## Multi-Agency

Involving the participation of several agencies

# References

## Publications

### **Civil Contingencies Act**

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/civil-contingencies-act](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/civil-contingencies-act)

### **National Risk Register**

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-risk-register](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-risk-register)

### **FRS Guidance**

[www.fireresilience.org.uk](http://www.fireresilience.org.uk)

(central library/documents/capabilities/command & control/SHA)

### **HMG Security Policy Framework**

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/hmg-security-policy\\_0\\_0.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/hmg-security-policy_0_0.pdf)

## Websites

### **UK Resilience Website**

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience)

### **UK Preparing for Emergencies Website**

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/Dealingwithemergencies/Preparingforemergencies/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/Dealingwithemergencies/Preparingforemergencies/index.htm)

### **National Resilience Extranet**

[www.resilience-extranet.gov.uk](http://www.resilience-extranet.gov.uk)



# Strategic Holding Areas

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## Multi Agency Site Specific Inspection Questionnaire

Version 1.0

DATE

Site Name

This questionnaire should be completed for each venue considered suitable for use as a multi-agency strategic holding area. When complete, information gathered should be used in the preparation of the site specific template. This completed document is the property of the Local Resilience Forum.



**Strategic Holding Area: Multi Agency Site Inspection**

**Section 1: Administration**

<p>Name of Venue</p> <p>Postal Address</p> <p>Post Code</p> <p>Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name</li> <li>• position in organisation</li> </ul> <p>Contact Telephone Number</p> <p>Classification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi agency use</li> <li>▪ Single agency use</li> <li>▪ Both</li> </ul> <p>Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any financial agreement in place with owner of site</li> <li>• Any financial agreement in place with other agencies intending to use SHA</li> </ul>	
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**Section 2: Services**

	Yes	no	Comments
<p>Fuel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience of supply</li> <li>• Are fuel cards accepted (which type)</li> <li>• Fuel types available</li> </ul>			
<p>Catering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Max number of meals</li> <li>• Catering contract/agreement in place</li> <li>• Out of hours activation of catering contract/agreement</li> <li>• Resilience of supply (how many days / other</li> </ul>			



constraints) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24 hour service</li> </ul>			
<b>Accommodation</b> (does not have to be on site) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office space / capacity identified</li> <li>• Briefing room(s) / capacity identified, any cost</li> <li>• Toilet/washing/showering capacity identified</li> <li>• Overnight/sleeping accommodation capacity identified                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Onsite</li> <li>Elsewhere</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Site Capable of receiving up to 500 personnel</li> <li>• Site Capable of receiving 500- 1500 personnel</li> </ul>			
<b>Hygiene</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Washroom</li> <li>▪ Toilet (numbers) male/female</li> <li>▪ Waste disposal</li> <li>▪ Site maintenance arrangements</li> </ul>			
<b>Utilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience of critical services assured</li> <li>• Electricity – back up generator</li> <li>• Arrangements for re-fuelling stand by generators</li> <li>• Water supplies/Hydrants</li> </ul>			

**Section 3: Communications**

	Yes	No	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT capability identified                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computers</li> <li>Projectors</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Communications capability identified                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broadband</li> <li>Telephony</li> <li>Fax</li> <li>Mobile networks reception</li> <li>Airwave transmitter capacity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Area for portable HITS (see section 10)</li> </ul>			

**Section 4: Security**

	Yes	No	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perimeter fence</li> <li>• Existing security arrangements identified</li> <li>• Additional security arrangements identified</li> <li>• Capability to provide additional security requirements</li> <li>• Arrangements for media attendance</li> <li>• Effectiveness of site lighting</li> </ul>			
<b>CCTV</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of CCTV coverage on site</li> </ul>			

**Section 5: Access**

	Yes	no	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access/egress routes identified (inc. alternative options, flood considerations)</li> <li>• Arrangements for signage</li> <li>• One way traffic system</li> <li>• Arrangements for escorts</li> <li>• Helicopter landing site Onsite/Nearby</li> <li>• Entry + exit control</li> <li>• Record keeping</li> <li>• Traffic Management Plan For vicinity of SHA For escorts to/from safe/'blue' routes</li> </ul>			

**Section 6: Health, Safety and Welfare**

	yes	no	Working towards/completion date/comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Safety assessment conducted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parking area</li> <li>○ Public areas</li> <li>○ Other</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Copies of RA's available to SHA commander</li> <li>• Briefing arrangements in place for responding staff</li> <li>• Occupational Health provision on site</li> <li>• Impact assessment on site being used as SHA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community Impact</li> <li>○ Site owner impact</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			

**Section 7: Parking**

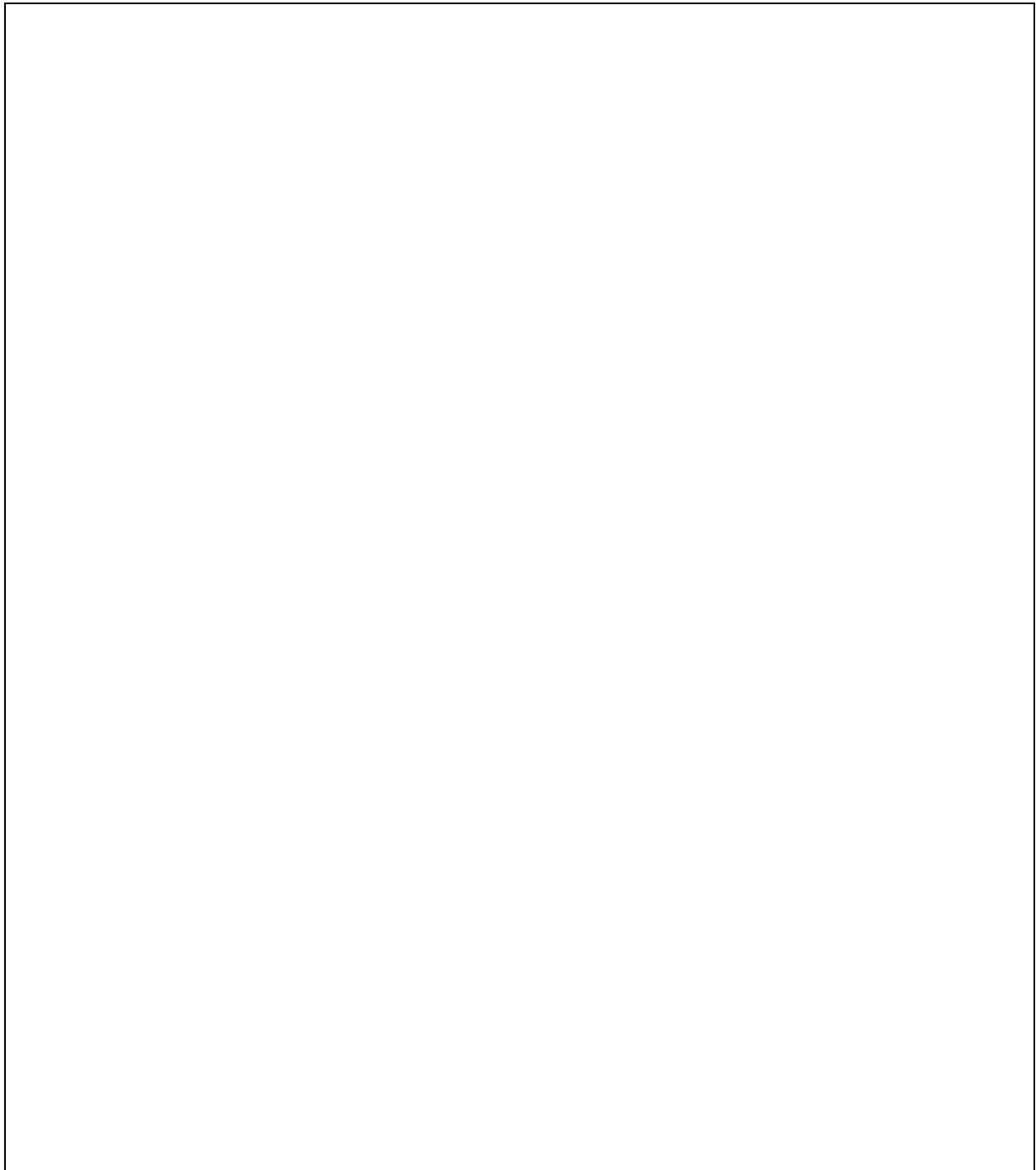
	yes	no	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity identified</li> <li>• Limitations identified (turning circle/height restrictions etc)</li> <li>• Management of parking</li> <li>• Adequate lighting (or lighting to be supplied)</li> <li>• Arrangements for signage</li> <li>• Lighting arrangements</li> <li>• Parking area measured (m2)</li> </ul>			

**Section 8: Activation**

	Yes	no	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement in place with owner of site Verbal Written</li> <li>• Out of hours contact point available Has authority to sanction activation Has out of hours access to site / alarms / keys etc.</li> <li>• Agreement with neighbouring LRF(s) to activate their SHA(s) Verbal Written</li> <li>• Activation procedure agreed</li> <li>• Activation Plan completed Cross referenced to other relevant plans 24/7 call out in place for key personnel re. activation</li> </ul>			

**Section 9: Map of SHA (insert site plan of venue, prior to visit)**

- Indicate on map agreed locations of emergency service assets (where each service will park on the day) and any other key functions / areas including FRS Enhanced Logistics Support vehicle and the HITS unit.



**Section 10: High Integrity Telecommunication System (HITS)**

	Yes	no	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable area identified (15 to 20 sq meters)</li> <li>• Support vehicle 30 sq meters</li> <li>• Is there clear line of sight to the south</li> <li>• Will the satellite dish be within a maximum of 150 m from the point of use</li> <li>• Provide National Grid Reference (sat nav can be used for this purpose)</li> <li>• Provide secure storage for all HITS equipment for the duration of the deployment (which may be less than the overall MASHA)</li> </ul>			

**Comments and Observations Sheet**



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*(insert name here)* **LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM**

**Multi-Agency Strategic Holding Areas**

**Site Specific SHA Plan - *(insert Location here)***

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Approved by:  
Date Approved:



Nothing in this Plan over-rides the discretion of the relevant senior officer on duty to take such action as he/she thinks fit in the circumstances prevailing at the time.

### Site Information

#### Section 1: Administration

Venue Owner/Occupier	Detail
Name of Venue	
Postal Address	
Post Code	
Contact	
Contact Telephone Number	
Finance (Are formal arrangements in place?)	
<b>Activation Details</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day</li> <li>• Night (out of working hours)</li> </ul>	
Allocation of Parking Areas	See map in section 6 for agreed site allocation.

**Section 2: Services**

<b>Function/Requirements</b>	<b>Detail</b>
<b>Fuel</b> Fuel cards accepted	
<b>Catering</b> Max number of meals & seating arrangements	
<b>Catering contract in place</b>	
<b>Out of hours facilities</b>	
<b>Resilience of supply</b> (how many days / other constraints)	
<b>Accommodation (Office)</b>  <b>Accommodation (Sleeping)</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On Site</li> <li>• Off Site</li> </ul>	
<b>Briefing Room</b> Cost (if any)	
<b>Ablutions</b>	
<b>Site capable of receiving up to 500 personnel</b>  <b>Site capable of receiving 500- 1500 personnel</b>	

**Section 3: Communications**

<b>Function/ Requirement:</b>	<b>Detail</b>
<b>IT capability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Computers</b></li><li>• <b>Projectors</b></li></ul>	
<b>Communications capability on site</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Broadband</b></li><li>• <b>Wi-Fi</b></li><li>• <b>Telephone</b></li><li>• <b>Fax</b></li><li>• <b>Mobile phone reception</b></li></ul>	
<b>Airwave reception</b>	

**Section 4: Access, Security and Resilience**

<b>Function/ Requirement:</b>	<b>Detail</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access and egress</li> <li>• Secondary access</li>   <li>• Traffic management(on site)</li> <li>• Helicopter landing site</li> <li>• Traffic Management Plan</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Site Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perimeter fence</li> <li>• On site security staff</li> <li>• Able to provide additional security staff</li> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Lock down procedures</li> <li>• CCTV</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Electricity</li> </ul>	

**Section 5: Document Control**

This document is the property of *[Insert SITE NAME here]* Local Resilience Forum and is issued for the information to those people only who need to know its contents in the course of their official duties.

**History/version control**

<b>Plan History</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>

**Section 6: SHA Location Map**  
*(insert picture/map here)*

**Section 7: Site Plan – agreed distribution of resources, including on site key locations**

*(insert site plan here)*

**Section 8: Location map of supporting facilities (fuel stations, sleeping accommodation, catering establishments, and large retail outlets)**  
*(insert location map here)*





END