

**NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT:**  
**STRATEGIC HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT LAND**  
**AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SHELAA) 2017**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is to assess the potential suitability, availability and achievability of land within the district for residential or employment land development. The assessment will form an important step in the preparation of the district's new Local Plan by enabling the identification of sites and broad locations with potential for development over the next plan period. This report explains the national policy context for the SHELAA and the broad findings from this assessment.

**2 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>1</sup> requires local planning authorities to ensure that their Local Plan is based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of their area. Furthermore, local planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and take full account of relevant market and economic signals.
- 2.2 The NPPF requires that each local planning authority has a clear understanding of housing needs in their area, and sets out a requirement to prepare an assessment to help establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for new homes over the plan period.
- 2.3 The assessment will help to inform the Council's identification of a 'supply' of specific and deliverable sites, which are sufficient to provide five years worth of land for new homes in the district against our housing need. Local planning authorities are also required by the NPPF to identify an additional buffer of 5%, or 20% where applicable, to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. This buffer can include sites which are considered to be able to be moved forward from later on in the plan period. Local planning authorities should also identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan period.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

- 2.4 The Council has produced previously produced two assessments on housing land supply in the district; in 2009 and 2012<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.5 Each local planning authority is now also required to specifically assess the potential for land to be delivered for employment uses; with the NPPF specifically requiring local planning authorities to use the evidence base to assess the existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet the identified needs. The assessment of land in the district for housing and employment land has therefore been combined into one assessment; the SHELAA.
- 2.6 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)<sup>3</sup> specifically sets out a standard method for undertaking a SHELAA. The Guidance states that that where plan makers seek to depart from this defined methodology; they must set out reasons for doing so. It has been considered appropriate in the Council's case to follow the standard methodology set out in the PPG.
- 2.7 The PPG sets out three key objectives of the Assessment;
- To identify sites and broad locations with potential for development;
  - To assess the development potential of these sites and broad locations; and
  - To assess each site's suitability for development, and the likelihood of development coming forward ('suitability', 'availability' and 'achievability')
- 2.8 A separate national planning policy statement has been prepared for Gypsy and Traveller sites - Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS)<sup>4</sup> – which should be read in conjunction with the NPPF (as recognised in NPPF paragraph 4). For consistency the Council has included a broad assessment of those sites which were put forward for consideration as Gypsy and Traveller use. The SHELAA will therefore assist the Council in identifying an up-to-date supply of Gypsy and Traveller pitches in line with need.
- 2.9 The methodology and findings of the Assessment are available in the main SHELAA report, at Appendix A. These findings have been used to inform the production of an up-to-date housing land trajectory, appended to the

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.rochford.gov.uk/new-local-plan-evidence-base](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/new-local-plan-evidence-base)

<sup>3</sup> [www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment)

<sup>4</sup>

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/457420/Final\\_planning\\_and\\_travellers\\_policy.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457420/Final_planning_and_travellers_policy.pdf)

SHELAA, which sets out the anticipated delivery of sites for new homes across the district over the next 10 years.

- 2.10 The SHELAA follows the Call for Sites process that the Council undertook between June 2015 and March 2016, which allowed landowners, agents and other parties the opportunity to submit sites to the Council for inclusion within the assessment. The Council also included other sites in the assessment, in line with the Planning Practice Guidance.
- 2.11 The SHELAA found that a total of 38 sites are potentially suitable, available and achievable for the delivery of new homes, providing a potential yield of 935, based on the Council's existing policies and standard assumptions for development including a density of 35 dwellings per hectare and 35% contribution of affordable housing on sites capable of delivering 15 or more dwellings. This does not include those sites which have already received planning permission but have not yet been fully built out.
- 2.12 Furthermore, a total of 17 sites have been identified as being potentially suitable, available and achievable for employment development comprising a total site area of 18.76 hectares.
- 2.13 The SHELAA has been undertaken as a 'point in time' assessment, however it is noted that an assessment of the Green Belt will also need to be undertaken in accordance with the NPPF and PPG. This future assessment will be used to inform future SHELAA's. A local level landscape character assessment will be also be undertaken to support the new Local Plan.
- 2.14 The findings of the SHELAA, as part of the evidence base, will be used to inform the Council's new Local Plan preparations by providing up-to-date information on the availability, suitability and achievability of sites within the district subject to current planning policy constraints. It is anticipated that the Council will keep the SHELAA under review to inform the plan-making process to reflect any changes in the short-term deliverability or longer-term developability of sites, and ensure that the new Local Plan is based on up-to-date information. The Council will continue to monitor the delivery of new homes through its Authority Monitoring Reports (AMR).

### **3 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 An assessment of the potential suitability, availability and achievability of land for new homes and employment development is required by the NPPF and PPG to support the preparation of the Council's new Local Plan. It is therefore an important piece of evidence which will assist the Council in determining the potential supply of land for different uses in the future.
- 3.2 The Council will update the SHELAA throughout the plan-making process, taking account of any changes to national planning policy and guidance.

Failing to have adequate evidence on the supply of land for different uses may risk a draft plan being found unsound at the independent examination stage as well as hamper the Council in engaging in meaningful discussion with neighbouring authorities under the Duty to Co-operate.

**4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council is required to comply with legal and national planning policy requirements throughout the plan-making process, including the preparation of evidence to support policy development. The preparation of the SHELAA has been met from investments in the existing budget provision.

**5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The preparation of a SHELAA is required by the NPPF to support the plan-making process. Failing to have adequate evidence on the supply of land for different uses may risk a draft plan being found unsound at the independent examination stage.

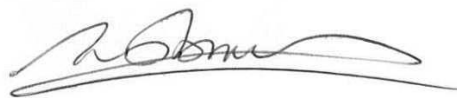
**6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None.

**7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RESOLVES**

That the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, as attached at Appendix 1, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website.



Matthew Thomas

Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services

---

**Background Papers:-**

None.

For further information please contact Natalie Hayward (Planning Policy and Economic Development Team Leader) on:-

Phone: 01702 318101

Email: [natalie.hayward@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:natalie.hayward@rochford.gov.uk)

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.



**Contents**

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Policy Context .....	1
3	Methodology.....	4
4	Identification of Sites and Broad Locations .....	8
5	Site and Broad Location Assessment.....	15
6	Windfall Assessment .....	24
7	Review of the Assessment .....	25
8	Potential Site Delivery .....	29
	Appendix A - Call for Sites Form	
	Appendix B - 'Find Your Site' and Area Maps	
	Appendix C - Site Assessment Forms	
	Appendix D - Final Viability Report	
	Appendix E - Housing Land Trajectory	

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is a technical study which assesses the potential availability of land in the district for meeting the need for new homes and jobs. The SHELAA will form an important part of the evidence base for the Council's new Local Plan, examining the suitability, availability and achievability of land in the district to meet identified development needs.
- 1.2 The SHELAA is not a one-off study however; previous land availability assessments for the district have been published in 2009 and 2012, with updates included in successive Authority Monitoring Reports (AMRs). The SHELAA will therefore be kept under review and updated periodically to reflect the availability of new evidence and changes to both local and national policy, which could impact on the appropriateness of sites for meeting needs. The purpose of the SHELAA is only to guide and inform the plan-making process; the SHELAA will not allocate sites for development, nor will it set specific policies.

## **2 Policy Context**

### **National Planning Policy Context**

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012, followed by the Planning Practice Guidance in 2014; both these documents supersede previous guidance on how to undertake land availability assessments. As a Local Planning Authority, we are required to undertake these types of assessments to inform decision-making on planning policy development. The NPPF, at paragraph 158, requires Local Planning Authorities to ensure that their assessment of, and strategies for, housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics of the area.
- 2.2 The overarching policy requirements in the NPPF for land availability assessments are found within paragraphs 159 and 161. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF requires that Local Planning Authorities have a clear understanding of housing needs in the area, and that they should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to fully assess their housing needs, whilst working with neighbouring authorities to reflect cross administrative boundary housing markets. A SHMA has been prepared (and, where appropriate, updated) for the South Essex Housing Market area<sup>1</sup> which sets out the objectively assessed needs for housing. Paragraph 159 goes on to require Local Planning Authorities to prepare a "Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period". The key tests when assessing the potential for a site to be delivered for new homes are, therefore, whether a site is likely to be available, suitable and viable to be delivered over a period of time. Within this context paragraph 47 of the NPPF distinguishes between sites which are considered to be 'deliverable' for the first five years of the Local Plan and 'developable' (beyond five years); this is further defined in footnotes 11 and 12 of the NPPF.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.rochford.gov.uk/new-local-plan-evidence-base](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/new-local-plan-evidence-base)



- 2.3 Paragraph 47, also requires that the Local Planning Authority identifies and annually updates a ‘supply’ of specific and deliverable sites, which are sufficient to provide five years worth of housing land against their housing requirements. Local Planning Authorities are also required to identify an additional buffer of 5%, or 20% where applicable, to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. This buffer can include sites which are considered to be able to be moved forward from later on in the plan period. Local Planning Authorities should identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan period.
- 2.4 In contrast to previous land availability assessments, Local Planning Authorities are now specifically required to assess the potential for land to be delivered for employment uses. Paragraph 161 of the NPPF states that “local planning authorities should use the evidence base to assess the existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet the identified needs.” Given this requirement, the assessments for both housing and employment land have been combined. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out the methodology for undertaking land availability assessments which the SHELAA methodology set out in this report is based on.
- 2.5 A separate national planning policy statement has been prepared for Gypsy and Traveller sites, which should be read in conjunction with the NPPF (as recognised in NPPF paragraph 4). The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) published in 2015 distinguishes between – for planning purposes – those ethnic Gypsy and Travellers that continue to travel for work and those that do not. Those that no longer travel do not fall within the definition in the PPTS and are therefore considered to form part of the housing needs for the settled community. Those that continue to travel meet the definition and the PPTS requires Local Planning Authorities to identify a supply of sites to accommodate the current and future needs of those families.
- 2.6 To assess the need for Gypsy and Traveller sites a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) has been prepared on behalf of the Essex Local Planning Authorities. The need to identify deliverable and developable sites is also required for Gypsy and Travellers. This need is therefore included in this land availability assessment. The SHELAA will assist the Council in maintaining an up-to-date rolling supply of deliverable (and developable) sites for the housing, Gypsy and Traveller, and economic requirements over the next twenty years. These requirements will be tested and planned for locally through the new Local Plan.
- 2.7 The PPG provides specific guidance on the undertaking of a SHELAA, setting out three key objectives of the assessment:

- To identify sites and broad locations with potential for development;
- To assess the development potential of these sites and broad locations; and
- To assess each site's suitability for development, and the likelihood of development coming forward ('suitability', 'availability' and 'achievability')

2.8 The SHELAA supports the plan-making process by allowing the proactive and informed selection of sites which may come forward through our emerging new Local Plan. Not all sites identified within the SHELAA will be suitable for development, for example because of policy or designation constraints, or because of viability issues. The purpose of the SHELAA is to assess sites for their deliverability; it is not for the SHELAA itself to allocate sites for development, sites would only be allocated through the emerging local development plan.

### **Local Planning Policy Context**

- 2.9 Under the previous Local Development Framework system, Local Planning Authorities were required to prepare a number of development plan documents to set out future development needs. The Council subsequently positively prepared and adopted seven development plan documents, including a Core Strategy (2011), Allocations Plan (2014), Development Management Plan (2015) and four Area Actions Plans. The Area Action Plans, cover the town centres of Rayleigh, Hockley and Rochford, and London Southend Airport (including its surrounding areas, which was jointly prepared with Southend Borough Council). The overarching local planning policy document – the Core Strategy – was prepared prior to the NPPF and PPG. The Council is however at the early stages of reviewing its local planning policies to positively plan for the future to meet local needs. The current adopted policies in the seven development plan documents are considered as a policy constraint for the purposes of the SHELAA and have been considered during the assessment process, where applicable.
- 2.10 A number of evidence base documents, which provide important background information to support future local planning policies have or are in the process of being updated to inform the new Local Plan. This includes the SHELAA. Other key evidence which should be considered alongside the SHELAA, where available, include South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 (SHMA), SHMA Addendum 2017, Essex Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2017 (GTAA), Rochford District Employment Land Study 2014, and the South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment 2017 (EDNA). Consideration of these evidence base documents and other emerging evidence including the SHELAA, will inform the need for new homes and jobs, identify how much land is available for each type of use, and subsequently help determine local targets for the future.

### **3 Methodology**

- 3.1 The methodology for this SHELAA follows the standard methodology detailed in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment<sup>2</sup> section of the PPG.
- 3.2 This methodology is considered to provide a consistent and effective mechanism through which to assess the suitability, availability and achievability of sites for development. The PPG states that where plan makers seek to depart from this defined methodology, they must set out reasons for doing so.
- 3.3 The assessment is required to be both thorough and proportionate, building where possible on existing information sources outlined within the guidance.
- 3.4 The PPG sets out a five-stage methodology, which has been summarised below:

#### Stage 1: The Identification of sites and broad locations

- 3.5 Stage 1 of the methodology provides an overview of how potential sites for inclusion in this assessment were identified, which sites were excluded from the assessment and the justification for doing so, as well as what basic information was recorded as part of the initial review process.
- 3.6 In the interests of comprehension and clarity, a detailed explanation of the methodology and criteria for Stage 1 has been provided as part of the main report, at Chapter 4.

#### Stage 2: Site/Broad location assessment

- 3.7 Stage 2 of the methodology provides information on the criteria against which identified sites were assessed, particularly in relation to their suitability, availability and achievability for development.
- 3.8 In the interests of comprehension and clarity, a detailed explanation of the methodology and criteria for Stage 2 has been provided as part of the main report, at Chapter 5.

#### Stage 3: Windfall assessment (where justified)

- 3.9 Windfall sites are sites which have not been specifically identified as available through the Local Plan process. They tend to be sites which have unexpectedly become available.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.10 Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, and sections of the PPG, both state that windfall sites can positively contribute towards housing supply, where justified. However, there is an emphasis on justification, and compelling evidence must be provided to show that windfall sites have consistently become available in the past, and that therefore there can be a realistic expectation that such sites will become available in the future.

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment)

<sup>3</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2012, Annex 2: Glossary

3.11 Chapter 6 therefore forms a review of historic windfall delivery trends in the district, and will determine whether the inclusion of a windfall allowance in the housing trajectory is justified, in line with the provisions of the NPPF.

Stage 4: Assessment review

3.12 Once all of the identified sites have been assessed, the development potential of the sites will be collated to produce an indicative trajectory. This will set out – in theory – how much housing and economic land could be delivered in the district and at what point in the future this land could be development. It should be borne in mind however, that a separate assessment of the Green Belt will be required to be undertaken at a later date and the findings of this will be factored into future land availability assessments.

3.13 As set out in Paragraph 47 of the NPPF, the Council should aim to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in other sections of the Framework. As part of these requirements, the Council should identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites or broad locations to provide a five-year housing supply, with an appropriate buffer. The NPPF further requires the identification of specific, developable sites in years 6-10 and where possible, in years 11-15 of the plan period. The indicative trajectory will therefore be an important piece of evidence in informing the Council's new Local Plan preparation.

3.14 Should the trajectory fail to identify a sufficient number of suitable, available and achievable sites to meet the district's objectively assessed needs, it may be necessary to review the assumptions made within the previous stages. Part of this review may include revisiting whether policy constraints can be relaxed, or if there is scope to increase proposed site capacities.

3.15 If after reviewing the assessment, the trajectory still fails to identify a sufficient number of suitable, available and achievable sites to meet our objectively assessed needs, then it may be necessary to consider whether any deficit can be met within neighbouring authorities, in line with the *Duty to Co-operate*.

Stage 5: Final evidence base

3.16 It should be noted that this assessment is a 'point in time' assessment and does not directly set policy. The assessment will be reviewed and updated in the future to reflect changes in land availability and evidence base.

3.17 The SHELAA will generate standard, core outputs, which will allow for consistent, accessible and transparent outcomes to the process.

3.18 These core outputs will be:

- A list of all sites or broad locations considered, cross-referenced to their locations on maps;

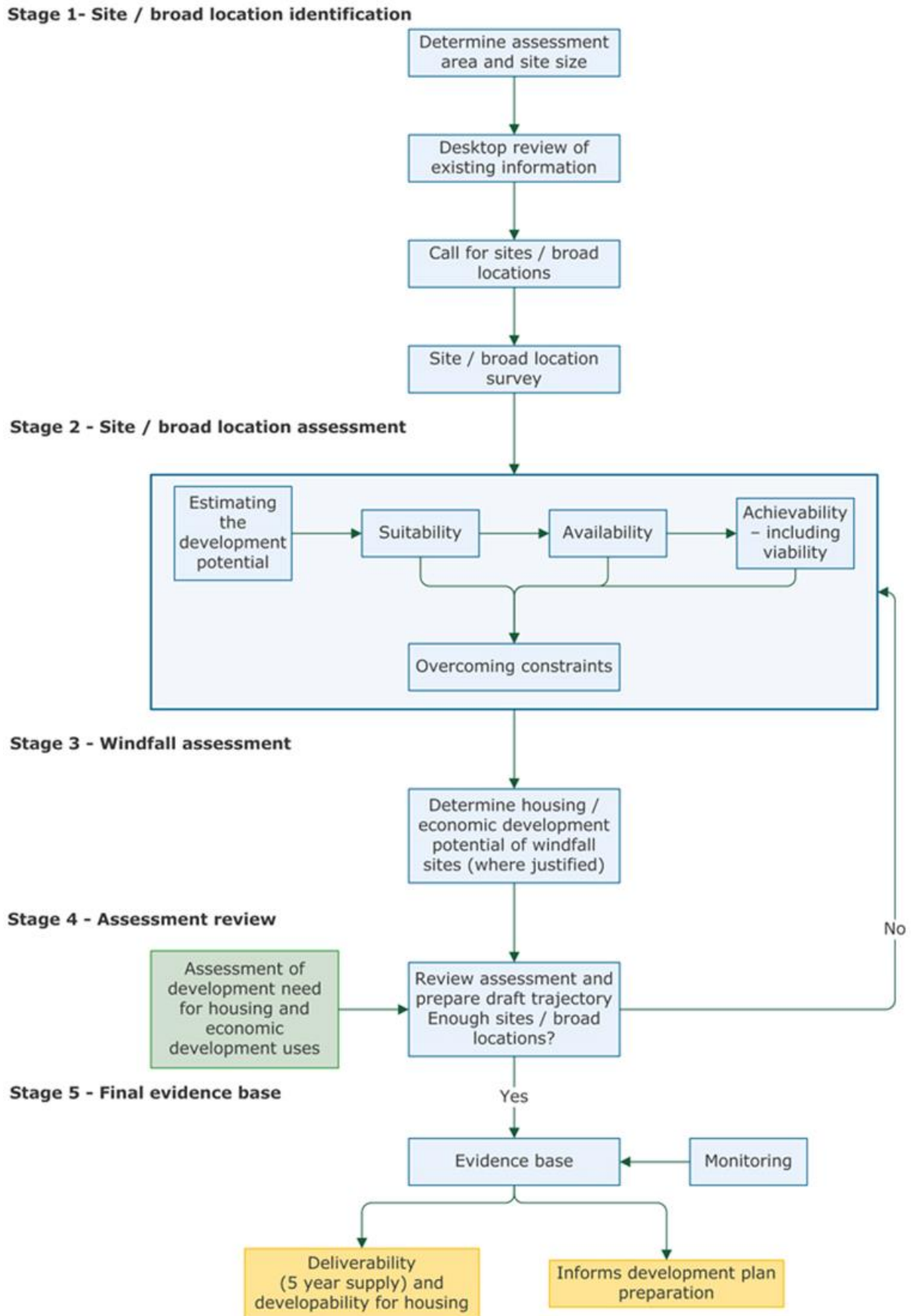
- An assessment of each site or broad location, in terms of its suitability for development, availability and achievability (including whether the site is viable) to determine whether a site is realistically expected to be developed and when;
- Contain more detail for those sites which are considered to be realistic potential candidates for development, where others have been discounted for clearly evidenced and justified reasons;
- The potential type and quantity of development that could be delivered on each site, including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how any barriers to delivery could be overcome and when; and
- An indicative trajectory of anticipated development and consideration of associated risks.

3.19 The Council will endeavour to monitor the housing trajectory and delivery of sites throughout the plan process, as part of the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

3.20 This information will be used to inform the ongoing preparation of the Council's new Local Plan.

3.21 An illustrative flowchart of the methodology is set out in Figure 1 overleaf.

Figure 1: SHELAA Methodology Diagram, Planning Practice Guidance (2014)



## 4 Identification of Sites and Broad Locations

- 4.1 The first stage of the SHELAA involves the identification of specific sites or broad locations which may be able to support development to meet the identified needs of the district.
- 4.2 The PPG is clear that the assessment should identify all sites and broad locations regardless of the amount of development needed; this enables the provision of an audit of all available land. The process is intended to provide information to enable the identification of sites suitable for the development required by the emerging Local Plan.
- 4.3 The PPG suggests that the assessment extends to a wide geographical location based on the housing market area and functional economic market area<sup>4</sup>, however this approach is not considered to be practical at this time, as each neighbouring authority is at differing stages in their Local Plan preparations, and respective SHELAA preparations. Should the Council or a neighbouring authority be unable to meet their housing and economic land needs, the active and on-going methods of collaboration under the Duty to Co-operate will enable housing and economic market considerations to be assessed.
- 4.4 The Council has been proactive in identifying as wide a range of sites as possible, including existing sites that could be improved, intensified or changed. Sites which have particular policy constraints have been included in the assessment, but where constraints are present, they have been set out clearly and consideration has been given to the extent to which they restrict development.
- 4.5 The Council has not only relied on sites which they have been made aware of, but also sought to identify sites through a desktop review process.

### Call for Sites

- 4.6 The Council undertook a 'Call for Sites' exercise between June 2015 and September 2015, which was further extended to March 2016. The process gave an opportunity for landowners, developers and agents to make the Council aware of any sites within the district that they believed to be suitable, available or achievable for development. Submissions required completion of a Site Information Form (available at Appendix A), and submission of an OS map clearly showing the location and extent of the sites.
- 4.7 The Council welcomed 'Call for Sites' submissions by post, email and fax. The exercise was publicised in a number of ways including:
- letters to agents and landowners registered on the Council's mailing list;
  - emails to agents and landowners registered on the Council's mailing list;
  - letters to local Parish Councils;
  - an article in the *Rochford District Matters* local publication; and

---

<sup>4</sup> [www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments)

- pages, banners and links on the Council’s website.

4.8 The Council received a total of 171 site submissions through the exercise, of which two sites were subsequently withdrawn.

4.9 The PPG makes it clear that the SHELAA exercise should consider all sites and broad locations capable of delivering 5 or more dwellings, or economic development on sites of 0.25 hectares or more. However, it further notes that where appropriate, plan makers may wish to consider alternative site size thresholds. On this basis, the Council chose not to discriminate on the basis of site size and accepted sites of all sizes, in order to comprehensively assess the suitability of all identified land in the district for development. This position is considered to be justified as smaller sites have historically made a strong contribution towards housing supply in the district. It is, however, noted that sites which are particularly small or of an irregular shape may be unsuitable for certain forms of development.

### **Identification of Potential Sites**

4.10 Sites and broad locations to be included in the SHELAA were identified from the following sources, in line with the relevant guidance<sup>5</sup>.

- sites submitted through the Call for Sites process described in Paragraph 4.6;
- land in the local authority’s ownership which is not designated Open Space;
- existing housing and economic development allocations which have not received a planning permission at 10 October 2017;
- sites which have previously received planning permissions for housing or economic development but whose permissions have now expired;
- sites considered in previous SHLAA exercises which have not yet been developed;
- Gypsy and Traveller, or Travelling Showpeople sites, where currently occupied and which do not have permanent planning permissions; and
- any other sites that the Council believed may be suitable, available or achievable for development.

4.11 Officers also sought to identify sites from the Register of Public Sector Land, however no sites within the district were listed on the register at the time of consideration.

4.12 Any sites (including those specifically allocated for development of new homes) which have extant Full, Outline or Reserved Matters permissions at the time of undertaking this assessment have not been specifically assessed in the SHELAA as their suitability, availability and achievability have already been established through the plan-making and planning application processes. These sites have, however, been included in the

---

5  
[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/575032/Type\\_of\\_site\\_and\\_potential\\_data\\_source.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575032/Type_of_site_and_potential_data_source.pdf)



housing trajectory which forms Appendix E to this report as they clearly form an important component of housing delivery in the district over the current plan period.

### **Exclusion Criteria**

4.13 Sites were excluded from the assessment if more than 50% of their site area is subject to any of the following constraints:

- Scheduled Monuments – there are five Scheduled Monuments located within the district. These are archaeological or historical sites which are of national importance and protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – there are three SSSIs located within the district. These are internationally important sites protected for their wildlife or geological value.
- Ramsar Sites / Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) / Special Protection Areas (SPA) – there are two sites within the district which are listed as Ramsar sites / SACs / SPAs. These are internationally important areas protected for their exceptional natural and wildlife value.
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR) – There are four LNRs located within the district. These are sites which are locally protected for their natural value.
- Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) – There are 39 LoWS in the district. These are sites which do not have a national or international statutory protection, but have been designated locally to preserve their significant wildlife value. It should, however, be noted that these designated sites are currently under review, and may be subject to change. The outcome of this review will be used to inform any future SHELAA exercises.

4.14 However, it is noted that the special character or value of these areas does not necessarily cease at their site boundary, and they are likely to be affected by development close to, but not necessarily within, their boundaries. Where a site, or part of a site, does not fall within a designated area but is located within close proximity to a designated area, the impact of any development on the nearby designation may impact on their suitability for development. To this end, the following “buffer zones”, as set out in Figure 2 below, have been noted. These buffers have been determined in accordance with the recommendations of the Environmental Impact Regulations (2011) or else local precedents where the Regulations are silent.

4.15 These buffers have been noted on a pre-cautionary basis and for the purposes of raising awareness to the nearby environmental area of sensitivity. It should be noted, however, that a site falling within a buffer zone does not necessarily mean that that site would be unsuitable for development and no sites have been excluded from the exercise because they fall within the buffer zone of an environmental designation.

**Table 2:** Buffer zone distances for environmental designations

Designation	Buffer Zone Distance
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	2km
Special Area of Conservation (SAC) / Special Protection Area (SPA) / Ramsar site	5km
Local Nature Reserve (LNR) / Ancient Woodland / Local Wildlife Site (LoWS)	100m

4.16 Whilst the following constraints have the potential to impact on, and perhaps completely negate, the developability and deliverability of certain sites, they have not been considered absolute constraints to development for the reasons listed below. As a result, any sites which are subject to these constraints have not been excluded from the exercise.

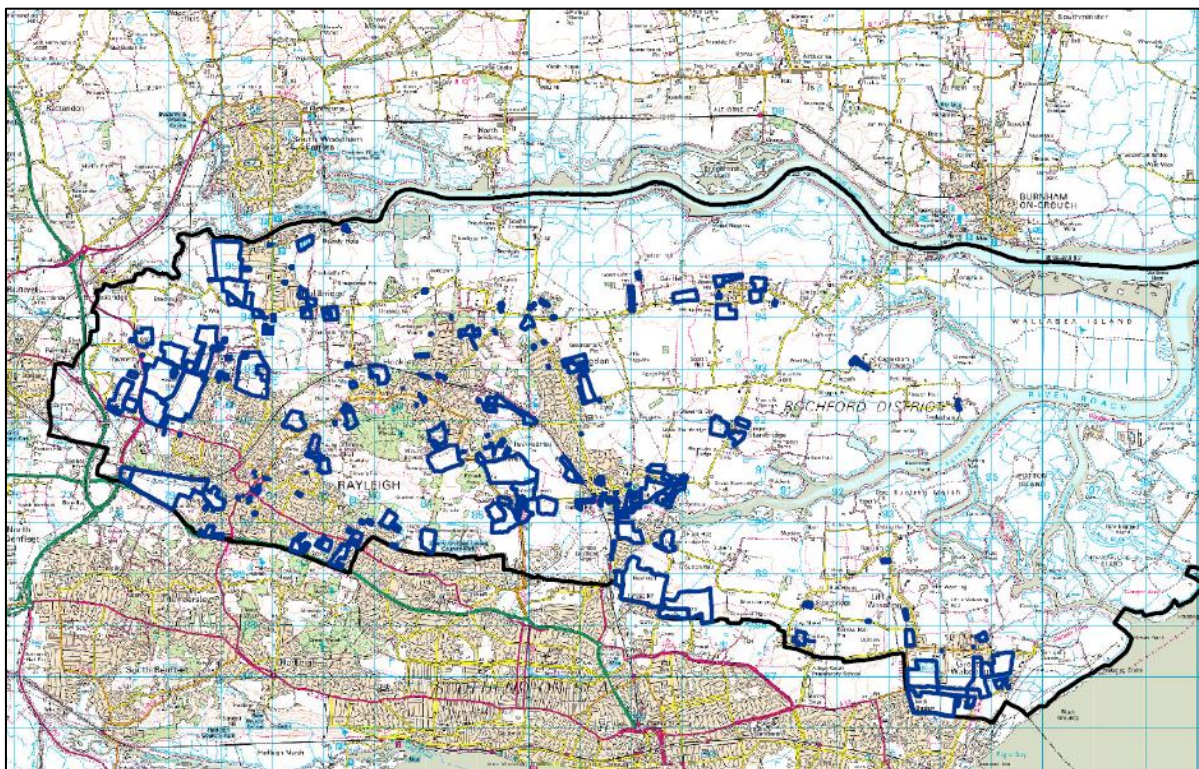
- Flood risk – sites were not automatically excluded because of identified flood risk given that some sites only had a small or moderate proportion of their area falling within a flood zone, and given that in some instances it may be possible to deliver appropriate flood defences or mitigation alongside any development. Sites were only omitted from the exercise where it was considered that the identified flood risk was a significant obstruction to any development on the site within the next 15 years, e.g. the whole site falls within Flood Zone 3b (functional flood-plain) on the Environment Agency’s Flood Map.
- Green Belt – the Rochford District is a predominantly rural district with the majority of its undeveloped areas designated as part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. As one might expect, therefore, the majority of sites that have been submitted through the Call for Sites exercise fall within the designated Metropolitan Green Belt. The NPPF makes clear that, once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of a local development plan. As a Local Planning Authority, we are continuing to develop our evidence base to support the new Local Plan. This is likely to include a Green Belt assessment to consider the role that the district’s Green Belt land plays in achieving the five Green Belt purposes, as set out in the NPPF, and contributing to preserving openness. On this basis, sites which fall within the Metropolitan Green Belt have not been excluded from the assessment, however clearly these sites must generally be considered non-deliverable and non-developable until the outcomes of any future Green Belt assessment are known.
- Special landscape areas – the evidence on landscape character in the district is quite broad, as it has been prepared at the Essex level. There are two local designations – the Coastal Protection Belt and Upper Roach Valley Special Landscape Area – and these are supported by current policy. It is intended that a Landscape Character Assessment review will be undertaken for the district in the

near future, which may propose alterations to the existing designations. Given that this review is still outstanding, sites have not been excluded from the exercise on the basis that they fall within a defined special landscape area. However, clearly sites which fall within a defined special landscape area must generally be considered non-deliverable and non-developable until the outcomes of any review are known.

4.17 Any sites that were submitted through the Call for Sites process, or become otherwise known to the Council, following the March 2016 deadline have not been included in this assessment. Any sites received or identified after this date will be included in any future SHELAA exercise.

4.18 In total, the Council identified 225 sites through the methods set out in paragraph 4.10. An indicative map showing the distribution of these sites is provided below at Figure 3. More detailed area- and site- level maps, as well as site references, are provided as part of the site appraisals at Appendix C.

**Figure 3: Site Distribution Map**



### **Basic Site Information and Data Sources**

4.19 As part of the desktop review, the Council has recorded basic site information for each site, including:

- A unique site reference;
- The location of the site and its boundaries;

- Site size (in hectares); and
- The existing use of both the site, and any adjacent sites.

4.20 All sites included within the SHELAA have been mapped using the Council's GIS software. This database of basic site information is able to be updated where necessary.

4.21 For every site, robust site information has been collected and recorded which will then form the basis for assessment against suitability, availability and achievability criteria. The Council has used the follow sources and stakeholders to collate this information:

- GIS mapping and constraint layers;
- current development plan documents;
- current and emerging evidence base documents;
- Public Rights of Way mapping (Essex County Council);
- minerals and waste mapping (Essex County Council);
- flood risk mapping (Environment Agency);
- planning and development history (Council records);
- Tree Preservation Orders (Council records);
- Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings registers (Historic England);
- public transport and local Infrastructure information;
- local mapping to determine proximity to local services, including retail, education and healthcare facilities; and
- Call for Sites Site Information Forms (if applicable).

4.22 The proximity of the site to local services such as educational facilities, healthcare facilities, open spaces, retail facilities, public transport and existing residential areas has also be recorded through a Good / Medium / Poor rating. The proximity of a site to these facilities will impact on the suitability of that site for certain uses and is expanded upon in paragraph 5.14.

- Good – site is less than 800 metres (10 minutes walking distance)<sup>6</sup> from a facility
- Medium – site is more than 800 metres but less than 2.4 kilometres (30 minutes walking distance)<sup>7</sup> from a facility

---

<sup>6</sup> Department for Transport, Accessibility Statistics Guidance

<sup>7</sup> Department for Transport, Accessibility Statistics Guidance

- Poor – site is more than 2.4 kilometres from a facility

4.23 Where the site has been submitted through the Call for Sites process, or insufficient or out of date information is available for the site, the Council also undertook site surveys, in order to:

- ratify inconsistent information gathered through the Call for Sites or desktop assessments;
- get an up-to-date view on development progress (if the site has planning permission);
- gain a better understanding of the type and scale of development which may be appropriate;
- gain a more detailed understanding of deliverability, any barriers and how they could be overcome; and
- identify further sites with potential for development that were not identified through the Call for Sites or other sources.

4.24 Where necessary, site surveys have been undertaken using a standard pro forma survey, recording characteristics for each site in line with Paragraph 016 of the PPG, including:

- quality of existing accesses (both pedestrian and vehicular) and proximity to local highway network;
- land uses of site and adjacent sites;
- character of area;
- topography and landform;
- physical infrastructure on the site;
- natural features and vegetation; and
- any other identified constraints to development

4.25 The undertaking of site surveys is of use as it allows any discrepancies between the impression of the site gained through the desktop survey and the characteristics of the actual site to be identified, and corrected if necessary.

4.26 The PPG advises that site surveys should be proportionate to the detail required for a robust appraisal. Sites which are considered to be more suitable candidates for development will require more detail than those which are thought to be highly unsuitable for development.

4.27 The Council excluded no further sites at this stage, unless the desktop or site study stages found that a particular site was wholly unsuitable for development, perhaps because of an insurmountable constraint, not otherwise covered under paragraph 3.19.

## **5 Site and Broad Location Assessment**

- 5.1 The next stage of the SHELAA process involved the assessment of development potential for each site, on the basis of suitability, availability and achievability.
- 5.2 The estimation of development potential was be guided by both existing and emerging planning policies, including, for example, locally determined policies on density.<sup>8</sup>
- 5.3 Assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of sites, including whether the site is economically viable will provide the information on which the judgment can be made in the plan-making context as to whether a site can be considered deliverable over the plan period<sup>9</sup>.
- 5.4 Where constraints have been, or are, identified, the assessment considers what steps would be required to overcome them, including the impact this may have on the overall achievability of the site, and the impact on the viability of pursuing the development of the site.
- 5.5 The projected timescales for the potential delivery of each site has be estimated as part of the assessment, and recorded as part of a trajectory. Sites which possess the characteristics of being suitable, available and achievable will be collated. These will help inform the housing and economic strategy for the emerging new Local Plan

### **Assessing Suitability**

- 5.6 The PPG recognises that Local Planning Authorities need to assess a range of different site sizes; ranging from small-scale sites to large-scale opportunities such as village and town extensions and new settlements where appropriate (paragraph 10).
- 5.7 The assessment has considered the **suitability** of the identified use or mix of uses of a particular site, including the types of development which meets the needs of the community.
- 5.8 The Council has considered the following factors when assessing the suitability of land for development:
- existence of constraints and statutory designations;
  - location and sustainability considerations;
  - quality of existing access and relationship with local highway network;
  - physical constraints including landform, topography and existing of surface-level infrastructure; and

---

<sup>8</sup> Planning Practice Guidance 2014, *Housing and economic land availability assessment*, Paragraph 017

<sup>9</sup> Planning Practice Guidance 2014, *Housing and economic land availability assessment*, Paragraph 018

- policy constraints

- 5.9 The information gathered through the desktop and site surveys have formed a fundamental part of assessing the overall suitability of a site for development. Consideration has also been given to how suitable the site is in light of the current and emerging development plans, as well as national policy requirements. This will involve taking into account how up-to-date planning policies are, and the appropriateness of any policy constraints which might restrict development of a particular site. The suitability of a site however may change over time as other evidence to inform the new Local Plan emerges.
- 5.10 Sites with unimplemented or partially implemented planning permissions have generally been considered suitable for development, unless it was considered that changes in policy mean a different decision would likely be made on a future planning application. This extends to allocated land without planning permission, and considering whether the allocated site remains suitable for the development type for which it is allocated.

#### Sustainability and Accessibility Issues

- 5.11 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a 'golden thread' running through the planning system<sup>10</sup>. Part of this presumption in favour of sustainable development includes the principle of actively managing patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focussing significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable<sup>11</sup>.
- 5.12 The accessibility of a site, both in terms of its relationship with the existing highway network and with sustainable transport services, will directly impact on the sustainability of development in that area. The proximity of a site to key local services, such as schools, healthcare institutions and retail premises, will impact on the behaviour of residents in that area and as a result, will impact on the sustainability of the development as a whole. It is therefore a key factor when assessing the suitability of a site for development to consider how accessible and sustainable development in such a location would be.
- 5.13 In general, the presence of an existing access was seen as an indication that the site was physically accessible. Sites were not considered unsuitable if they ran adjacent to existing highway(s) given it is likely to be possible to create a new access from this highway to serve any development, and given that mitigation may be achievable to offset any resultant harm to the local highway network. The practical considerations and design of such an access are secondary considerations which were not examined at this stage. However, any sites which were 'landlocked', i.e. could not be directly accessed from an existing highway and did not run adjacent to any highways were generally considered unsuitable, unless it was considered that development alongside a suitable, adjacent site could achieve a satisfactory means of access.

---

<sup>10</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2012, Paragraph 14

<sup>11</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2012, Paragraph 17,

5.14 When assessing the current sustainability of a site, consideration was given to the distance of the site from key local services, including educational facilities, healthcare facilities, open spaces, retail facilities, public transport and existing residential areas. Information regarding facilities was gathered from mapping software and was considered to be sufficiently accurate at the time of assessment. Figure 4 below sets out the assessment criteria in line with Department for Transport Accessibility guidance<sup>12</sup>.

**Table 4:** Sustainability of Location Assessment Criteria

	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Distance</b>	Site is further than 2.4km from facility	Site is between 800m and 2.4km from facility	Site is less than 800m from facility
<b>Walking Time</b>	More than 30 minute walking distance	Between 10 and 30 minute walking distance	Within 10 minute walking distance
<b>Implication on sustainability</b>	Few people could walk or cycle to facility – high dependence on private car	Some people could walk or cycle to facility – medium dependence on private car	Most people could walk or cycle to facility – low dependence on private car

5.15 Sites were not found to be unsustainable simply on the basis of their location, given that the Council is still at an early stage of its new Local Plan preparations and therefore its housing delivery strategy has not yet been decided. It may be, for example, that one option for housing delivery is a new village or town on land which may currently have poor access to local services but which could deliver new local services through its development. Furthermore the assessment does not take into account the capacity of these services with respect to any development in that area, therefore a ‘good’ level of access does not necessarily demonstrate good accessibility. It may be necessary through the plan-making and application processes for improvements to such facilities to be achieved to deliver satisfactory accessibility.

5.16 Because of the above, sites were generally not found to be unsustainable because of poor access to local services, however where a site was found to be particularly remote, have poor access to local services and given its size, is considered unlikely to be able to provide the necessary improvements to local services if developed, such a site has been found unsuitable at this stage.

Topographic and Landform Issues

5.17 Each site appraisal has recorded information about the topography and landform of the site, as well as any identified surface level infrastructure such as pylons, sub-stations and other structures. Where it is considered that topographic, landform or infrastructural

<sup>12</sup> Department for Transport 2014, Accessibility Statistics Guidance



issues are so significant or insurmountable that they make the site, or parts of the site, unsuitable for development, this will be reflected in the appraisal.

### Policy Issues

- 5.18 Where a site falls within a defined policy area which was not considered to be an absolute constraint under paragraph 3.19, the impact of this policy on the suitability of the site will be considered within the site appraisal. Sites falling within a Conservation Area, minerals or waste area, the curtilage of a Listed Building, or an area including a Tree Preservation Order, will not necessarily be considered unsuitable on that basis, as those policies do not restrict all development, but any development on those sites will likely be required to have sympathy to that policy and/or designation. Furthermore, sites which fall within the scope of Policy S9 of the Essex Minerals Local Plan (2014) – ‘Safeguarding mineral resources and mineral reserves’ – or Policy 2 of the adopted Essex Waste Local Plan (2017) will not necessarily be considered unsuitable, however procedurally consultation with the Minerals and Waste authority, in this case Essex County Council, may be necessary if any such sites were brought forward for development in the future.
- 5.19 There is currently one designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in the district, encompassing an area around Rayleigh Town Centre<sup>13</sup>. This AQMA was designated after marginal exceedances of the annual average level of nitrogen dioxide were recorded in that area. Where a site falls within this designated AQMA, it will not be considered unsuitable for development on that basis, as the existence of an AQMA does not necessarily prohibit all development in that area, and some development may be achievable which does not exacerbate air quality issues. An Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) has been prepared to tackle the air quality issues in this area and the provisions of that Plan may be implemented into the plan-making process where possible and justified. This position may be reviewed in any subsequent SHELAA exercises to ensure any changes to the situation are adjusted for appropriately.
- 5.20 Where a site falls into an area designated as open space, it will generally be considered unsuitable for development, in order to preserve and protect the valuable amenity area that the district’s open spaces provide. It is, however, noted that on larger sites, development schemes may be able to incorporate new open spaces which are able to replace or improve existing open space; therefore any sites whose development would result in the loss of designated open space will be reviewed in any subsequent assessment.

### Flooding Issues

- 5.21 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF sets out that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. Permitting development in areas at high risk of flooding, without adequate mitigation, can lead to safety risks for those residents, as well as having the potential to exacerbate flooding issues for existing developments through increased water run-off. Flood risk was recorded for each site using the Environment Agency’s Flood Map which

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.rochford.gov.uk/environment/air-quality/air-quality-management-area-aqma>

defines flood risk using four 'Zones' – each based on a calculated probability of flooding.

- 5.22 Flood Zone 1 is land at the lowest risk of flooding, and land which is considered suitable for all uses; any sites which fell entirely within Flood Zone 1 were therefore not considered to be constrained by any flood risk.
- 5.23 Flood Zones 2 and 3a is land with a greater probability of flooding, when compared to Flood Zone 1. The PPG sets out that certain forms of development may be acceptable within these zones, albeit a flood risk assessment would be required to determine the likely flood risk. Furthermore, the PPG and NPPF set out the framework for the sequential and exception tests which test the necessity of providing the development in these zones in the context of the increased flood risk. Potential housing sites which fell within Flood Zones 2 and 3a were therefore not necessarily considered wholly unsuitable for development, given mitigation, and the sequential and exception tests may establish that housing development on such sites is acceptable.
- 5.24 Sites which formed part of the employment land assessment were not considered unsuitable in these zones given that most employment uses are classed as 'less vulnerable' developments<sup>14</sup>, which are considered acceptable in Flood Zones 2 and 3a.
- 5.25 The NPPF describes permanent caravan sites as being 'highly vulnerable,' meaning provision within Flood Zones 3a or 3b is wholly unsuitable, and provision within Flood Zone 2 is subject to the exceptions test. As a result, potential Gypsy and Traveller sites which fell within Flood Zone 3a or 3b were found to be unsuitable for development, given the particular vulnerability of caravans.
- 5.26 Flood Zone 3b is a functional floodplain and only essential infrastructure and water compatible uses are acceptable in these areas. As a result, sites, or any parts of a site, which fell within Flood Zone 3b have been considered unsuitable for development.
- 5.27 Where part of a site falls within Flood Zone 3b but not the whole site, it may be that certain parts of the site are considered suitable for development but others are not. In these cases, the net developable area and yield will be adjusted to account for the discounted area at highest flood risk.

#### Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas

- 5.28 The Council intends to undertake a Green Belt Assessment and Landscape Character Assessment review as part of its new Local Plan preparations. As a result, for the purposes of this assessment, sites which fall within the Green Belt or a Special Landscape Area have not been considered wholly unsuitable for development, given the outcomes of those assessments are not yet known. However, until such time that these assessments are undertaken, any development on sites which fall within these areas is likely to be contrary to local planning policies and the NPPF, and therefore neither deliverable or developable.

---

<sup>14</sup> Planning Practice Guidance 2014, Paragraph 66: Flood Risk and Coastal Change,

Previously Developed Land (Brownfield sites)

- 5.29 The NPPF defines previously developed land as ‘land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process.
- 5.30 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out a core planning principle of encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value.
- 5.31 Furthermore, Paragraph 89 of the NPPF establishes the principle of the development of previously developed land in the Green Belt, where the limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed (brownfield) land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.
- 5.32 Where a site is considered to meet the definition of previously developed land, the site will generally be considered suitable for development unless policy, sustainability or physical constraints are identified which make the site otherwise unsuitable for development.

**Consideration for housing delivery**

- 5.33 Although sites were assessed as being suitable if they were potentially able to deliver five or more net dwellings, as per the PPG, smaller sites of fewer than five net dwellings have also been included in this assessment. This is because small sites have historically contributed to supply as windfall sites. The supply of smaller sites can underpin the inclusion of windfall sites in the five year housing supply calculations. Smaller sites also align with the Government’s aspirations to encourage provision of allocations suitable for small and medium sized house builders (as set out in the Housing White Paper, March 2017).
- 5.34 The overall suitability of land for housing delivery has been based on the sustainability of its location with respect to local facilities and services, and the presence of any constraints, whether policy-based, statutory designations or physical constraints on the site. A brief summary has been provided for each site explaining its given suitability score.

**Consideration for Gypsy and Traveller site delivery**

- 5.35 The Department for Communities and Local Government has produced specific planning policy relating to the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites, entitled Planning

Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS). The PPTS sets out that traveller sites should be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, providing access to appropriate health services, educational services, as well as avoiding placing undue pressure on local infrastructure and services and away from areas at high risk of flooding – given the particular vulnerability of caravans.

- 5.36 In accordance with the PPTS, the suitability of potential Gypsy and Traveller sites have been assessed on the basis of the sustainability of its location in relation with local facilities and services, as well as the presence of any constraints, including statutory, policy-based and physical constraints. With potential Gypsy and Traveller sites, flood risk is a significant consideration – given the particular vulnerability of caravans – which the NPPF defines in a higher category of flood vulnerability than standard dwellings. In line with the NPPF, any potential sites which fall within Flood Zone 3a or 3b shall be considered wholly unsuitable for Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

### **Consideration for employment land delivery**

- 5.37 As per the PPG, the SHELAA has assessed the potential suitability of sites to be delivered for employment use. Sites have predominantly been assessed based on the presence of any constraints, as well as their location and relationship with existing, and allocated, employment sites, the strategic transport network and the district's three town centres (Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley). Any sites which are less than 0.25 hectares in size have been considered unsuitable for employment uses unless they are located within a town centre or other area where smaller scale employment uses, such as offices, are more suitable.

### **Assessing Availability**

- 5.38 The PPG defines **availability** as when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems on the site, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners.
- 5.39 Sites which are put forward by a developer or landowner, who have expressed an intention to develop the site, will generally be considered available. Because a person does not need to have an interest in a site to make a planning application, the existence of a planning permission, either extant or unimplemented, will not be assumed to make the site available. However, generally sites will be considered to be available unless legal or ownership issues are identified which are likely to preclude any development of the site in the plan period.
- 5.40 Ownership issues might include the existence of multiple landowners across the site, the existence of ransom strips or any other issues relating to site ownership which might prevent or delay a site coming forward for development. Information relating to the existence of any ownership issues was gathered through relevant fields on the Site Information Form, in the case of Call for Sites submissions, or on best information for any other sites.
- 5.41 Legal issues might include the existence of tenancy agreements on the site or any other contractual or covenanted agreements which might prevent or delay a site coming

forward for development. Again, information relating to the existence of any legal issues was gathered through relevant fields on the Site Information Form, in the case of Call for Sites submissions, or on best information for any other sites.

- 5.42 The Council has limited access to land agreements or land ownership information, and therefore it is difficult to verify that the information provided with respect to ownership and legal issues is wholly comprehensive and accurate. However in the absence of information to the contrary, it has generally been considered that a site would be available for development.
- 5.43 It is further noted that sites may be available for some uses but not for others, e.g. a landowner may make a site available for housing development but not for employment land. In such instances, the site has only been considered available for the uses that it has been put forward. Where information has not been provided regarding a proposed use, the site has been considered available for all uses.
- 5.44 Where a site is Council-owned, the site will generally not be considered available for development in the short term unless the site has actively been proposed for development, including where a planning application has been submitted. Some Council-owned sites, such as public car parks and operational offices, have been included in the assessment in the interests of completeness, but have specifically not been recorded as being available in the short term, given they are still in use and their loss would likely require alternative provision elsewhere. The Council may choose to make such sites available for development in the future, if and where justified, therefore these sites have not been excluded from the exercise and will be kept under review for consideration in any future SHELAA exercises.
- 5.45 Consideration will also be given to the delivery record of the developers or landowners putting sites forward, and whether the planning background of a site shows a history of unimplemented permissions.
- 5.46 Where issues are identified which may impact on the availability of the site, consideration will be given to the degree to which the identified issue preclude development on the site, and where such an issue may delay development, a realistic timescale in which the site to be developed. A short summary will be provided for every site providing a conclusion on the likely availability of the site.

### **Assessing Achievability**

- 5.47 The PPG defines **achievability** as when there is considered to be a reasonable prospect that a particular type of development will be developed on a site at a particular point in time. This includes assessing the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the landowner or developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period.
- 5.48 Assessing whether a site is achievable will include consideration of various factors including:
- Market factors – such as adjacent land uses, viability of existing, proposed and alternative uses, attractiveness of the locality, level of demand, net developable areas, yield potential, dwelling mixes and rate of sales;

- Cost factors – such as land preparation costs, costs of overcoming constraints, the cost of strategic infrastructure, and costs of meeting planning standards and obligations; and
- Delivery factors – such as phasing, build out rates and size and capacities of developers.

Viability Assessment – Peter Brett Associates

- 5.49 Due to the specialist nature of this work, the Council commissioned Peter Brett Associates LLP to undertake a viability assessment of 219 sites to consider their achievability for potential housing land development. The potential viability of sites for employment land has not been subject to this assessment because non-residential development, including for employment uses, does not lend itself to standard viability assessment that is used for housing. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the NPPF sets out specific requirements in relation to housing land supply that do not apply to other land uses. Secondly, non-residential property markets, including employment, work differently to housing markets<sup>15</sup>.
- 5.50 The SHELAA has been informed by the Council’s Employment Land Study Update 2014 and the South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment 2017; both prepared by GVA. The housing viability assessment followed a standard approach advocated by the Harman Report<sup>16</sup>, calculating an approximate gross development value of residential development on a site minus the amount required for landowners to sell, profit, finances and overheads, development costs and policy requirements. From this, sites were able to be score as being viable, marginally viable or unviable.
- 5.51 The viability assessment utilised standard assumptions from the Council’s adopted planning policies including a 35% affordable housing contribution on sites which deliver more than 15 dwellings – with an 80% social and 20% intermediate housing split – as well as a standard development density of 35 dwellings per hectare and projected policy costs derived from the Council’s current adopted local development framework. It should be noted that in some instances it may be that higher densities would be acceptable – such as in town centre areas – or that lesser affordable housing contributions may be accepted where it is proven that the development would otherwise be unviable. However it is considered that in the majority of cases these standard assumptions would apply and therefore their use is justified for the purposes of this strategic assessment.
- 5.52 The viability assessment is provided, in full, at Appendix D, which sets out the assumptions and methodology used in greater detail, as well as providing the viability score for each site.

**Overcoming Constraints**

- 5.53 Where constraints have been identified, whether they are policy, legal or viability-related, the assessment has considered to what extent this precludes prospect of development on the site, and the impact of these constraints on the likely timescales

---

<sup>15</sup> Rochford SHELAA Residential Viability Study – July 2017

<sup>16</sup> Local Housing Delivery Group, Chaired by Sir John Harman (2012) Viability Testing Local Plans

and delivery of any development have been factored into the trajectory, where appropriate.

**Timescale for Development**

5.54 Once each site has been assessed on the basis of suitability, availability and achievability, and any constraints are identified, each site can be assessed on a likely timescale and rate of development, should they come forward for development. This information has incorporated into the trajectory at Appendix E.

**6 Windfall Assessment**

6.1 Windfall sites are sites which have not been specifically identified as available through the Local Plan process. They tend to be sites which have unexpectedly become available<sup>17</sup>.

6.2 Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, and sections of the PPG, both state that windfall sites can positively contribute towards housing supply, where justified. However, there is an emphasis on justification, and compelling evidence must be provided to show that windfall sites have consistently become available in the past, and that therefore expecting such sites to become available again is realistic.

6.3 Figure 5 below sets out the net contribution to housing delivery that windfall sites have made across the district from 2006/07 to 2016/17.

**Figure 5: Net Contribution to Housing Supply from Windfall Sites (2006 – 2017)**

06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
-5	0	58	55	-6	-3	-2	148	37	53	25

6.4 Whilst the district has seen significant trends of windfall delivery over the past 11 years, there have also been multiple years where there has been a net loss of dwellings from windfall sites. As a result, whilst the average delivery across this period is positive (32.7), windfall sites have clearly not made a consistent, positive contribution to housing delivery; therefore it is not considered justified to include a windfall allowance in the housing supply trajectory at this time. This position will be reviewed in any subsequent assessments to take account of any changes in windfall delivery trends at that time.

---

<sup>17</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2012, Annex 2: Glossary

## **7 Review of the Assessment**

- 7.1 The following section summarises the key findings of Rochford District Council’s SHELAA which will become an important document in the new Local Plan evidence base.

### **Housing development potential**

- 7.2 Of the 219 sites assessed as listed in Appendix C, all were assessed for their housing development potential. All sites were assessed against suitability, availability and achievability criteria as set out in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report.
- 7.3 The viability of the sites was tested on the basis of standard assumptions about the delivery of a site. This included consideration of the Council’s current affordable housing policy of a 35% delivery on sites with a potential yield of 15 or more dwellings, with an 80% social rented and 20% intermediate tenure mix.
- 7.4 Potential site yield was calculated with the assumption that all sites will be delivered at a density of 35 dwellings per hectare (dph) or for previously allocated sites, at their allocation. Constraints and necessary contributions and infrastructure have been factored in to the calculations, with the net developable area adjusted for all sites. It is noted that in some locations a higher density may be acceptable, such as within town centres.
- 7.5 The overall SHELAA viability results for the tested scenario are represented in Tables 6 and 7 below.

**Table 6:** Overview of the Sites Viability Assessment Results

<b>Viability Score</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>
<b>Viable</b>	204
<b>Marginal</b>	10
<b>Unviable</b>	5



**Table 7:** Overview of the Potential Yield Viability Assessments Results

<b>Viability Score</b>	<b>Dwelling Yield</b>
<b>Viable</b>	23,707
<b>Marginal</b>	1,042
<b>Unviable</b>	205

7.6 The tested scenario of 35% affordable housing content and a dwelling density of 35 dph indicates that 205 viable and 10 marginally viable sites are likely to be achievable, out of a total of 219 sites considered. In total, these sites have the potential to yield approximately 23,707 viable dwellings or 24,749 dwellings when including marginally viable sites. These figures do not take into account sites which are not considered to be suitable or available and therefore clearly do not provide an accurate reflection of the district's current land availability; these figures do, however, provide an idea of the maximum theoretical housing land potential in the district.

7.7 Table 8 below breaks down those sites which the assessment has determined are potentially suitable, available and achievable for housing development. These figures provide a 'point in time' indication of the potential capacity of sites in the district that can be considered either deliverable or developable at the current time.

**Table 8:** Available sites determined as being potentially suitable and achievable for housing development

	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Potential Yield</b>
<b>Suitable</b>	43	1,105
<b>Achievable</b>	38	935
<b>Suitable and Achievable</b>	38	935

7.8 Table 9 below breaks down those sites which the assessment has determined are potentially suitable, available and achievable for housing development, including those sites which were not considered deliverable or developable at the current time but which could conceivably become deliverable or developable in the long-term, either because they are subject to policy constraints which will be reviewed as part of the new

Local Plan process, or because the site is unlikely to be made available in the short-term but has the potential to come forward in the longer term. The purpose of including such sites is to provide information on the maximum potential capacity of sites in the district in a ‘policy off’ scenario. Furthermore, these sites have not been completely discounted given that, subject to the outcomes of forthcoming Green Belt and Landscape Character assessments, it is possible that some of these sites may become deliverable or developable in policy terms.

**Table 9:** Available sites determined as being potentially suitable and achievable for housing development including those sites subject to constraints under review and those which could be made available in the longer term

	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Potential Yield</b>
<b>Suitable (including sites falling within the Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas)</b>	214	24,924
<b>Achievable (including sites falling within the Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas)</b>	211	24,749
<b>Suitable and Achievable (including sites falling within the Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas)</b>	209	24,590

7.9 Due to the predominantly rural nature of the Rochford District, in its context in South Essex, unsurprisingly the vast majority of available, undeveloped sites in the district are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt or Special Landscape Areas. However, this assessment has found that there is land available in the district which is both suitable and achievable to deliver 935 dwellings, in addition to those sites which already have planning permissions and which therefore already form part of the Council’s housing land trajectory.

7.10 The Council’s housing land trajectory, which includes the sites considered as part of this assessment, in addition to allocated sites and sites with extant permissions, has found that there is sufficient suitable, available and achievable land to deliver a total of 3,499 dwellings in the district across the next ten years. This trajectory can be found at Appendix E.

**Employment development potential**

- 7.11 The vast majority of the 219 sites in the SHELAA database have been assessed for their suitability for economic development. However, it should be noted that very few of these sites were put forward for employment development, which greatly reduced the number of sites which could be considered available for this type of development.
- 7.12 Table 10 below sets out the hypothetical capacity of suitable and available land in the district for employment development. As with those sites considered for housing development, sites which are subject to constraints which will be reviewed as part of the Local Plan process, specifically the Metropolitan Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas, have not been wholly discounted given that the long-term suitability of these sites for development may change. However, such sites should be considered undevelopable as employment land until the outcomes of these reviews are known.
- 7.13 It is likely that some of the sites that are considered to be suitable and available for employment development have also been found to be suitable, available and achievable for housing development. As a result, the capacity figures shown in Table 10 should be read as a maximum theoretical capacity, and not as an addition over and above the housing land capacity set out within Tables 8 and 9 above.

**Table 10:** Sites which are considered to be suitable and available for employment development

	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Total site size (Ha)</b>
<b>Suitable (excluding Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas)</b>	23	19.32
<b>Suitable and Available (excluding Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas)</b>	17	18.76
<b>Suitable and Available (including Green Belt and Special Landscape Areas and where no availability information)</b>	27	154.62

## **Gypsy and Traveller development potential**

- 7.14 In total, the SHELAA has identified 11 sites as being available for a Gypsy and Traveller use. Of these 11 sites however, 10 fell within the Metropolitan Green Belt. In general, development of this nature would be considered inappropriate within the Green Belt and materially harmful to its character and openness, contrary to the NPPF. As a result, there are not considered to be any sites within the District that are both suitable and available for Gypsy and Traveller development as of 10 October 2017, except those which already lawfully exist and the allocated Gypsy and Traveller site at Michelins Farm, Rawreth (Policy GT1 of the Council's Allocations Plan).
- 7.15 As discussed earlier in this report, the Council does intend to undertake a Green Belt assessment as part of its new Local Plan preparations. The outcomes of this assessment may justify the revision of Green Belt boundaries which may impact on the suitability of currently unsuitable sites. As a result, the sites considered in this section will be kept on record for reconsideration once such a Green Belt assessment has taken place.

## **8 Potential Site Delivery**

- 8.1 Of those sites identified as potentially suitable, available and achievable, it is useful to establish a realistic timeframe over which a site could be developed and/or delivered. For example, for some sites it may be realistic to assume that the site will come forward for development immediately or within five years, however for other sites, certain issues relating to the site's availability or suitability may mean the site is more likely to come forward over a 6-10 year or 11-15 year period.
- 8.2 To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within 5 years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years, for example they will not be viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans<sup>18</sup>. Sites which have been considered as deliverable have been included in the Council's trajectory for shorter term delivery.
- 8.3 To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged<sup>19</sup>. These sites have been included in the Council's trajectory for longer term delivery.
- 8.4 It may be that some sites are considered non-developable. This will be the case where the prospect of development on such a site is unlikely within a 15 year period, as insurmountable issues relating to the site's suitability, availability and achievability have been identified. These sites cannot be incorporated into the Council's housing

---

<sup>18</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2012, Footnote 1

<sup>19</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2012, Footnote 2

trajectory but may be included in any future SHELAA exercise to establish if there has been any change in their suitability, availability and achievability in that time.

- 8.5 The Council's housing trajectory is provided at Appendix E. This trajectory includes those sites which were already identified within the Council's trajectory, i.e. those which have an extant planning permission or are allocated for housing development, as well as any additional sites that have been specifically identified through this SHELAA exercise. The estimated timeframes to come forward and build out rates have been based on discussions with developers – particularly for allocated sites – as well as any availability issues identified for the site and past delivery trends.
- 8.6 The trajectory is considered to be accurate as a 'point in time' estimation; however it will be reviewed periodically, as part of the Council's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), to ensure that the projected timeframes reflect any new information and remain accurate and that the delivery of any further windfall sites is monitored.