

Site Selection Topic Paper (2024)



South Tyneside Council

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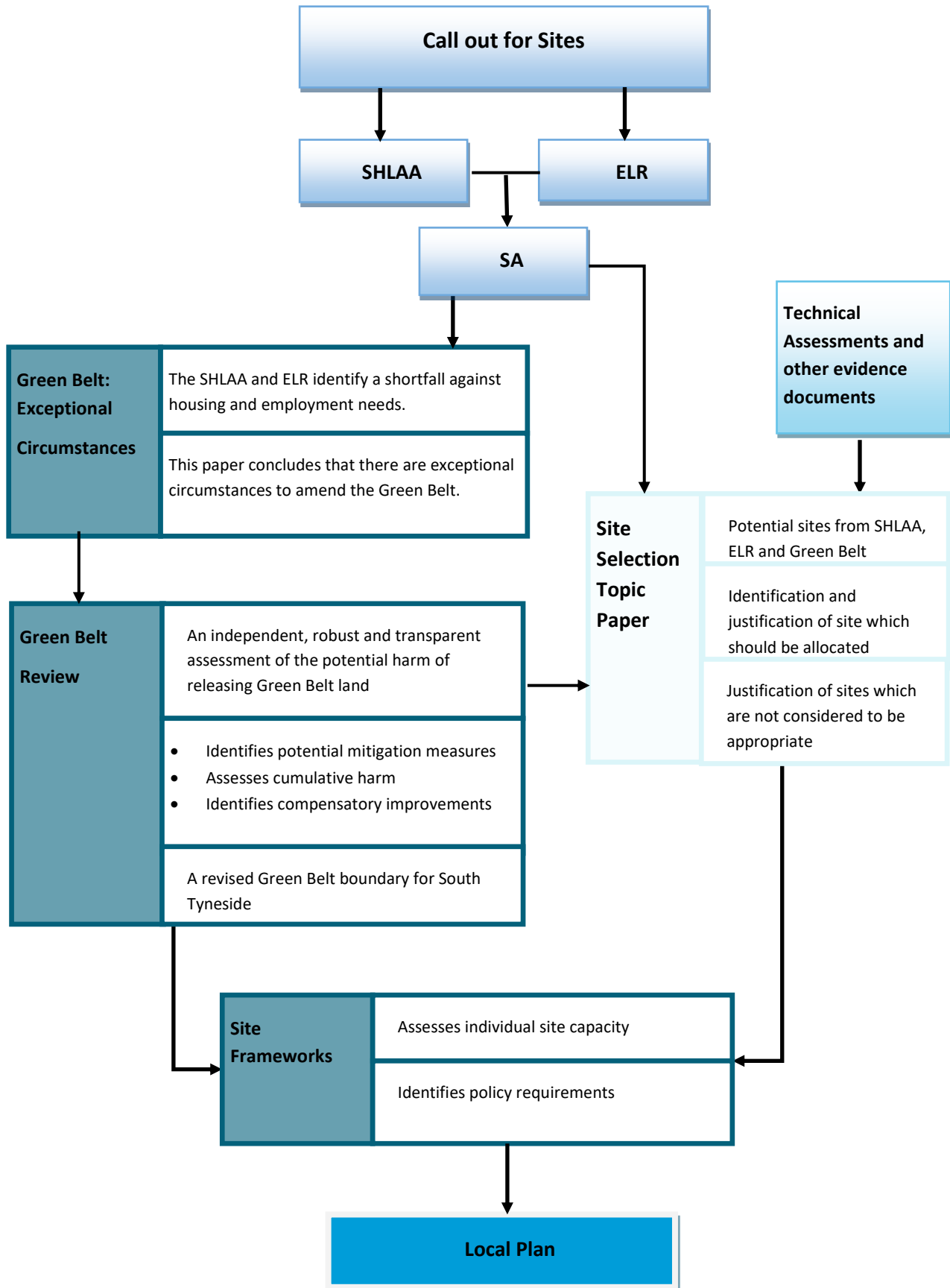
1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 This paper sets out how we have assessed housing and employment site options selected for allocation in the Publication Draft Local Plan 2023 – 2040. This document builds on the Site Selection Topic Paper (2022) which was prepared for the Regulation 18 South Tyneside draft Local Plan (2022).
- 1.2 The paper provides clarity and transparency by explaining how the Plan has allocated sites, why each site has been selected and why reasonable alternatives have not been selected. It also outlines how updates in the Local Plan evidence base have been considered and how that has affected the site selection process.
- 1.3 This topic paper update comprises of the main report and additional Appendices which look at each site in more detail. The Appendices included in this document are:
 - Appendix 1: Boldon and Cleadon
 - Appendix 2: Fellgate and Hedworth
 - Appendix 3: Hebburn
 - Appendix 4: Inner South Shields
 - Appendix 5: Jarrow
 - Appendix 6: Outer South Shields
 - Appendix 7: Whitburn
- 1.4 The Site Selection Topic Paper is supported by an interactive map which identifies each of the reasonable options considered as part of the plan preparation process.
- 1.5 In total 515 sites have been considered as reasonable options in the preparation of the Plan. All sites considered to be reasonable options have been subject to a sustainability appraisal assessment in addition to the site selection process outlined in this report.
- 1.6 This paper should be read in conjunction with the following evidence base documents:
 - Effective Land Use
 - Green Belt Stage 1: Exceptional Circumstances
 - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)
 - Employment Land Review (ELR)
 - Employment Land Technical Paper

2. EVIDENCE REVIEW

- 2.1 A range of evidential sources have informed the site selection process. It is essential that this evidence is kept up to date to ensure that it remains robust. This paper reflects the key changes to the evidence base since the Regulation 18 consultation which are relevant to the site selection process.
- 2.2 Figure 1 sets out the how the evidence base feeds in to the production of the Local Plan.
- 2.3 It is important to note that there are a number of inter-dependencies between these evidence sources which means they cannot be read in isolation. There may also be cases where the findings from one conflict with the findings of another. In determining which sites are suitable for allocation, we have had to make a balanced judgement fully informed by the full range of individual evidential sources and the degree to which any conflicts can be mitigated.

Fig 1. How Local Plan evidence base has informed the Local Plan Site Selection



STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SHLAA) (2023)

- 2.4 The primary role of the SHLAA is to identify and assess sites that may have the potential to provide for housing in South Tyneside to support the delivery of sufficient land to meet the borough's housing needs. The SHLAA is a 'snapshot' in time. To ensure robustness it will be reviewed annually. If changes are recorded, then this may change the assessment of a site.
- 2.5 The SHLAA report identifies a supply of specific deliverable sites for the first five years of the plan and a supply of specific developable sites for years 6-10 and 11-15 years. The South Tyneside SHLAA will identify supply to support the Plan period up to 2040. The SHLAA identifies all sites in the borough with potential for future housing development, assessing their suitability, availability and how soon development could reasonably be achieved, as well as making assumptions of how many homes they could yield if they were to be developed for housing.
- 2.6 The 2023 SHLAA update assesses 199 sites with potential for future housing development, assessing their suitability, availability and how soon development could reasonably be achieved, as well as making assumptions of how many homes they could yield if they were to be ultimately developed for housing.

EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW (ELR) (2023)

- 2.7 The purpose of the ELR is to provide an understanding of:
- The borough's current position with respect to employment land supply; and
 - The anticipated future growth trajectory of the borough's economy and the implications of this with respect to demand for employment land over the period 2021 - 2039.
- 2.8 The ELR includes site specific assessments of sites that are currently available for employment use in the following categories:
- General employment land - land suitable for general non-specialist employment uses.
 - Port and river related employment land - sites along the river corridor that are well situated to provide services to the offshore energy sector including renewables as well as the manufacture of wind turbine generators.
- 2.9 Included in the assessment of each site is a recommendation for the Council to consider the site for employment use or not. As with the SHLAA, the ELR does not itself allocate sites but forms part of the evidence base and assists in understanding the achievability of available employment sites.
- 2.10 An Employment Land Technical Paper (2023) has also been prepared. The paper sets out the technical evidence we have used to assess how much employment floorspace may be required in the borough over the years 2021-2039 and where it should be located. This paper builds upon the ELR, the Local Economic Assessment (2021) and officers' expertise.

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL (SA) OF LOCAL PLAN SITES AND POLICIES (2022 AND 2023)

- 2.11 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a process which is undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan. The SA ensures that potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues. The SA aims to promote sustainable development by assessing all policies and alternatives against a set of Sustainability Objectives; this assessment

helps to identify conflicts and can lead to mitigation measures being introduced. The process aims to ensure plans and policies achieve sustainable development. The SA is an iterative process and is repeated throughout the plan preparation process.

2.12 All sites considered to be reasonable options for the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan were subject to a site-specific SA. The process showed the sustainability credentials of each site as part of the Plan process and highlighted any issues which were likely to require mitigation. In support of the Regulation 19 Local Plan, further Site Specific SA's have been undertaken or updated. New SA assessments have been undertaken for:

- Reasonable options not considered as during Regulation 18 – e.g. sites where planning permissions has lapsed.
- Sites within the Green Belt which were previously ruled out as reasonable options due to impact upon the Green Belt determined by the South Tyneside Green Belt Study (2022). To support the Regulation-19 Local Plan a new Green Belt Study has been undertaken, to reflect the findings of this to ensure reasonable options had not been prematurely ruled out, all Green Belt sites which are considered reasonable options have been subject to a Site-specific SA.

2.13 The Site- Specific SA have also been updated to reflect the updated evidence base to support the Publication draft Local Plan were relevant.

2.14 The Publication draft SA Report (2023) reflects any modifications and amendments to policies which have occurred following consultation will be assessed against the SA objective. The final SA report will be submitted to the Planning Inspector alongside the Plan.

THE HABITAT REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) (2023)

2.15 A Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required to demonstrate that a plan or project will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European Protected Site. The process seeks to identify any potential 'likely significant effects' (LSE) which may impact upon the designated site, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. Where it is deemed that adverse impacts cannot be ruled out, the plan or project must not proceed unless exceptional circumstances exist.

2.16 The assessment seeks to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended, which are commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations'. Importantly, the most recent amendments (the Conservation of Habitats and Species (amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 20192) take account of the UK's departure from the EU.

2.17 South Tyneside's coast has two designated European Sites: Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA)/Ramsar site. The citation for the site explains that this SAC protects the only example of vegetated sea cliffs on magnesian limestone exposures in the UK and supports a unique mix of vegetation not found elsewhere in the UK. It is highly sensitive to impacts that change the conditions of the site, including nutrient enrichment and direct habitat damage.

2.18 The Northumbria Coast is classified as a SPA and listed as a Ramsar site for its wading bird species. It is designated for two species of wintering waterbirds, Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper. The key concern for South Tyneside with respect to bird disturbance relates to wintering Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone.

- 2.19 The HRA is an iterative process and will be undertaken at each stage of the Plan process. An assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the effects of growth delivered through the plan are identified and appropriately mitigated.

GREEN BELT PAPERS

Green Belt: Exceptional Circumstances

- 2.20 This paper examines the strategic context and existing evidence base insofar as it relates to the possible need to release land from the Green Belt and provides an assessment as to whether the Council considers that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the removal of land from the currently defined Green Belt.

Green Belt Study

- 2.21 Whilst the Green Belt was established to help prevent the spread of urban development within the area, national planning policy requires local authorities to ensure that there is a supply of deliverable housing site to meet housing requirements and that enough land is available to support the needs of businesses.
- 2.22 The Green Belt Study does not itself determine whether or not land should remain or be included in the Green Belt. Rather, it appraises parcels of land against the purposes of the Green Belt. It does not appraise the suitability of sites for development, or take into account other potentially physical policy constraints, such as flood risk, ecology, heritage, etc. These issues are dealt with separately through other evidential work that will support the Plan, and which have been brought together in this Site Selection Topic Paper. The Green Belt Study is therefore a technical document that is used to aid decisions on where the Green Belt may be amended, if necessary, to accommodate future development requirements.
- 2.23 National Policy requires the Local Plan to set out ways to offset the impact of removing land from the Green Belt. Compensatory measures include improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. A number of site-specific recommendations have been drawn up and these will help inform development proposals on the Green Belt allocations.

THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY (2012)

- 2.24 The Landscape Character Study presents a detailed review of the landscapes of South Tyneside, and the means by which their distinctive characteristics can be maintained and enhanced. The study is intended to provide a greater understanding of the local character and context of the built and natural environment of the borough.

STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT (SFRA) / FLOOD RISK SEQUENTIAL TEST AND EXCEPTION TEST (2022)

The Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report (2022)

- 2.25 A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is a study to assess the risk to an area from flooding from all sources, now and in the future, taking account of the impacts of climate change, and to assess the impact that land use changes and development in the area will have on flood risk. The SFRA Level 1 Report provides the baseline technical report for assessing flood risk at a strategic level in South Tyneside and is sufficiently detailed to allow the application of the Sequential Test.

The Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2023)

2.26 The Level 1 SFRA provides a strategic assessment of the suitability, relative to flood risk, of the sites at the Port of Tyne to be considered for allocation in the Local Plan.

The Flood Risk Sequential Test

2.27 The NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. A sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development should be applied in the preparation of Local Plans (NPPF paragraph 161). The aim is to minimise the risk from flooding. Development should not be allocated if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed allocation in areas with a lower probability of flooding (NPPF paragraph 162).

The Flood Risk Exception Test

2.28 The Exception Test is applicable if, following application of the Sequential Test; it is not possible, consistent with wider sustainability objectives, for the development to be located in zones with a lower probability of flooding. For the Exception Test to be passed:

- It must be demonstrated that the development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk, informed by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment where one has been prepared (the first part of the Test); and
- A site-specific flood risk assessment must demonstrate that the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall (the second part of the Test).

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

2.29 Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) seeks to provide robust and defensible evidence of the potential risk of development of the proposed site allocations in the Plan to the significance of heritage assets, including their settings. In addition to identifying the potential risks of development, and whether development can be justified, the paper seeks to provide guidance on the opportunities and strategies for mitigating any potential impacts.

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY (2015 & 2019)

2.30 The Council undertook a Playing Pitch Strategy (2015) followed by an update in 2019. The Playing Pitch Strategy has identified a shortfall playing pitch provision for grassed sports (football, rugby and cricket), now and in the future. It therefore recommends that playing field land in the borough should not be deemed as surplus to requirements because of these shortfalls and should be protected via the Plan. Any playing field land identified for housing development would need to be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. The Playing Pitch Strategy is in the process of being updated.

OPEN SPACE STUDY (2023)

2.31 The new South Tyneside Open Space Study (OSS) replaces the 2015 Open Space Study and 2019 Open Space Addendum. The key objectives of the OSS are to provide a clear understanding of open space quality and quantity standards in the borough, identify surpluses or deficiencies and

to provide information to justify the collection of Section 106 developer contributions towards improving the quality and quantity of open space provision. It considers the future demand for provision based upon population distribution, planned growth and consultation findings. The study addresses the following open space typologies:

- Amenity greenspace
- Parks and recreation grounds
- Natural and Semi-natural greenspace
- Play space (children)
- Play space (youth)
- Accessible Natural Green Space
- Allotments

2.32 Individual sites have been assessed and awarded a rating based on their quality and value; most assessed sites in South Tyneside rate above the quality threshold and are of high quality. The Open Space Study helps to identify standards (ha per 1,000 population) for each open space typology and for the borough. It also includes accessibility mapping which seeks to identify open space deficiencies and gaps in open space provision though out the borough.

WILDLIFE CORRIDOR NETWORK REVIEW (2020)

2.33 The Wildlife Corridor Network Review (2020) provides an evidence base to identify and map the wildlife corridors network within local development plans and to inform future work on nature recovery and biodiversity gains.

2.34 The study identifies three components which contribute to the wildlife corridors identified within South Tyneside. They are:

- Core Sites - These are sites of high nature conservation value that are of most importance for biodiversity in terms of sustaining wildlife populations and providing sites from which species can disperse. These include International and national wildlife designations, Ancient woodland, locally designated sites, priority habitats and ponds and watercourses.
- Secondary Features and Stepping Stones – These are habitats/features within the wider landscape that provide connectivity and permeability between core sites.
- Buffer Zone - a 250 m buffer applied to all core sites (500m for international sites).

RELATIONSHIP TO NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

2.35 The East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan (2021) and Whitburn Neighbourhood Plan (2022) are now 'made' i.e. formally adopted and form part of the South Tyneside development plan. Regard has been had to the land-use policies within these neighbourhood plans in the appraisals undertaken within the Site-Selection Topic Paper appendices.

3. THE HOUSING SITE SELECTION PROCESS

3.1 The housing site selection process consists of the following stages:

1. Determining the need for homes
2. Ensuring a comprehensive baseline of potential housing sites
3. Sieving out sites without housing potential
4. Assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of sites
5. Determining the need to release land for homes from the Green Belt
6. Assessing site specific technical considerations, Green Belt harm and the site-specific sustainability appraisal

STEP 1 - DETERMINING THE NEED FOR NEW HOMES

3.2 The assessment and identification of housing land potential in South Tyneside is consistent with the broad methodology identified in the National Planning Practice Guidance for housing produced by the Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities.

3.3 The most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2023) and objectively assessed needs analysis identifies a housing requirement for South Tyneside of 309 dwellings per annum: a total 5253 dwellings over the Plan period. The Plan base date is April 2023 for housing completions and commitments (planning permissions). A total of 122 of the new houses the borough needs are already completed. Table 1 identifies the residual housing requirement for the Local Plan.

Table 1. Publication draft Local Plan – Residual Housing Requirement.

		Number of Homes
A	Local Plan minimum housing requirement 2023 to 2040	5253
B	Commitments	1475
C	Completions (net)	122
D	10% lapse rate for commitments on sites not yet started	95
E	Projected demolitions / losses	165
F	Small scale windfalls	444
G	Brownfield Register (small sites)	30
	Residual housing requirement = A – B - C + D + E - F -G	3443

STEP 2 – ENSURING A COMPREHENSIVE BASELINE OF POTENTIAL HOUSING SITES

3.4 The updated SHLAA (2023) is the key evidence document in the housing site selection process. A number of other important evidential sources have inter-acted with, and informed the SHLAA, but it has provided the crucial baseline evidence, both site-specific and in relation to strategic housing numbers.

3.5 All sites in the borough that are considered to have potential for residential development are included in the SHLAA. A call out for sites was undertaken via e-mail, letter and the Council's

webpage between 8th April 2021 and 30th April 2021 the submission of sites. In addition, desktop survey work was undertaken. The SHLAA is available on the Council website and includes full details of the methodology used. It provides a more up to date position on land supply and has been updated against more recent evidence such as the SFRA and the Green Belt papers.

STEP 3 – SIEVING OUT SITES WITHOUT HOUSING POTENTIAL

3.6 Sites were only sieved out if they were significantly covered by one or more Category 1 constraints. The Regional SHLAA Implementation Guide (March 2008) is consistent with PPG and advocates this approach. Applying these constraints, 48 sites were sieved out. The following designations are considered to be Category 1 constraints:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- Ramsar Sites
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- National Nature Reserves
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Health and Safety Executive Inner Zones
- Areas identified as flood zone 3

3.7 In accordance with the SHLAA methodology the following sites were also sieved out:

- Completed sites: sites are completed when they have no remaining units left to build out. As a result, such sites have not been assessed for their suitability, availability, achievability, and deliverability. Completion of sites will be monitored through the annual monitoring report and will inform future updates to the SHLAA.
- Sites that have not been submitted to the Council's Call out for Sites or have not currently or previously had planning permission for residential development.
- Sites with significant physical constraints i.e. no access, steep topography

STEP 4 – ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY, AVAILABILITY AND ACHIEVABILITY OF SITES

3.8 In accordance with PPG, sites are then assessed against the existing development plan, national policy, emerging policy and the market and industry requirements for housing in the market area to determine a sites development potential.

3.9 The assessment of suitability, availability and achievability can be viewed as a step in the site selection process. However, this is not a clearly delineated stage as circumstances can change over time. Further detail regarding the assessment of suitability, availability and achievability can be found in the SHLAA.

STEP 5 – DETERMINING THE NEED TO RELEASE LAND FOR HOMES FROM THE GREEN BELT

- 3.10 In total, the SHLAA assessed 173 sites across the borough which currently do not benefit from planning consent for residential development (including land within the Green Belt). The SHLAA identified 27 non-Green Belt sites were considered suitable from a planning perspective with a theoretical capacity to deliver some 1190 homes.
- 3.11 Taking the above into account, there remains an acute shortfall in the supply of housing land of at least 2253 homes over the Plan period. In other words, the Plan could only meet some 34% of its residual housing need which is a significant undersupply against its minimum housing requirement.
- 3.12 To substantiate the key findings from the SHLAA outlined above, a more detailed explanation of how we have used all reasonable endeavours to proactively search for development opportunities from non-Green Belt sources is detailed in the Green Belt Exceptional circumstances paper.

STEP 6 - ASSESSING SITE SPECIFIC TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS, GREEN BELT HARM AND THE SITE-SPECIFIC SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

- 3.13 An overall assessment of the site-specific circumstances taken into consideration in determining the development appropriateness and feasibility of each site. Factors taken into account include suitability, availability, achievability, and having regard to technical studies such as the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Please refer to the appendices in this paper for the detailed site assessments.

4. THE EMPLOYMENT SITE SELECTION PROCESS

- 4.1 The borough's portfolio of employment land has been assessed through the Employment Land Review (ELR) (2021) and the subsequent update of the ELR (2023). The starting point for the ELR assessment was the borough's existing portfolio of employment land (the majority of which is identified as employment land on the Proposals Map for the Adopted Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2012). Also forming part of the assessment were those sites promoted by landowners / agents as being suitable for allocation for economic development, all of which are located in the Green Belt.

SEARCH PARAMETERS

- 4.2 Within the baseline of existing employment land, the ELR identified a broad range of sites with potential for economic development. These include:
- Vacant sites currently allocated for employment use
 - Vacant sites formerly in employment use

- Vacant land in areas identified by the Council for mixed-use development that could include an employment component
- Expansion land held by business
- Employment premises that are at, or nearing, functional obsolescence
- Land and buildings in alternative uses that may have potential for economic development.

SITE ASSESSMENT CATEGORISATION AND CRITERIA

4.3 In order to ensure consistency with the Council’s approach to employment land, sites were grouped under the following headings for the 2023 update of the ELR:

- General employment sites
- Specialist employment sites – Port of Tyne
- Specialist employment sites – International Advanced Manufacturing Park
- Mixed use sites
- Potential employment sites

4.4 The site assessment criteria was grouped under two broad headings – market assessment criteria and sustainability criteria.

Market Assessment Criteria

- Access to Strategic Highway Network
- Site Characteristics & Physical Constraints
- Infrastructure
- Market attractiveness
- Barriers to Development
- Ownership Factors

Sustainability Assessment Criteria

- Local Road Access
- Proximity to Urban Areas
- Compatibility of Adjoining Uses
- Planning Sustainability
- Sequential Status

4.5 Sites were scored from 1 to 5 (5 being the highest score) depending on how they performed against these criteria and a recommendation as to whether the site had the potential for allocation in the emerging Local Plan.

SITE SELECTION

4.6 The independent assessment provided a robust evidential baseline for the employment site selection process. However, it has been for the Council to determine the sites that are proposed to be allocated in the emerging Local Plan.

4.7 The Employment Land Technical Paper (2023) provides a summary of the site selection exercise for new employment land. All of the sites identified in the Employment Land Review Technical Paper have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal.

- 4.8 The appendices to this Topic Paper set out the assessment for each of the individual sites considered for employment use. They provide the reasoning for each site as to whether it has not been taken forward for allocation or whether it has been allocated in the Plan and if so for what purpose.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The site selection process is ongoing and will take into account the comments received in response to the consultation on the Publication Draft Regulation 19 Local Plan, as well as any additional evidence that is relevant to housing and/or employment site selection.

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