**HELAA Methodology**

**The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) is a technical study prepared to inform the Council’s local planning framework. The assessment and identification of sites has no status in formally allocating land for future development and will not be treated as a material consideration in any future decision that the Council makes on individual planning applications.**

**The purpose of the HELAA is to quantify the future supply of housing and employment land. It does this through assessing sites with future development potential. It is not a statement of policy and does not allocate sites to be developed. This is the role of the Local Plan.**

**The identification of potential development sites within the HELAA as deliverable does not oblige or mean that the Council will grant planning permission for development. All planning applications will continue to be considered against the appropriate policies in Hertsmere’s local planning framework and any other material considerations. The inclusion of potential housing sites within the study does not preclude them from being developed for other purposes.**

1. **Introduction**
	1. The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) is used by Hertsmere Borough Council to identify a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period.
	2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) require Local Planning Authorities to identify a future supply of land which has potential to accommodate housing and economic development to meet the identified needs for these uses. In order to meet these requirements, an assessment should:
* Identify sites and broad locations with potential for development;
* Assess their development potential and suitability; and
* Assess the likelihood of development coming forward (the availability and achievability)

1.3 The Council’s most recent HELAA report was published in 2019 with the HELAA methodology previously being published in late 2017. The PPG sets out five main stages to preparing a HELAA, illustrated in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: HELAA Methodology, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Practice Guidance**



1. **Stage 1: site/broad location identification**

Geographical area covered

* 1. The assessment covers the whole borough of Hertsmere, which lies within the SW Hertfordshire strategic housing and functional economic market areas.

 Other parties involved

* 1. In line with the duty to cooperate, other local planning authorities in the SW Hertfordshire SHMA and FEMA, together with other neighbouring authorities, are being engaged in the HELAA process.
	2. The following other bodies are also being engaged in the HELAA process:
* Developers, land owners and promoters of land
* Local property agents
* Local Enterprise Partnership
* Local interest groups
* Businesses and business representative organisations
* Parish and town councils
* Other public and statutory bodies

A complete list of those invited to comment on the HELAA methodology and to submit sites to the call for sites is attached at Appendix 1

Size of site and broad locations

* 1. Sites and broad locations capable of delivering 5 or more dwellings or 0.25ha/500 sq m of economic development are being considered for inclusion in the HELAA. Sites are being identified without reference to the amount of land for development needed. The National Planning Policy Framework expects a minimum proportion of the sites identified as suitable for housing to be no larger than one hectare, unless there are strong reasons why this cannot be achieved.

 Types of site

* 1. In line with the guidance in the PPG, sites with policy constraints are being included in the initial list of those to be considered for inclusion in the HELAA as part of four scenarios against which sites will be assessed:
1. Current policy framework
2. Alternative policy framework involving increased densities
3. Alterative policy framework involving green belt boundary review
4. Alternative policy framework involving increased densities and green belt boundary review

2.6 Only a very limited number of policy constraints will lead to exclusion of sites from consideration prior to Stage 2 s*ite/broad location assessment*. This will include designations which are made through external agencies and where this would preclude the development from taking place on a site, as indicated in paragraph 2.12.

* 1. In identifying the list of sites/locations to be considered for assessment account has been taken of the guidance in the PPG, and where relevant sites in the following categories are being included:
* Existing Local Plan allocations (including safeguarded land) without planning permission
* Sites previously promoted for development since 2017 through calls for sites and included in the previous HELAA, unless the promoter has indicated they are no longer available or they are otherwise no longer suitable available or achievable.
* Sites identified through the preparation of and public engagement on the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021) which are not included in the current Local Plan
* Development briefs without planning permission
* Refused, withdrawn and lapsed planning applications (since the 2019 HELAA update)
* Land in Local Authority ownership or subject to the plans of Hertfordshire County Council, Government, NHS, police, fire, utilities providers, statutory undertakers (as indicated through the call for sites)
* Surplus public sector land
* Vacant and derelict land and buildings
* Additional opportunities in established uses e.g. under-used garage blocks
* Business requirements
* Sites in rural areas
* Redevelopment of existing residential or economic areas
* Sites in and adjoining rural settlements and rural exception sites
* Urban extensions
* Free standing settlements
* Any other sites as judged appropriate by officers

2.8 Where sites already have planning permission or Prior Approval they will be included in the HELAA but further detailed site assessments are not considered necessary unless other information suggests this to be required (see para 3.3 below). A complete list of sources of sites suggested in the NPPG is at Appendix 2

Call for Sites

* 1. Stakeholder input plays a key role in the delivery of a robust HELAA evidence base. As part of the HELAA process, a number of calls for sites have been issued, including the 2017 Call for Sites and the 2021 Call for Employment Sites. These were publicised extensively at the time including through directly approaching landowners and other stakeholders, on the Council’s website, via press releases and, in the case of the 2017 Call for Sites, via a newsletter which was circulated to all residents in the borough.
	2. Other public engagement events have also taken place as part of the Local Plan process, and have resulted in additional sites being submitted for consideration. This includes the Issues and Options consultation (2017), Potential Sites for Housing and Employment (PSHE) consultation (2018) and public engagement on the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021).
	3. A new call for sites is being opened in September 2022 with a particular emphasis on identifying and maximising the use of previously developed land in the borough. A HELAA questionnaire is available on the website and those submitting sites for consideration are required to complete the questionnaire and provide a site plan with the site boundaries clearly indicated. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix 3.

Site and broad location survey (a)

* 1. Conflict with a limited range of national policies and designations will exclude sites from further assessment unless robust technical evidence is provided to demonstrate that any designation requires review:
		+ SSSI, Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves and Regionally Important Geological Sites – locating housing or employment development on these sites could result in the loss of significant protected species, habitat, visual amenity and/or areas of general scientific interest.
		+ Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Battlefields and Sites of Archaeological Interest - housing or economic development on these types of sites would compromise the amenity value and/or historic value of such sites.
	2. Sites and broad locations are not excluded at this stage on the grounds of being located within the Green Belt (as identified in the current, adopted Local Plan), or within Flood Zone 3 (as identified in the latest Strategic Flood Risk Assessment). This is because
* Green Belt: given the quantum of new development that is likely to be required in the next 15 years there may be a need to identify some sites that are currently in the Green Belt for development
* Flooding: sites could come forward that may be partially developable based on detailed site specific analysis and modelling and the location of built development within the overall site boundary.
	1. It is acknowledged that footnote 7 of the NPPF includes both Green Belt and other designations including SSSIs. The NPPF does, however, at paragraphs 140 and 141, allow for the alteration of Green Belt boundaries where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified. Since 2016 a number of technical Green Belt assessments have been undertaken which have can be viewed on the Council’s website:
	+ Green Belt Stage 1 assessment (2016)
* Green Belt Stage 2 assessment (2019) and additional sites (2020)
* Green Belt Stage 3 assessment – Washed over villages (2020)
* Green Belt Stage 4 assessment – Inset Village Boundary (2021)

Mapping

* 1. All sites are being mapped for assessing the sites and to eliminate duplicates.
1. **Stage 2: Site/broad location assessment**
	1. To enable a preliminary judgement to be made about whether a site or broad location can be considered deliverable or developable over a plan period, its suitability, availability and achievability will be assessed. For those sites/areas judged to be suitable, available and achievable, an assessment of their development potential will enable their potential contribution to meeting housing and employment land needs over the plan period to be identified. A combination of desk based and where required, site survey work will be used.
	2. Sites assessed in the previous HELAA will be reviewed to ensure the information is up to date; they will not however be subject to site visit and full assessment unless there is evidence that circumstances pertaining to the site have changed significantly and/or site promoters have submitted any significant new information.
	3. Where sites already have planning permission, site assessments are not considered necessary as planning permissions provide a high degree of certainty in terms of yield. Sites will be taken as being available deliverable and achievable unless other information suggests that they should be reassessed. Sites which have only been or are currently subject to a pre-application, which are ordinarily treated as confidential, will be considered within the HELAA where the applicant agrees that information about the site and its availability can be reported publicly.

Site and broad location survey (b)

* 1. A pro-forma to enable assessment and survey work to be undertaken in an integrated way has been produced and is attached at Appendix 4. New HELAA sites will to be surveyed and assessed using this pro-forma.
	2. A desk based initial assessment of the potential contribution to housing and economic land supply of each site/broad location can be undertaken prior to undertaking any site visit. The site visit (where required) will enable existing information about the site to be confirmed/corrected and will enable any questions arising during the process of assessing suitability, availability and achievability in relation to the potential development of any site (see paragraphs 3.7ff below) to be checked at the same time.
	3. The site survey will include recording/checking the following information:
* Site size
* Site boundaries
* Site location
* Current land-use(s)
* Surrounding land use(s)
* Character of surrounding area
* Physical constraints (e.g. access, steep slopes, evidence of flooding, natural features of significance, pylons, trees)
* Potential environmental constraints
* Development progress (e.g. ground works completed, number of homes started and number of homes completed)
* Initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for a specific use or a mixed-use development

As well as ensuring that up to date information has been captured, a site survey will assist with

* Firming up on appropriate type/scale of development
* Firming up on deliverability, any barriers and how to overcome them
* Identifying any further sites nearby with potential for development

Assessment

* 1. Sites will be assessed for their suitability, availability and achievability. Where constraints are identified, action that would be needed to remove them will be considered. This will enable a realistic assessment to be made of the potential type and quantity of development that could be delivered on each site/broad location and in what timescale (1 to 5yrs, 6 to 10yrs, or 10 to 15yrs)

Assessing Suitability

* 1. In accordance with national policy and guidance, a site will be considered suitable if it would provide an appropriate location for development when considered against relevant constraints and their potential to be mitigated. The suitability of a site will be guided by:
* Existing and emerging local plan policy and national policy.
* Market and industry requirements
* Physical limitations or problems such as access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination
* Potential impacts including the effect on landscapes including landscape features, nature and heritage conservation
* Appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed
* Environmental/amenity impacts experiences by potential occupiers and neighbours

3.9 Policy constraints may affect the quantum of development that a particular site can reasonably deliver under current planning policies. Where there is a clear prospect that relevant policies in the new Local Plan may change and affect the status of the site/location in policy terms e.g. the current designation of a site no longer reflects development which has since occurred on that site, this will be taken into account. Otherwise, sites which could not be reasonably delivered under current planning policies will be recorded separately in a category of sites which, whilst available and developable, would not be acceptable under the current Local Plan.

Assessing Availability

* 1. An available site is one where based on the best information available there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership impediments to development e.g. multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies, or operational requirements of landowners. This will often mean that the land is owned by a developer or landowner who has expressed an intention to develop, or the landowner has expressed an intention to sell.

3.11 Where problems are identified an assessment will be made as to how and when they can realistically be overcome. The delivery record of the developer or landowner concerned, and planning history of the site may also be taken into account in assessing availability. The current use of the site may also affect its availability during the Plan period – e.g. a quarry with 10 years’ worth of resource still to be extracted may not be developable until years 11-15 or beyond.Assessing Achievability

3.12 An achievable site is one where there is a reasonable prospect that the type of development proposed will be developed at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period

Constraints

* 1. Where the above assessments identify constraints to development, the actions needed to enable sites to be delivered will be considered. This may include:
		+ Consolidating ownerships
		+ Investment in infrastructure
		+ Environmental improvement
		+ Changes to emerging development plan policy

Timescale – Deliverable/Developable

* 1. The following information will be used to estimate the timescale within which each site/location is likely to be developed:
* Suitability, availability, achievability and constraints
* Lead-in times for development proposed
* Build-out rates for development proposed
* Advice from developers and local agents
	1. Planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. They should identify deliverable sites for years one to five of the plan period with an appropriate buffer. (NPPF para. 68)
	2. For a housing site to be considered deliverable, it 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 (NPPF Annex 2: Glossary). In particular:
1. sites which do not involve major development and have planning permission, and all sites with detailed planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within 5 years (for example because they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans).
2. where a site has outline planning permission for major development, has been allocated in a development plan, has a grant of permission in principle, or is identified on a brownfield register, it should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within 5 years.
	1. For a site to be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged. (6-10 or 11-15 years). (NPPF Annex 2: Glossary)

Estimating residential development potential

3.18 For those sites considered to be suitable, available and achievable within the Plan period, an estimate of the site’s capacity /development potential will be made. The process for assessing the development potential used in the 2019 HELAA has formed the basis for the new methodology.

* 1. When estimating the residential capacity the revised method continues to use a baseline density of 30 dwellings per hectare for all residential promotions. This density may be adjusted and uplifted based on a variety of factors including:
* Area Type – The location of the development and the existing charterer of the area
* Prevailing Density – The current density of development surrounding the site
* Accessibility – The proximity of the site to key services
* Likely Type – The type of development proposed
* Design – The scope for innovative urban design and layout

3.20 The residential capacity is then calculated by multiplying the net site area by the revised density. The net site area represents the proportion of the site which will likely be developed, and includes an adjustment for the size of the proposal.

* 1. Sites capable of delivering less than five units are excluded from the identified site yield. Future yield from these sites will be accounted for through the windfall allowance.
	2. Some sites and yields based on developments that have been refused planning permission may be included; this will be the case if the development was supported in principle and it is considered likely that an amended version of the proposal will be pursued and may subsequently obtain planning permission.
	3. Most planning permissions in the area are implemented and that has been the case over a considerable period of time, although it is recognized that a small proportion lapse before construction starts on site. Where sites already have planning permission, the potential reduction in yield arising from permissions not being implemented will be identified. As with the 2015 SHLAA, a discount rate based on an analysis of planning permissions that have lapsed over the preceding 10 years will be applied.
	4. As was the case for the 2015 SHLAA update, self-contained units of C2 extra care housing are taken as a source of potential housing supply.

Estimating economic development potential

* 1. When estimating the economic development potential, sites are categorised by the general type of development proposed. Each of these 4 categories has a defined split for the type of employment uses expected on site, as shown below:
		+ Office – Solely office related development (100% for office and R&D)
		+ Commercial and Industrial – A mixed use business park (20% office and R&D, 40% industrial and 40% storage and distribution). Site may include flexible workspace and smaller industrial units.
		+ Warehousing and distribution – A large scale distribution facility (10% office and/or R&D, 10% industrial and 80% storage and distribution).
		+ Specialist – Given the bespoke nature of the employment offer, which may be Sui Generis rather than Class B or Class E development, these figures may not be included within the overall general employment supply.
	2. To calculate the floor space, a baseline high level plot ratio was applied, reflecting the South West Herts Economic Study Update. This varied depending on the type of employment use proposed (0.4 Office and R&D, 0.8 Industrial and 0.8 Storage and distribution). The HCA 2015 Employment Densities Guide has been used to provide a high level estimate of a sites employment potential, FTE, (Office 10.5 sqm per FTE, Office 10.5 sqm per FTE and Office 10.5 sqm per FTE.
	3. It is recognised that the nature of employment facilities provided on site will depend on the intended end user and will therefore vary considerably. The employment figures stated within the HELAA should be treated a high level guide.
		1. **Stage 3: Windfall Assessment**
	4. An assessment of likely housing delivery from windfall sites will be undertaken. An analysis of long term windfall delivery rates was undertaken for the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan Examination in 2016 and accepted by the Inspector; a windfall rate will follow a similar approach.
	5. Windfall sites are those which have not been specifically identified as available through the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.The NPPF (paragraph 48) and PPG enables Local Planning Authorities to make an allowance for windfall sites in the five-year supply if they have compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply. Windfall sites have been a significant source of housing supply over many years, as evident in the monitoring data published in previous years by the Council.
	6. Paragraph 24 of the PPG also specifies that Local Planning Authorities have the ability to identify broad locations in years 6-15, which could include a windfall allowance based on a geographical area (using the same criteria as set out in paragraph 48 of the NPPF). As such, a windfall rate will be applied across an entire 15 year plan period, given the continued churn of small sites across an area such as Hertsmere.
	7. In accordance with the PPG, residential gardens are excluded from windfall yield.
1. **Stage 4 - Assessment Review**
	1. The capacity, availability, suitability and achievability of all sites, together with phasing details (i.e. 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years) will be collated. An overall risk assessment as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated will be undertaken. An indicative housing trajectory will then be produced. Should a shortfall against objectively assessed need be identified under any of the scenarios being tested in paragraph 2.5, there will be a need to re-visit the assessments and consider whether any further sites/locations can be identified.
2. **Stage 5 – Final Evidence Base**
	1. The outputs from the HELAA will include:
		* List of all sites or broad locations considered, cross-referenced to their locations on maps;
		* An assessment of each site or location in terms of its suitability, availability and achievability (including viability) to determine whether it is realistically expected to be developed and when;
		* Further detail for those sites which are considered to be realistic 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/location, including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how any barriers to delivery could be overcome and when;
		* An indicative trajectory of anticipated development