

Wealden
District Council

Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) Main Report

September 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) provides an inventory and assessment of land within the plan making area of Wealden District.

1.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to produce a strategic housing land availability assessment to identify sufficient land to meet their housing need[1]. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) goes on to state that local planning authorities should also assess the existing and future supply of land for economic development[2].

1.3. The SHELAA is an important part of the evidence base which support the local plan making process, including local plans and neighbourhood plans. It provides a strategic overview of the suitability, availability and achievability of each site and will help inform plan-making and decision making in the preparation of the new local plan.

1.4. This SHELAA is an update to the SHELAA (February 2026), that was prepared as part of the evidence base supporting the 'Focused' draft Wealden Local Plan (2026) which was consulted upon in February 2026. This SHELAA (September 2026) has been drafted to support the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan (2026), undertaking a reassessment of all sites relevant submitted through the SHELAA process, noting the increased housing need and updated employment needs as set out in that Plan.

Role of the SHELAA

1.5. The SHELAA is a comprehensive evidence-gathering exercise which assessed the suitability, availability and achievability of land to meet the identified need for housing and economic development uses over certain time scales.

1.6. It is an evidence-based document only to provide information on the range of sites to meet the housing and employment needs of the district. It forms part of the Council's new Local Plan evidence base and will be used to inform judgements on the allocation of land for housing and economic development uses specifically.

1.7. It is not an allocations document and does not form Council policy. Rather, it provides a technical assessment of the potential sites for allocation for future land supply. This technical assessment is undertaken using an iterative

[1] Paragraph 72, NPPF (December 2024)

[2] Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 3-001-20190722, Housing and economic land availability assessment PPG

process between the SHELAA and other parts of the evidence base and updates, including through the Councils ongoing work in evidence such as the Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The SHELAA informs possible choices for the plan-making process which is the appropriate mechanism to allocate land for development and develop policies to meet the district's housing and economic development needs.

1.8. It does not imply that planning permission would be granted should a planning application be submitted. The SHELAA is only a high-level assessment, having regard to the information available at the point in time at which the assessment is undertaken. All planning applications will continue to be considered against the matters as set out in assessment of those applications, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and appropriate policies within the statutory development plan, having regard to any other material considerations.

1.9. The findings of the SHELAA do not pre-empt or prejudice any decision that the Council may make in the future on any particular site, both in the planning application process or the allocation of sites in the Local Plan, nor does it alter any existing policies or land use designations as set out in an adopted Local Plan or 'made' Neighbourhood Plans. The inclusion and assessment of sites within the SHELAA for housing or employment use does not preclude them from being considered for other uses upon submission of planning applications.

1.10. In relation to neighbourhood planning, the PPG confirms that neighbourhood-planning bodies may also make use of existing site assessments prepared by the local planning authority as a starting point when identifying sites to allocate within a Neighbourhood Plan[3].

Purpose of the SHELAA

1.11. The purpose of the SHELAA is to:

- identify all possible sites and broad locations with potential for housing and economic development;
- assess all possible sites and broad locations for their development potential that meet the threshold for assessment; and
- assess their suitability for development and likelihood of development coming forward (i.e. availability and achievability).

[3] Paragraph 003 Reference ID: 3-003-20190722, Housing and economic land availability assessment PPG

1.12. Carrying out the SHELAA will allow the Council to identify a potential supply of land that is suitable, available and achievable to meet identified housing and economic development needs over the plan period.

1.13. As the Local Plan progresses, a number of other land uses may be considered for assessment as part of the Local Plan process. This includes for example the development of retail, green infrastructure (including Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS)), tourism and leisure uses, community facilities, gypsy and traveller provision, and renewable energy schemes. The full list of uses is listed within the Council's SHELAA Site Submission Form[4].

1.14. It should be noted that the Land Availability Assessments undertaken as part of the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Local Plan (September 2026) is considering housing, employment uses (Use Class E(g), B2 and B8) and Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople accommodation. This SHELAA will include the assessment of sites for housing and employment development, whilst a separate document (the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Land Availability Assessment) will assess sites for Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople development, noting bespoke assessment criteria and joint work undertaken across East Sussex to consider these needs. As such, those sites promoted exclusively for the use of Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople needs have not been included in this report.

Structure of the report

1.15. This document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 – Background
- Section 3 – Methodology
- Section 4 – Results and Analysis
- Section 5 – Next Steps

2. Background

Local Plan Review

2.1. The Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan (September 2026) will guide future development in the district up to 2042, replacing the existing Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan 2013, the 'saved' policies from the Wealden Local Plan 1998, and the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan 2016. To support and inform the preparation of the new Local Plan, the

[4] Wealden District Council SHELAA Webpage

Council has developed a comprehensive and robust evidence base. This includes evidence to support new policies for housing, the local economy, retail, transport and the environment. The SHELAA forms part of this evidence base.

SHELAA in Wealden

2.2. The Council's first Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was published in March 2010 and provided the Council with evidence to inform decisions on the strategic distribution of residential development in Wealden to 2027, to support the growth identified in the adopted Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (February 2013). An addendum report was published in March 2010 and an interim SHLAA statement was published in January 2012 to provide a partial update to this.

2.3. The Council published a SHELAA in January 2019 which was undertaken in support of the Local Plan being prepared at that time. This SHELAA (January 2019) included all previous SHELAA sites as well as new sites that were submitted for assessment up until 15 November 2018. That Plan was subsequently withdrawn in February 2020 following an Inspectors recommendation, but work continued on the preparation of a new Local Plan, utilising relevant and suitable parts of the evidence base, including site submissions up to this point.

2.4. The Council's SHELAA (February 2024) was produced to support the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan (March 2024), which was consulted on between March and May 2024. That SHELAA contained all sites previously submitted to any Land Availability Assessment exercise undertaken in the district as noted above, plus new sites that were submitted to the Council up to 31 March 2023.

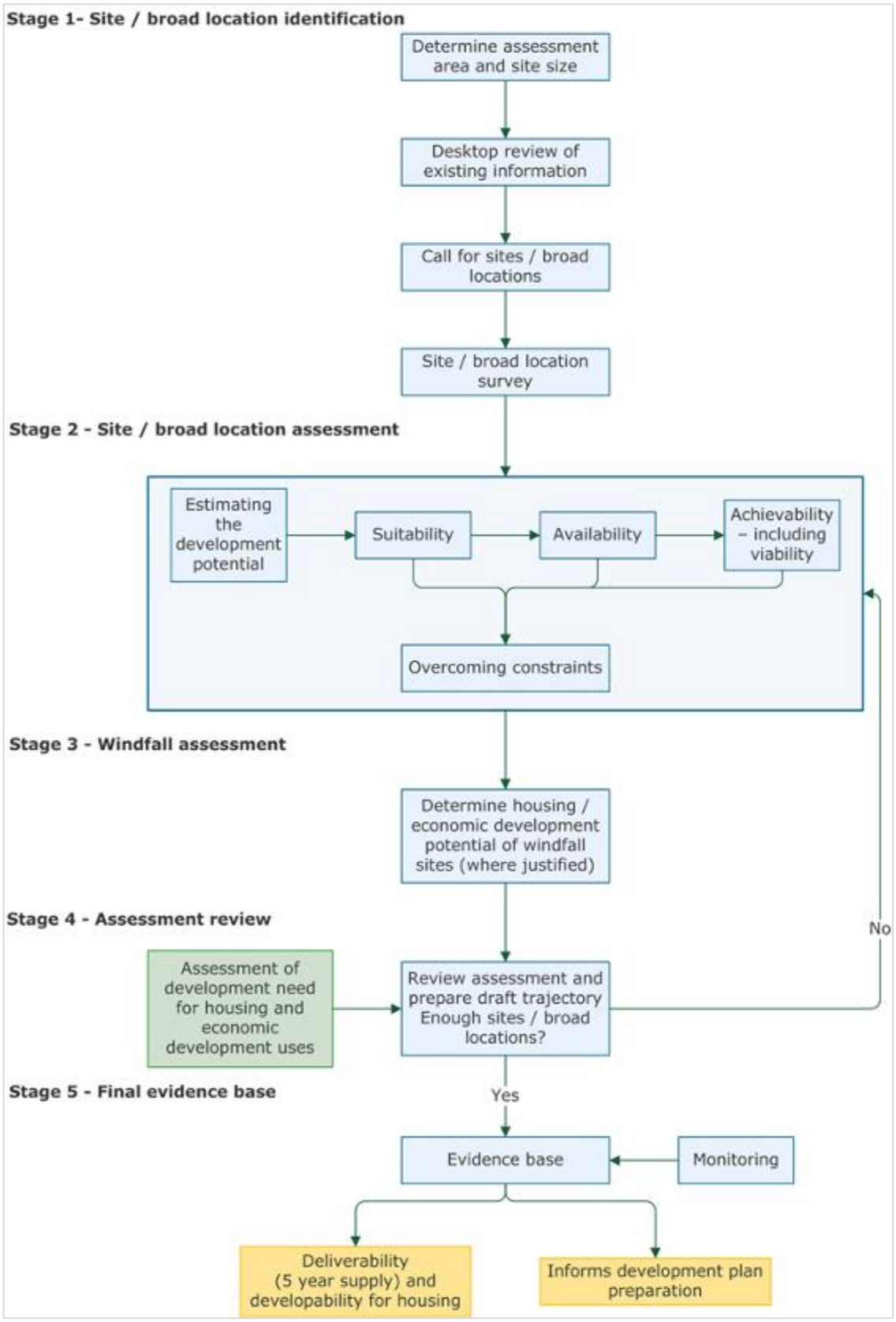
2.5. The SHELAA (February 2026) built upon that, to enable assessment of all submission sites submitted in pursuance of preparing a new Local Plan in the Wealden District. As such, it contained all existing sites within the previously published SHELAA (February 2024) in addition to new sites that were submitted to the Council up to 31 October 2025. The sites contained within the SHELAA (February 2026) therefore encompasses all sites submitted through any land availability assessment process between 1 August 2008 and 31 March 2025, resulting in the submission of 1,265 sites over this period.

2.6. This SHELAA (September 2026) provides a general update of the last iteration of the report whilst assessing new submission to 30 April 2026, resulting in the submission of 1,294 overall since the Council has been carrying out call for sites.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Council is following a SHELAA methodology that is in accordance with the overall approach set out in the PPG. The PPG provides a flowchart that confirms that a five-stage approach should be followed to develop a robust SHELAA. The flowchart for the stages of the SHELAA are set out in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 - SHELAA Methodology Flowchart[5]



3.2. It should be noted that although the tasks detailed above have been presented in chronological order, they have not necessarily been conducted

sequentially, noting the need for an iterative process as further information and evidence becomes available. The stages identified above will now be considered in further detail below.

Stage 1 – Site / Broad location identification

Task 1 – Determine Assessment Area and Site Size Threshold

3.3. The extent of the assessment area covers those areas of Wealden District outside the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) are responsible for all planning matters (both plan-making and decision-taking) within its own area and has its own separate SHLAA document[6] and Local Plan[7].

3.4. Where a new or existing SHELAA site straddles or abuts the administrative boundary of a neighbouring local authority[8], the Council has assessed those sites and liaised with the relevant neighbouring authority in relation to these sites. The Council has and will continue to liaise with relevant neighbouring authorities as the plan progresses.

3.5. The PPG[9] recommends that it may be appropriate to consider all sites and broad locations capable of delivering 5 or more dwellings, or economic development on sites of 0.25 hectares (or capable of delivering 500 square metres of floorspace) and above. The Council has previously taken this approach, given the relatively rural nature of Wealden District. Therefore, in accordance with national guidance and past practice, all sites not capable of accommodating five or more dwellings, or economic development on sites of 0.25ha (or 500 square metres of floorspace) were excluded from the assessment process. A list of the sites below this threshold in each Parish is provided within the Site Assessments at Appendix 1, listed as Sites excluded at Stage 1 (Sites below size threshold).

Task 2 – Desktop Review of existing information

3.6. In accordance with the PPG[10], the Council has considered a comprehensive range of sources in order to establish the best available information to

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[5] Paragraph 005 Reference ID: 3-003-20190722, Housing and economic land availability assessment PPG

[6] South Downs Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

[7] South Downs Local Plan, July 2019

[8] Parts of Eastbourne and Royal Tunbridge Wells are located hard up against the administrative boundary of Wealden District.

[9] Paragraph 009 Reference ID: 3-009-20190722, Housing and economic land availability Assessment PPG

[10] Paragraph 011 Reference ID: 3-011-20190722, Housing and economic land availability assessment PPG

identify and assess potential sites. The full list of potential data sources is provided in Table 1 below. These sources have been utilised in the creation of previous iterations of the SHELAA and sites updated as part of the current work.

Table 1 - SHELAA Potential Data Source

Type of Site	Potential Data Source
Existing housing and economic development allocations and site development briefs not yet with planning permission.	Local and Neighbourhood Plans Planning application records Development Briefs
Planning permissions for housing and economic development that are unimplemented or under construction.	Planning application records Development start and completion records
Planning applications that have been refused (or dismissed at appeal) or withdrawn.	Planning application records
Land in the local authority's ownership.	Local authority records
Surplus and likely to become surplus public sector land.	National register of public sector land Engagement with strategic plans of other public sector bodies such as county councils, central government, the National Health Service (NHS), police, fire services, utilities services and statutory undertakers.
Sites with permission in principle and identified brownfield land.	Brownfield land registers (parts 1 and 2) National Land Use database Valuation Office database Active engagement with sector
Vacant and derelict land and buildings (including empty homes, redundant and disused agricultural buildings, potential permitted development changes, e.g. office to residential).	Local authority empty property register English Housing Survey National Land Use Database Commercial property databases (e.g. estate agents and property agents)

Type of Site	Potential Data Source
	Valuation Office database Active engagement with sector Brownfield land registers
Additional opportunities for un-established uses (e.g. making productive use of under-utilised facilities such as garage blocks).	Ordnance Survey maps Aerial photography Planning applications Site surveys
Business requirements and aspirations.	Enquiries received by local planning authority Active engagement with sector
Sites in rural locations. Large-scale redevelopment and redesign of existing residential or economic areas. Sites in adjoining villages and rural exception sites. Potential urban extensions and new freestanding settlements.	Local and neighbourhood plans Planning applications Ordnance Survey maps Aerial photography Site surveys

3.7. A number of sources were used in the desktop review of existing information that included, but was not limited to, previous iterations of the SHELAA; information submitted during the Call for Sites exercise held alongside the Regulation 18 draft Wealden Local Plan consultation in March 2024 and 'Focused' Draft Wealden Local Plan consultation in February 2026; and consideration of recently approved, refused or withdrawn planning applications, and sites in previous adopted/emerging Local Plans.

3.8. The Council has considered and reviewed these potential sources of supply fully to accurately identify all existing sources of supply and their status. These sources of information and the review process are set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - SHELAA Review Process

Existing Data Source	Review Process
Wealden District SHELAA (February 2024)	Since the publication of the last SHELAA in February 2024, there has been a number of national policy changes[11]. It was therefore necessary to reappraise all live sites within the SHELAA to ensure that the assessment accounts for the latest policy position. The Council has also updated its SHELAA site pro-forma[12] in light of the NPPF and PPG changes.
Call for Sites	The Council, as part of its Regulation 18 draft Local Plan consultations held from March to May 2024 and February to April 2026, and in the preparation of this new SHELAA document, kept an ongoing 'Call for Sites' exercise open, publicised on its website. Any submissions received up to and including the 30 April 2026 have been considered in this SHELAA, with any site or information subsequently received to be considered at later stages. The 'Call for Sites' process itself has remained open. The Council has previously sought to contact all existing landowners/ developers on an internal database to ensure that an opportunity was provided to submit further relevant information and / or new sites, as part of the SHELAA process. New sites promoted exclusively via representations made on the Regulation 18 draft Wealden Local Plan in 2024 and the 'Focused' draft Wealden Local Plan in 2026 have also been included within this iteration of the SHELAA.
Recently refused or withdrawn planning applications	The Council holds records on planning applications that have either been refused by the Council, dismissed at planning appeal, or withdrawn by the applicant(s). In the SHELAA (2024) publication, the Council considered such sites that met the aforementioned size threshold within the SHELAA and then assessed the reasons for their refusal/withdrawal in order to assess their potential for housing and employment development. These sites have

[11] Policy changes include updates to the NPPF and PPG.

[12] SHELAA New Site Form and SHELAA Review Form

Existing Data Source	Review Process
	been updated in the SHELAA published in February 2026 and this SHELAA document.
Review of current planning applications and site commencement/ completion data	The Council holds information on 'planning commitments' (i.e. those sites with extant planning permissions), site commencements and site completions. Where a development site has been fully constructed, the site has been removed from the SHELAA records. For all sites that have an extant detailed planning permission and/or have commenced, such sites will be considered 'deliverable' unless otherwise known. Those major development sites with outline planning permission will continue to be considered either 'deliverable' or 'developable' on a case-by-case basis. The Council have also sought to consider all opportunities on these sites with planning permission granted on only part of the SHELAA site submitted. This SHELAA seeks to review and assess the remainder of the site still available for development.
Review of Existing Site Allocations	The adopted Wealden District Core Strategy (February 2013) provided a number of broad locations for growth for both housing and employment development under policy WCS4 (Strategic Development Areas (SDA)). The policy includes targets for a quantum of development to take place for each SDA. Although the SDAs are not development allocations[13], development has nonetheless come forward in most of the SDAs identified. There were a small number of SDAs where development has not come forward. These areas / sites were reconsidered as part of the SHELAA process, as published in SHELAA (2024). Those sites have again been reviewed at this stage. All sites that were identified as housing allocations within the withdrawn Wealden Local Plan (January 2019) were also reviewed as part of the SHELAA (2024) and reviewed again this time.

[13] The Strategic Development Areas are broad locations for growth as provided in the Key Diagram of the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (February 2013), but the allocation of such sites and specific policies, including phasing where necessary, were to be provided in the Strategic Sites Development Plan Document, which did not come forward.

Existing Data Source	Review Process
	Similarly, the Council also reviewed all draft allocations within the Regulation 18 draft Wealden Local Plans (2024 and 2026) to provide an updated view on deliverability; latest planning application information; and revisions to potential yield from sites, where applicable.

3.9. Sites which have achieved planning permission or are subject to a resolution to grant planning permission, in their entirety, were excluded from the detailed assessment process described under Stage 2 and have been considered 'deliverable' or 'developable' in line with the trajectory published with the Council's latest Five-Year Housing Supply Statement[14]. In these cases, the capacity identified for the planning permission was used, unless there was clear evidence that a different site capacity should be used instead.

3.10. A list of sites with planning permission is provided in the site assessments at Appendix 1, listed as sites excluded at Stage 1 (Sites with Extant Planning Permission).

3.11. Where SHELAA sites are only partially covered by an extant planning permission or a resolution to grant planning permission these sites have been included in this list. However, we have also continued to provide an assessment within the SHELAA for the remaining part of the site that does not benefit from planning permission.

3.12. The SHELAA reflects the position at the time the assessment was carried out. Since then, planning permission may have been granted on some sites. These updates will be included in the next version of the SHELAA.

Task 3 – Call for Sites and Broad Locations

3.13. A 'Call for Sites' exercise was undertaken alongside the consultation on the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan (2024) and on the 'Focused' draft Local Plan (2026). This was widely advertised alongside this consultation to establish initial land availability for all types of development, including housing and economic development. The 'Call for Sites' process was aimed at as wide an audience as practicable, so that even those not normally involved in property development can contribute. Respondents were asked to complete a new site pro-forma that can be found on the Councils website[15]. The site pro-forma sets out the information sought by the Council and includes the site location, suggested type of development, the scale of such development and

[14] Housing Land Supply Statement – as of 1 April 2026

[15] Wealden District Council SHELAA Webpage

any constraints/viability issues associated with the development, amongst other matters.

3.14. The Council has previously contacted all those land agents/landowners who have previously submitted sites in the Council's SHELAA, where relevant, to confirm that the information initially submitted to the Council remains up to date, or if not, to update this information. The Council asked existing landowners as to whether their site was still available for the development specified, and if not, to withdraw those sites from the process. In addition, the production of a new site pro-forma prior to the SHELAA (2024) meant that there was an opportunity for existing SHELAA sites to be updated by landowner/agents to ensure that the new information was collected and assessed.

Task 4 – Site and Broad Location Survey

3.15. The PPG[16] recommends that the comprehensive list of sites and broad locations that emerge from existing data sources and the 'Call for Sites' exercise will be assessed against national policies and designations to establish whether the sites have a reasonable potential for development and should be included in the more detailed site survey stage.

3.16. This is in order to:

- ratify inconsistent information gathered through the 'Call for Sites' exercise and desktop review;
- get an up-to-date view on development progress (where sites have planning permission);
- obtain a better understanding of what type and scale of development may be appropriate;
- gain a more detailed understanding of deliverability, any barriers to development and how they can be overcome; and
- potentially identity further sites with potential for development that were not identified through other data sources and the 'Call for Sites' exercise.

3.17. Both housing and employment sites that either have planning permission or are under construction are already visited on a regular basis by the planning policy team to monitor commencements and completions on each site. It was therefore considered that a site visit was not necessary for such sites where comprehensive information on a site is already known through these existing processes. Other remaining sites (subject to the suitability criteria

[16] Paragraph 013 Reference ID: 3-013-20190722, Housing and economic land availability assessment PPG

below) were surveyed as part of the SHELAA process and/or discussed with the planning colleagues who have surveyed these sites in connection with recent planning applications and processes. This assisted the Council in providing evidence that there is a reasonable chance of the site being developed for housing/economic development.

3.18. The PPG[17] outlines the information that can be recorded by the local planning authority when undertaking its initial survey. This includes:

- site size, boundaries, and location;
- current land use and character;
- land uses and character of surrounding area;
- physical constraints (e.g. access, contamination, steep slopes, flood risk, natural features of significance, location of infrastructure/utilities);
- potential environmental constraints;
- consistency with the development plan's policies;
- proximity to services and other infrastructure, such as public transport;
- where relevant, development progress (e.g. ground works completed, number of units started, number of units completed); and
- initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for a particular type of use or as part of a mixed-use development.

3.19. It is considered that sites, which have particular policy constraints, should be included in the assessment for the sake of comprehensiveness and transparency, but these constraints must be clearly set out, including where they severely restrict development. In these cases, where the constraint covers the entirety or majority of the site to such an extent as to prevent the minimum scale of development required for SHELAA, then this is an absolute constraint to development when applying national policy. Where this is the case, the sites have been excluded from further detailed assessment.

3.20. Table 3 below sets out the absolute constraints applicable, and reasons why they are absolute in nature. Sites/areas affected by these absolute constraints within the SHELAA will not progress to Stage 2 of the SHELAA process. The table used for the assessment of these absolute constraints is shown in each site assessment undertaken, to determine which constraint below the site is impacted by or which constraint is partly impacting the site, but potentially capable of mitigation (to be considered at Stage 2).

[17] Paragraph 015 Reference ID: 3-015-20190722, PPG - Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Table 3 Site to be excluded from detailed assessment

Absolute Site constraint	Reason
Sites and broad locations that are predominately or wholly contained within an International or a Habitats Nature Conservation Site. For Wealden District, this includes: • the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA); and • the Pevensey Levels SAC and Ramsar Site.	These sites are protected through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017[18] (as amended), where plans and projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the Habitats site(s) in question.
Sites and broad locations within 400m of the Ashdown Forest SPA that are promoted for residential development/living accommodation.	In connection with the above, the SPA area is a designation of international significance for wildlife and biodiversity, and residential development within this 400m zone of the SPA cannot be mitigated against to ensure there is no adverse effect on the integrity of the habitat(s) in question. This is line with Natural England's advice on the matter.
Sites and broad locations that are predominantly or wholly contained within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). For Wealden District, this incorporates just under 10% of the district[19].	In addition to protection through legislation, the NPPF at paragraph 193 confirms development on land within or outside a SSSI, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it should not normally be permitted.
Sites and broad locations that predominantly or wholly contain Ancient Woodland.	In addition to protection through legislation, the NPPF at paragraph 193 confirms that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, such as Ancient Woodland should be refused, unless there are

[18] Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

[19] It should be noted that there is substantial overlap between the European Nature Conservation Sites and SSSIs.

Absolute Site constraint	Reason
	wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.
Other than water-compatible uses, and in some cases essential infrastructure, development will not be suitable in a functional flood plain (Flood Zone 3b or equivalent) due to high flood risk.	Both the NPPF at paragraph 170 and PPG set out that development should be directed away from areas at highest risk of flood (whether existing or future).
Sites and broad locations that are predominantly or wholly contained within a Local Green Space.	Once a Local Green Space has been designated through a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, the NPPF at paragraph 106 confirms that they should be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period and that no development should take place.
Sites and broad locations that wholly or predominantly contain heritage assets of the highest significance where substantial harm to or loss of Ancient Scheduled Monuments, grade I and II* Listed Buildings and grade I and II* registered parks and gardens is proposed.	In addition to protection through legislation, the NPPF at paragraph 213 confirms that substantial harm to or loss of such heritage assets should be wholly exceptional.

3.21. Once the above factors have been taken into account a judgement has been made as to whether the site can progress to consideration through to the next stage. It will only be those sites that are subject to the absolute constraints, as identified in Table 3, that will not progress to the next stage of the assessment. A list of those sites within each parish is provided within Appendix 1, listed as Sites excluded at Stage 1 (Sites with Absolute Constraint).

3.22. It is noted that there are a number of other significant constraints within the district, most notably the High Weald National Landscape that covers around 53% of the district, the setting of the South Downs National Park (SDNP), flood risk areas (other than described in the table above), heritage assets and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) to name a few. The Council has considered these constraints and whether they are mitigatable as part of the assessment process described under Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Site / Broad location assessment

3.23. The remaining sites were taken to Stage 2 of the SHELAA process and were subject to further assessment of suitability, availability and achievability.

Suitability Assessment

3.24. In short, a site or broad location can be considered suitable if it provides an appropriate location for development, when considered against the relevant constraints and their potential to be mitigated. This is a high-level assumption. The PPG[20] states that when local planning authorities consider constraints, they may wish to consider the information collected as part of the initial site survey, as well as other relevant information such as:

- national policy;
- appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed;
- contribution to regeneration priority areas; and
- potential impacts including the effect upon landscapes including landscape features, nature and heritage conservation.

3.25. The PPG states that sites can be considered against the adopted development plan, although clearly the assessment will need to take account of how up to date the plan policies are. In terms of using an emerging Local Plan to assess suitability, plan-makers will need to account for potential policy changes or other factors that could impact the suitability of the site/broad location.

3.26. To support the suitability assessment, an overview of key criteria considered has been provided for each site as set out in Table 4. This has been derived from the Absolute Constraints listed in Table 3, based on the physical constraints against which the NPPF may determine development should be refused where certain impacts arise. As set out above, sites which are wholly or largely covered by this constraint are filtered out at Stage 1. However, a number of sites are covered by these absolute constraints in part only. This designation on part of the site is then used in assessment of suitability. In addition, criteria such as location of the site and landscape designations are listed, for the reasons set out.

3.27. It should be noted that this list of criteria in the Site Assessment summary does not constitute an exhaustive list of the issues considered. A high-level assessment of site suitability is undertaken as set out in the commentary

[20] Paragraph 018 Reference ID: 3-018-20190722, Housing and economic land availability assessment PPG

provided on each site. This is used to summarise the assessment against national policy and should be read alongside other information set out.

Table 4 Key criteria considered for the suitability assessment

Criteria name	Assessment criteria and approach followed
Relation to settlement	To achieve sustainable development, sites need to be supported by the appropriate infrastructure and facilities and services. Development isolated and disconnected from existing settlements is unlikely to meet this objective. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF is specifically noteworthy in a rural district such as Wealden, as this states that 'in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities'. It is therefore considered that new housing development should be related to settlements that contain these communities. Each settlement in the district has been categorised as a Type 1-6 Settlement, identified in the Council's draft Sustainable Settlement Study[21]. In each site assessment undertaken, the site criteria will determine which type of settlement (Type 1 - 6) the site relates to. This is based on officer judgement of the site, location, and its proximity to the nearest settlement. Where it is considered that the site does not relate to any settlement '-' or '0' will be shown in the table. This information is used to determine if a site relates to a sustainable settlement.
Ancient Woodland	In addition to protection through legislation, the NPPF at paragraph 193 confirms that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, such as Ancient Woodland should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. The key criteria list in the assessment distinguishes between sites wholly (this is an absolute constraint), partly and not affected by Ancient Woodland. The site assessment undertaken further identifies key

[21] Wealden District Council Sustainable Settlement Study

	areas of ancient woodland and/or buffers to ancient woodland that may be present on site.
At risk of flooding	Both the NPPF at paragraph 170 and PPG set out that development should be directed away from areas at highest risk of flood (whether existing or future). The key criteria list in the assessment identifies whether the site is wholly affected by high risk of flooding (this is an absolute constraint), partly affected by flood risk or not affected by flood risk. The commentary within the site assessment will elaborate on this where relevant.
Flood risk	This criterion refines the above by identifying pluvial and fluvial flood risk with all assessed sites. Although the presence of this flood risk within a site may not constitute an absolute constraint, it can significantly influence the developability of the site. The assessment lists the presence of Flood Zone 1 ('1'), Flood Zone 2 ('2'), Flood Zone 3 ('3'), low surface water flood risk ('L'), medium surface water flood risk ('M') and high surface water flood risk ('H').
Ecological site	International or a Habitats Nature Conservation Sites are protected through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017[22] (as amended), where plans and projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the Habitats site(s) in question. In addition, the NPPF at paragraph 193 and legislation confirms that development on land within or outside a SSSI, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it should not normally be permitted. The key criteria list in the assessment establishes whether the site affects those particular designations as an absolute constraint only. It will not determine the presence or impact on any other ecological designation or features. These considerations may be noted as part of the detailed written assessment

[22] Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

	for each site, but at a high level only, not as a detailed site-specific assessment.
400m Ashdown Forst SPA	In connection with the Ashdown Forest SPA, residential development within a 400m zone of the SPA cannot be mitigated against to prevent adverse effect on the integrity of the habitat(s) in question. The Ashdown Forest SPA requires measures to prevent cat predation at the Ashdown Forest, other impacts associated with urbanisation, as well as recreational pressure on the Ashdown Forest, in line with Natural England's advice. The key criteria list identifies those sites wholly located within the 400m perimeter from the Ashdown Forest SPA. This is an absolute constraint.
Local Green Space	Once a Local Green Space has been designated through a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, the NPPF at paragraph 106 confirms that they should be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period and that no development should take place. The key criteria listed establishes whether the site is contained within a Local Green Space which is an absolute constraint.
Heritage Asset	In addition to protection through legislation, the NPPF at paragraph 213 confirms that substantial harm to or loss of Ancient Scheduled Monuments, grade I and II* Listed Buildings and grade I and II* registered parks and gardens should be wholly exceptional. The key criteria list identifies whether the development of a site would result in substantial harm or loss of such heritage assets, stating Yes if so, which is an absolute constraint. Any other relevant impact on heritage assets, regardless of which type and grade of asset, will be assessed as part of the detailed written assessment for each site.
National Landscape	National Policy affords a great level of protection to National Landscape, with paragraph 189 of the NPPF stating that 'great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic

	beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection'. Paragraph 190 gives some key considerations for the purpose of decision making. The key criteria list of the site assessment identifies those sites located within the High Weald National Landscape. The commentary within the site assessment will elaborate on landscape issues where relevant.

Availability Assessment

3.28. A site can be considered available for development, when, on the best information available to the local planning authority, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership impediments to development. Given the significant role of the SHELAA in terms of enabling the Council to establish a robust housing land supply for future development over a plan period, if there is no reasonable prospect that the site will become available over the lifetime of the plan, then it cannot be included as a realistic option for development.

3.29. In submitting sites to the Council, landowners and site promoters are asked to indicate the following information:

- details of land ownership/land interests;
- what the current and proposed uses are for the site;
- the reason that the landowner/site promoter is proposing the site for development;
- details of when the site is expected to become available for development; and
- whether there are any known constraints that could restrict the development of the land.

3.30. The Council has made a judgement based on the information submitted by the landowner/site promoter as to whether the site is available, and when it may be able to deliver the proposed development. Where required, the Council has communicated further with the landowner/site promoter to supplement the information already provided or to clarify matters of ownership as part of the process. Where potential issues have been identified, the Council has made an assessment as to how and when these issues can realistically be overcome. Where sites are considered suitable for other uses than those the site was submitted for, they will not be considered available until formally confirmed by the land promoter.

Achievability Assessment

3.31. The PPG[23] confirms that a site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. In effect, this is a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the developer to complete and then let or sell the development over the plan period.

3.32. This will include an assessment of a number of:

- *Market factors* – such as adjacent uses, the economic viability of the existing, proposed and alternative uses in terms of land value, the attractiveness of the locality and levels of potential market demand;
- *Cost factors* – including site preparation costs relating to any physical constraints, abnormal costs that may be related to securing site requirements or additional land/access rights, any exceptional works necessary, relevant planning standards (i.e. space standards) or obligations (i.e. affordable housing, highway works), prospect of funding or investment to address identified constraints or assist development; and
- *Delivery factors* – including the developer's phasing of development, where included in its submission, build out rates and the number of developers on site and their product range.

3.33. As part of the Local Plan process, the Council will undertake a viability assessment that will take into account such factors as the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), S106 agreements and planning obligations (i.e. affordable housing), and other standards that can affect development viability within the Council's Local Plan (such as design and space standards). This viability assessment should ensure that the majority of new development within the district will be financially viable at the time when development is envisaged to take place.

Calculating Development Capacity

3.34. The PPG[24] confirms that the estimation of the development potential of each identified site can be guided by the existing or emerging plan policy including locally determined policies on density. It notes that relevant existing

[23] See Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 3-020-20190722 of the housing and economic land availability assessment PPG

[24] Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 3-016-20190722, Housing and economic land availability assessment PPG

schemes can be used as the basis for assessment, adjusted for any individual site characteristics.

3.35. Individual site characteristics and physical constraints have also been considered to inform the indicative development capacity identified for each site. Certain sites may be suitable for higher density development, perhaps due to a central location, or the density of adjacent development. For other sites, specific constraints may exist (e.g. Ancient Woodland or Flood Zone 3) which would reduce the developable area of the site. The reasoning behind the identified indicative development capacity is clearly set out in the assessment report and has been considered on a case-by-case basis due to the specific nature of sites.

3.36. The Council has previously published an Urban Capacity and a Character Density Study[25] that has examined many of our major towns and villages that are subject to growth and has assessed different parts of these towns/villages for their prevailing character and density. Where appropriate, the Council has also considered this document in determining the densities of housing sites in those relevant settlements.

3.37. The housing densities provided by the SHELAA are indicative for the future development of a site. The SHELAA does not pre-empt or prejudice any decision the Council may make in the future on any specific site and the assumptions made on densities should not be considered as fixed.

Conclusion and timescales

3.38. The assessment of the suitability, availability and achievability of a site provides information on which a judgement can be made as to whether a site is likely to be developed. The approach adopted to provide an overall conclusion is as follows:

- **Deliverable** sites are suitable for the relevant use, available at the time of the assessment and achievable. Development can be delivered within 5 years.
- **Developable** sites are suitable for the relevant use, available at the time of the assessment or will become available during the plan period and achievable. Development will be delivered within the next 6 to 15 years.
- **Not deliverable or developable** sites means that at least one of the suitability, availability and achievability criteria had a negative outcome.

[25] Wealden Urban Capacity Study (March 2024) and Wealden Character and Density Study (March 2024)

3.39. Information on the suitability, availability, achievability and constraints has been used to assess the timescale within which each site is capable of development. The Council already provides a detailed assessment of housing sites with an extant planning permission, or a resolution to grant planning permission, as part of its review of its five-year housing land supply position statement. For all other sites without planning permission, consideration has been given as to the likely delivery timescales of each site. This helps give a broad indication as to whether the site would come forward in the short term (1-5 years), medium term (6-10 years) or longer term (11 years or over).

3.40. The estimated rates of delivery for the district are set out in Table 5 and have been based upon experience within the district. It should be noted that each housing scheme will have individual constraints or delivery issues and that the rates below should only be used as a guide and will be iterated upon if required in future years.

Table 5 Estimated delivery rates for Wealden District

Delivery Rates	
Site Size (Net Dwellings)	Delivery (Dwellings Per Annum)
5-100	25
101-200	50
201-400	75
401-800	85
>801	100

Stage 3 – Windfall assessment

National Planning Policy

3.41. The NPPF at paragraph 75 confirms that where an allowance is to be made for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply, there should be compelling evidence that they will provide a reliable source of supply. It notes that any allowance should be realistic having regard to the strategic housing land availability assessment, historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends.

3.42. Prior to the publication of the updated NPPF in 2019, any windfall allowance was to not include residential gardens. The NPPF (December 2024) no longer applies this restriction but indicates that Local Plans should consider the case for setting out planning policies to resist inappropriate development

of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.

3.43. Windfall sites are defined within Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF succinctly as ‘sites not specifically identified in the development plan’. This definition would include all sites, whether on brownfield land or greenfield land, that are not allocated within a Local Plan.

Approach to Windfall Development

3.44. The delivery of housing on unidentified small sites (i.e. sites below 5 dwellings) has been and will continue to be an integral source of housing supply within the district. In accordance with national planning guidance, this SHELAA applies a site size threshold of five or more dwellings. Therefore, the SHELAA does not identify suitable, available or achievable development sites capable of delivering below this threshold. Historically, small sites have made an important contribution to housing supply in the district, particularly through infill development within many of Wealden’s towns/villages and in rural areas through the conversion of agricultural buildings for example.

3.45. In addition, the changes under the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) have meant that some employment/retail/agricultural premises have applied to change their existing use to residential. This will likely continue whilst the government’s change to such regulations remains in place and can include sites of 5 (net) dwellings or more.

3.46. The Councils windfall assessment attached at Appendix 2 was produced as part of the SHELAA (September 2026) and was based upon historic windfall delivery rates for such typologies of sites over a twelve-year period between 2014 and 2026. The windfall assessment has sought to project forward and has also considered future predicted trends at that time (for example, legislation changes). In total, the windfall assessment estimates that 1,724 (net) dwellings will come forward as windfall development during the time period identified.

3.47. This windfall assessment attracted significant representations as part of the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan consultation previously undertaken in March 2024 and at the ‘Focused’ Local Plan consultation (February 2026). However, the outcome is based upon detailed analysis and data available at that time and is presented in Appendix 2.

Stage 4 – Assessment review

3.48. The PPG[26] confirms that once all the sites and broad locations have been assessed, the development potential of all sites can be collected to produce

[26] Paragraph: 024 Reference ID: 3-024-20190722,

an indicative trajectory. This should set out how much housing development and the amount of economic development that can be provided over the Plan period and at what point in the future (i.e. 1-5 years, 6-10 years, or 11 years and beyond). However, as discussed previously, all such sites submitted to the SHELAA and found to be suitable, available and achievable will still need to be considered through the plan-making process and specifically the SA and SEA, as well as the emerging policies of the Local Plan. This will be an iterative process as the evidence base and Local Plan evolves.

3.49. The PPG recommends that an overall risk assessment should be made as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated, as the assessment may conclude that insufficient sites have been identified to meet our strategic housing requirements and that further sites need to be sought. If this is the case, it will be necessary to investigate how this shortfall should best be planned. This will include revisiting the assessment (e.g. changing assumptions of potential sites or reviewing constraints). For this SHELAA, this process has already been undertaken with the wholesale review of all 1,294 sites submitted as of April 2026, including those assessed and identified in the previous SHELAA (September 2026). If there is still a shortfall in sites, consideration needs to be given to how needs might be met in adjoining areas.

Stage 5 – Final evidence base

3.50. The PPG states that the assessment should provide a set of standard outputs to ensure consistency, accessibility and transparency. The SHELAA will set out:

- A list of all sites or broad locations considered, cross-referenced to their location on maps;
- An assessment of each site or broad location, including:
    - Evidence provided to justify why site capacity is discounted;
    - The potential type and quantity of development where a site is considered deliverable, 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 based on the evidence available.

3.51. The assessments have been organised on a parish basis and have been published alongside this main SHELAA report in Appendix 1.

4. Results and Analysis

Stage 1 – Site / Broad location identification

4.1. A total of 1,294 sites have been submitted to the SHELAA process as at 30 April 2026. Of those, 984 sites remain 'live' for assessment as of April 2026 within the SHELAA, 1 site was submitted solely for renewable energy and 12 sites are exclusively assessed for the provision of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation. Other sites were withdrawn due to requests from site proponents or withdrawn due a change in position (e.g. planning permission granted and the development has subsequently been completed).

4.2. Of those live sites, it was determined that the 129 sites were classified as too small for assessment and that 77 sites were identified as benefitting from extant planning permission or a resolution to grant planning permission for the entirety of the site (see Appendix 1 for further details). In addition, 47 sites were excluded as they are affected by an absolute constraint. Therefore, a remaining total of 731 sites were considered for residential or employment uses.

Stage 2 – Site / Broad location assessment

4.3. Of those 731 sites, 601 sites were found to be not deliverable or developable, with 13 sites to be developable for housing use; 110 sites to be deliverable for housing use; and 7 sites to be developable for employment use.

4.4. It should be noted that a number of these 'suitable' sites also overlap or form part of larger 'suitable' sites. Although they have been accounted for in the above summary, they have been excluded from the capacity of deliverable and developable SHELAA sites to avoid double counting.

Stage 3 – Windfall assessment

4.5. The windfall assessment (see Appendix 2) has identified an additional 1,724 (net) dwellings that are anticipated to come forward during the time period of the new Local Plan.

Stage 4 – Assessment review

4.6. Table 6 sets out the potential capacity of deliverable and developable SHELAA sites (without planning permission) for residential development in 5-year periods for the next 16 years, in accordance with national planning policy and guidance.

Table 6 Net dwellings capacity for deliverable and developable SHELAA sites (without planning permission) within each Parish

Parish	Years 1-5	Years 6-10	Years 11+	Net dwellings per Parish (Total)
Arlington	0	0	0	0
Berwick	47	40	0	87
Buxted	10	65	65	140
Chalvington and Ripe	0	0	0	0
Chiddingly	0	0	0	0
Crowborough	51	140	150	341
Danehill	0	0	0	0
East Hoathly with Halland	0	246	140	386
Fletching	0	0	0	0
Forest Row	0	0	0	0
Framfield	9	290	310	609
Frant	60	325	520	905
Hadlow Down	0	0	0	0
Hailsham	149	323	224	696
Hartfield	0	11	0	11
Heathfield and Waldron	22	123	31	176
Hellingly	14	237	418	669
Herstmonceux	0	5	17	22
Hooe	0	0	0	0
Horam	8	343	450	801
Isfield	0	20	0	20
Laughton	5	0	0	5
Little Horsted	0	450	850	1300
Long Man	0	0	0	0
Maresfield	19	181	5	205

Parish	Years 1-5	Years 6-10	Years 11+	Net dwellings per Parish (Total)
Mayfield	0	0	0	0
Ninfield	5	185	130	320
Pevensey	0	0	0	0
Polegate	0	18	53	71
Rotherfield	0	8	0	8
Selmeston	0	0	0	0
Uckfield	6	255	78	339
Wadhurst	20	0	0	20
Warbleton	0	0	0	0
Wartling	0	0	0	0
Westham	65	252	213	530
Willingdon and Jevington	0	40	0	40
Withyhyam	5	31	0	36
District Total	495	3,588	3,654	7,737

4.7. The SHELAA has identified that there is a theoretical capacity to deliver 7,737 (net) dwellings within the district. Table 6 above demonstrates the potential timescale for the delivery of housing sites by Parish. It calculates the potential capacity in years 1-5 to be 495 (net) dwellings, the potential capacity in years 6-10 to be 3,588 (net) dwellings and the potential capacity in years 11+ to be 3,654 (net) dwellings. The individual timescales for the delivery of deliverable and developable housing sites are described in the individual parish summaries for the SHELAA as provided in Appendix 1.

4.8. Table 7 below indicates which of the assessed SHELAA sites are deliverable or developable for economic development within the district on a Parish basis. This includes sites with existing economic uses that could be supported for intensification of those uses.

Table 7 Deliverable and developable employment sites for each Parish

Parish	**SHELAA Reference**	**SHELAA Site Name**
Hailsham	913/1310	Tudor Close, Polegate Road, Hailsham

Hailsham	973/1310	Woodside Depot and Brownings, Polegate Road, Hailsham
Hailsham	1115/1310	Woodside Park, Land East of A22, Hailsham
Hellingly	1039/1310	Knights Farm West, Hailsham
Long Man	1029/1310	Natewood Farm, Polegate Road, Hailsham
Maresfield	980/3120	Land south of Ashdown Business Park, Michael Way, Maresfield
Polegate	896/1510	Land at North Polegate, A22

4.9. The Council has identified 7 SHELAA sites within Wealden District that are considered, at a high-level, 'suitable' for employment uses.

Stage 5 – Final evidence base

4.10. In addition to the windfall sites and the deliverable and developable sites, there are also 7,312 (net) dwelling 'commitments' as of 1 April 2026. It should be noted that the number of commitments precedes the preparation of this SHELAA report and does not account for the planning permissions granted more recently.

4.11. In total, the Council at this stage can demonstrate that there is potential capacity to deliver 7,737 (net) dwellings during the new Local Plan period to 2042, alongside the provision of 7 employment sites, in addition to commitments and windfall sites.

5. Next Steps

5.1. The Council will endeavour to provide these standard outputs as part of its SHELAA assessment including as part of any subsequent SHELAA update. The Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) provides the timetable for the progression of the new Local Plan.

5.2. The SHELAA is a live document. Following the publication of the Regulation 19 process for the Local Plan, the Council intends to continue the ongoing 'Call for Sites' process to enable the public, developers, landowners, agents and Parish /Town Councils to provide updated information on existing sites within the process, or to submit new sites to the Council's SHELAA.

5.3. Therefore, if any member of the public, developer, landowner, agent, Parish/Town Council and other relevant parties has any further information they would like to submit in relation to a site or if they had an additional site, they would like to be put forward for inclusion in the SHELAA, the relevant information should be sent to the Planning Policy Team at:

Email: shelaa@wealden.gov.uk

Post: Planning Policy, Wealden District Council, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, BN27 2AX

5.4. This information will then be considered and (where appropriate) will be included within the next review of the SHELAA. The PPG states that the assessment once completed should be kept up to date (at least annually). Further information regarding the SHELAA will be available on our website via the following link:

https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/strategic-housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment-shelaa/