



Harborough District Council

Site Selection Methodology

January 2025

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Harborough District Council is preparing a new Local Plan which on adoption will supersede the current *Harborough District Local Plan 2011 – 2031*. The new *Draft Harborough District Local Plan (2020-41)* allocates sites for housing, employment or other uses to meet identified requirements over the plan period.
- 1.2 This document sets out the methodology for site assessment, which has been used to assess sites for inclusion within the new Local Plan for housing and employment uses to 2041.
- 1.3 It supersedes the methodology paper issued alongside the Regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan and forms part of the supporting information to the Regulation 19 consultation plan.
- 1.4 The primary areas of site assessment discussed in this document relate to general housing (Use class C3) and 'general' employment land – broadly covering general industrial (Use class B2), smaller scale storage and distribution (Use class B8) and commercial, business and service (Use Class E and E(gi-iii)). Separate, more specialised site assessment methodologies have been developed alongside the relevant evidence base for the following:
 - Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation.
 - Retail and Leisure Facilities Study [\[insert link\]](#).
 - Commercial Attractiveness of Candidate Employment Sites which has informed the technical site assessment in Stage 4; and
 - Employment land relating to strategic scale distribution (units of >9000sm²). [\[insert link\]](#).

2 National Policy and Guidance Context

- 2.1 The preparation of the Council's site selection approach reflects the guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2023) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.2 Local Plans should be prepared in accordance with the NPPF to provide a positive vision for the future to facilitate sustainable development to include an overarching framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities that should align with infrastructure. Within the Local Plan, strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, which includes making adequate provision for housing and employment.
- 2.3 Paragraph 23 of the NPPF states that Local Plans should indicate broad locations for strategic development. In paragraph 123, it is stated that planning policies should promote an effective use of land in meeting the needs for homes, with strategic policies setting out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed land. One of the tests of soundness for Local Plans as set out in paragraph 35 of the NPPF is that to be justified they should be based on an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives and based on proportionate evidence. As such, this assessment of sites and how they compare against one another will be important to demonstrate reasonable alternatives have been considered.
- 2.4 In support of the government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, the NPPF reiterates (Para 69) the importance of identifying a sufficient amount and variety of land that can come forward, to meet local housing needs. It requires that the Council should have a 'clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment'. More specifically, planning policies should identify a supply of:

- a) specific, deliverable sites for five years following the intended date of adoption; and
 - b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for the subsequent years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the remaining plan period.
- 2.5 The importance of small and medium sized sites in meeting housing requirements quickly is further noted in the NPPF. Paragraph 70 indicates that local planning authorities should promote the development of a good mix of sites through the development plan and brownfield registers, and to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare; unless it can be shown, through the preparation of relevant plan policies, that there are strong reasons why this 10% target cannot be achieved. Paragraph 70 also focuses upon the importance of small sites to support community-led development for self-build and custom-build housing.
- 2.6 At the other end of the housing spectrum, the NPPF also supports the supply of large numbers of new housing through settlement extensions or new settlements. NPPF Paragraph 74 outlines the key considerations to identify well located, sustainable proposals, supported by the necessary infrastructure and services.
- 2.7 The importance of maintaining effective housing supply and delivery is a strong focus of the NPPF, and subject to assessment through 5-year housing land supply statements and housing delivery test analysis.
- 2.8 It is important that planning policies reflect changes in the demand for land. Para 126 of the NPPF states that policies should be informed by regular reviews of both the land allocated for development in plans, and of land availability. Where a local planning authority considers there to be no reasonable prospect of an application coming forward for the use allocated in the plan it should, as part of plan updates, reallocate the land for a more deliverable use that can help to address identified needs (or, if appropriate, deallocate a site which is undeveloped).

- 2.9 The NPPF contains less policy direction on employment land and sites but under para 87 it is noted that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.
- 2.10 Under paragraph 127, Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to use employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centres, and would be compatible with other policies in the NPPF.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 2.11 National Planning Practice Guidance on conducting Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments sets out the approach to identifying land that is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic uses over the plan period. This is a high-level assessment of the future supply of land.
- 2.12 The assessment is a key part of the evidence base to inform the site selection process. It is however important to note that it does not determine whether a site should be allocated for development. Rather it assesses and identifies a pool of sites that are potentially suitable for further consideration for allocations. In Harborough this document is entitled the *Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) 2024*.
- 2.13 This site selection methodology uses the SHELAA database as the technical starting point in terms of identifying sites for further evaluation.

3 Stage 1 – Site Identification

3.1 The main source of sites is the 2024 Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) which updated the previous 2021 version. The SHELAA and supporting methodology **can be found here [insert link]**–

3.2 In line with planning practice guidance, the SHELAA does not determine whether a site should be allocated for development. The role of the SHELAA is to provide a pool of sites which are available to meet the local authority’s requirements for the development plan to determine and assess which are the most suitable sites to meet those requirements.

Sources of Potential Land Supply

3.3 Several sources of potential land supply fed into the SHELAA these include:

Outstanding (Residual) Allocations

- Remaining allocations from the currently adopted Local Plan (*Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031*): All remaining allocations under the current Local Plan that have planning permission, with the exception of site allocation SC1: Scraptoft North Strategic Development Area, are included within housing supply. This site has not been taken forward as an allocation within the new Local Plan, due to viability and deliverability constraints. The site has been assessed within the SHELAA as developable within the 16+ timeframe.
- Remaining allocations from made Neighbourhood Development Plans (5 dwellings plus): The current monitoring date for housing supply calculations for the new Local Plan is the 31st March 2023. Neighbourhood Plan allocations ‘made’ before this date are included within the five-year housing supply calculation and therefore have not been included in this assessment. Neighbourhood Plan’s which have been ‘made’ with allocations after the 31st March 2023 have been assessed and included as new allocations within the new Local Plan.

Sites with Planning Permission 31st March 2023

- Sites already with planning permission are expected to be delivered during the course of the plan period and do not therefore need to be allocated in the new local plan. Housing sites with planning permission are monitored through the Council's Five Year Land Supply Report [\[insert link\]](#) for housing. Employment sites with planning permission are also monitored through the Authorities Monitoring Report [\[insert link\]](#).

Land with Planning History

- Non-commenced major planning permissions (10 dwellings plus);
- Expired windfall planning permissions – the principle of development has generally been established on non-allocated sites, but permissions have not been implemented within their statutory timeframe;
- Planning applications that have been refused or withdrawn – indicating market interest but likely to contain key policy / physical constraints or implementation obstacles;
- Land contained within the brownfield land register; and
- Small extant residential windfall sites.

Call for Sites

- Sites submitted through the focused Call for Sites (CFS) processes – CFS 1 – 26th March to 4th June 2021 and CFS 2 – 16th January to 27th February 2024;
- Sites submitted while the Call for Sites was open until 31st October 2024; and
- Additional sites promoted through Local Plan consultations and outside of 'Call for Sites' submissions.

Public Land and Other Sites

- Land owned by Harborough District Council and other public bodies which is considered surplus to requirements;
- Other sites the Council believes merit consideration – these could take the form of sites identified in other survey analysis;

- Sites in rural locations, adjoining villages and rural exceptions sites; and
- Potential urban extensions and new free-standing settlements.

Thresholds and Site Information

3.4 The SHELAA sets a threshold of five or more dwellings for inclusion of housing sites and economic sites of at least 0.25ha (or at least 500 sqm of floorspace) and undertakes an initial assessment of sites based upon the following site information and characteristics:

- Site size, boundaries and nearest settlement;
- Settlement hierarchy - where a site is not within or directly adjacent to the built-up boundary of a settlement, the settlement hierarchy category chosen for the site is 'other countryside location'.
- Current/adjacent land use and character;
- Physical and environmental constraints (e.g. access, contamination, topography, flood risk, natural features, location of infrastructure/utilities);
- Current development plan policy allocations/designations relating to site;
- Proximity to services and other infrastructure; and
- Planning history/status.

3.5 Part of the initial early-stage site assessment is to consider whether any site falls within a 'red constraint' which is defined in the joint SHELAA methodology as:

- Functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b);
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Internationally and Nationally Designated Sites of Biodiversity and Geological Interest (SSSI, SPA); and
- Major Hazardous Facilities (as defined by the Health and Safety Executive).

- 3.6 Red constraint sites are not automatically excluded from the SHELAA, with much depending upon the area of land promoted in total and relationship to the red constraint(s) identified.
- 3.7 The SHELAA includes a NPPG Stage 2 assessment of site suitability, availability and achievability. It also provides a graded assessment of deliverability (1-5 years) and developability (6 years plus). A summary of the SHELAA site assessment key considerations are set out below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: SHELAA – Site Assessment

Suitability	Availability
<p>The suitability assessment reflects any physical, environmental or heritage constraints on or near the site, proposed access arrangements including potential impacts on the highway network, and its relationship/proximity to existing services and facilities. This includes specific consultation with the Highways Authority on specific site concerns/issues; cumulative impacts on the local highway network and mitigation which could impact on viability of the site; and strategic sites – defined as sites of 500 units or more.</p> <p>Depending on the findings, and the prospect of mitigation, a site is categorised as one of the following: Suitable: within 5 years; Potentially suitable: 6 – 10 years; Not currently suitable: 11 - 15 years; or Not suitable: 16+ years - acknowledges that some sites may not be suitable, available, achievable within the new Local Plan period, but it could be possible to overcome such constraints in the longer term, enabling them to form part of a longer-term vision for development).</p>	<p>Information relating to landowner intentions, developer involvement, potential legal or ownership issues, and operational requirements, to establish when a site may become available for development.</p> <p>Depending on the findings, a site is categorised as one of the following: Available: within 5 years; Potentially available: 6 – 10 years; Not currently available: 11 - 15 years; or Not available: 16+ years.</p>
<p>Achievability</p> <p>Assessment takes account of any market, cost or delivery factors that could impact on a site’s economic viability and prevent it coming forward for development within a particular timeframe. As part of this, any current policy designations affecting a site are noted and where a potential change in policy through the local or neighbourhood planning process would be needed this is reflected in the achievability timescale.</p> <p>Depending on the findings, a site is categorised as one of the following: Achievable: within 5 years; Potentially achievable: 6 – 10 years; Not currently achievable: 11 - 15 years; or Not achievable: 16+ years.</p>	

Site Yield

3.8 The SHELAA adopts a number of standard calculations for estimating residential and employment development potential. For residential sites this includes applying the following formulae stages:

1. Gross Site Area (GSA) (hectare) minus 'red constraints' = Developable Site Area (DSA)
2. GSA or DSA multiplied by scaled development ratio (depending upon site size) = Net Development Area (NDA)
3. NDA multiplied by 30 dwellings per ha to calculate overall estimated residential yield.

3.9 Development ratios are an important concept in site yield estimates and the SHELAA uses the following ratios as noted in **Table 5**. These ratios account for infrastructure needed to support residential developments such as open space provision, community infrastructure and access and service infrastructure. Generally, the larger the site the more infrastructure required and the lower the ratio. No adjustments have been made in the SHELAA for new mandatory policy requirements such as a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and in terms of applied density calculations the SHELAA (2024) uses a blanket 30 dph for the District as a whole.

Table 1: Gross to Net Development Ratios

Site Size	Gross to Net Development Ratio
Up to 0.4ha	100%
>0.4 - 2ha	82.5%
>2 - 35ha	62.5%
Over 35ha	50%

3.10 The SHELAA estimates the timescales and rate of development of each site. The suitability, availability and achievability results are used to estimate the delivery timescale for each site. Sites are assigned the following categories.

- Deliverable: within 5 years
- Developable: 6 - 10 years
- Developable: 11 - 15 years
- Developable: 16+ years

3.11 Please note that a site can be assigned more than one timeframe, where development timescales do not fit within one five-year period:

3.12 For employment land, while the approach is similar, a slightly different set of assumptions and formulae is used to estimate the development potential of economic sites, based upon various evidence studies. This is set out in the formulae stages below:

1. Gross Site Area (GSA) (hectare) minus 'red constraints' = Developable Site Area (DSA)
2. For general employment (Office, Industrial and Non-strategic warehousing)
 - a) GSA or DSA multiplied by plot ratio / density of 0.35 for offices and
 - b) GSA or DSA multiplied by plot ratio / density of 0.42 for general industrial and
 - c) GSA or DSA multiplied by plot ratio / density of 0.4 for non-strategic warehousing.
3. For strategic warehousing (Use Class B8 of units 9,000smq+):
 - a) GSA or DSA multiplied by plot ratio / density of 0.35.

3.13 Where a mix of employment uses has been stated, an average density has been applied based on the specified mix and the above plot ratios.

SHELAA 2024 – Summary of Assessment

3.14 In total 301 housing and employment sites are included in the 2024 SHELAA. Of these: the SHELAA further details that 97 sites were excluded from the assessment, or were assessed but their capacity is excluded from the SHELAA, for the following reasons:

- the site size not meeting the required size threshold (4 sites);
- the submitted site is a duplicate of a site submitted in 2021 and has already been assessed (16 sites);
- the site has already been developed (1 site);
- the site was previously excluded from the 2021 SHELAA and remains excluded (this includes two sites which were excluded as allocations in 2021 but reassessed under 2024 site references in this update and a site previously rejected in 2021 (12 sites);
- the site has been divided into two separate sites for assessment which means the original site has been excluded as it has been superseded by the two separate site boundaries (1 site);
- the site has been withdrawn from the process by the owner/site promoter (2 sites);
- Site assessed but not included in capacity figures because it is a sub-set of a larger site assessed (35 sites); and
- Sites assessed in 2021 but now superseded by 2024 site assessments (26 sites).

4 Sites not taken forward for assessment from the SHELAA

Strategic Sites 1500+ Dwellings

- 4.1 Strategic Sites offer the potential opportunity to deliver a level of social and other infrastructure, as well as a degree of self-containment that can help reduce car-born transport. As a general rule, the larger the site, the greater the opportunity for infrastructure funding and sustainable benefits. Strategic Sites capable of accommodating over 1,500 homes in the SHELAA was therefore identified as a discrete option through the development strategy process, to enable an understanding of the potential impacts (positive and negative) of large strategic sites, including some sites capable of accommodating large standalone or co-dependent new settlements (>5,000 homes). Whilst strategic growth less than 1,500 homes may provide a degree sustainable benefits, they are unlikely to be significant enough to justify a scale of growth at a settlement over-and-above that which the settlement's position in hierarchy would support.
- 4.2 Large Strategic Sites able to accommodate more than 1,500 homes were therefore considered through the Development Strategy process. This process found there were significant sustainable benefits of bringing forward large strategic sites, but long lead-in times highlighted significant risks of a strategy over reliant on large strategic sites, including the ability to maintain a supply of homes across the plan period and the need to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, with specific deliverable sites for the first five years, and specific developable sites or broad locations for years 6-10 and, where possible for years 11-15 (NPPF paragraph 69).

- 4.3 Taking this into account the refined options were developed on the basis of including no more than 1 new large strategic site (over 1,500 homes) in each option. To inform this process all large strategic sites (over 1,500 homes), including those submitted during the Issues and Options Consultation in January/February 2024, were assessed to identify which large strategic site(s) should be taken forward for further consideration as part of the growth options assessment considered as part of the development of the development strategy and spatial distribution.
- 4.4 Table 2 below contains a summary of whether each site was taken forward for further consideration in the refined spatial options (for completeness, the assessment of each site is included as Appendix 6):

SHELAA Reference	Site Name	Potential Capacity (Homes)	Conclusion
21/8229	Farmcare Estate, Stoughton	10,000	Not taken forward into the Refined Options
21/8217	Whetstone Pastures Garden Village, Willoughby Waterleys	5,000 – 6,000 (1,017 in HDC* and 4,000 – 5,000 in BDC**)	Not taken forward into the Refined Options
21/8192 & 24/10498	Land east of Broughton Astley and North of Dunton Bassett and Ashby Magna	5,000 – 5,677	Not taken forward into the Refined Options
21/8178 & 24/10137	Land at Newton Harcourt (Newton Croft)	3,176 – 3,237	Not taken forward into the Refined Options
21/8093	Land at Stretton Hall Farm, Chestnut Drive, Great Glen	1,707	Not taken forward into the Refined Options
24/8631	Land South of Gartree Road and land at Stretton Hall Farm	4,000 (3,000 in HDC and 1,000 in OWBC***)	Taken Forward into the Refined Options
24/10433	Land South of the A4303, Lutterworth	2,415	Taken Forward into the Refined Options

*Harborough District Council **Blaby District Council ***Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

- 4.5 Although taken forward to the refined options, Land South of the A4303, Lutterworth was rejected at the preferred option stage as it does not comply with the preferred development strategy.

- 4.6 As outlined in Stage 3 of the methodology, this assessment applies the new Local Plan development strategy which has taken into consideration large strategic sites. Consequently, sites considered in this assessment are smaller in scale (i.e. less than 1,500 homes) and not appropriate to be considered standalone new communities. Therefore, sites which do not adjoin the built-up area of a sustainable settlement (identified in the Settlement Hierarchy) have not advanced past Stage 3.

Sites Excluded from the Site Selection Process

- 4.7 Sites that are included within the SHELAA which are isolated or not related to a settlement have not been assessed as part of the site selection process.
- 4.8 Sites within or next to Small villages were not assessed.
- 4.9 Only sites which have a reasonable prospect of being delivered within the plan period have been included within this assessment, i.e. sites that have been identified within the SHELAA as being developable in the 16 year plus timeframe have been excluded. Other sites were also excluded from this assessment and the list of sites and the reasons for their exclusion are set out in Appendix 2.

5 Stage 2 – Sustainability Appraisal Regulation 18

- 5.1 At the Regulation 18 stage, each developable site within the SHELAA has been assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal framework. This considers a range of social, environmental and economic factors which reflect the objectives of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework.
- 5.2 Site options were originally subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in October/November 2023 with the findings published in the January 2024 Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Regulation 18 Issues and Options Consultation Document.
- 5.3 The Sustainability Appraisal framework objectives against which the sites are appraised are as follows:

Objective 1: Minimise greenhouse gas emissions and develop a managed response to the effects of climate change:

The likely effects of all residential, mixed use, employment and retail site options against this objective are negligible.

Objective 2: Protect, enhance and manage biodiversity and geodiversity:

Ten of the residential site options (21/8034, 21/8075, 21/8132, 21/8149, 24/10304, 24/10612, 24/12202, 24/12215, 24/12222, 24/9111), six of the mixed use site options (21/8150, 21/8217, 21/8242, 24/10117, 24/10251, 24/12210) and one of the employment site option (21/8169) could have significant negative effects as they contain all or part of a designated Local Wildlife Site, some sites are also within 250m of national biodiversity designations. Site option 24/12210 could result in the loss/damage or partial loss/damage of approximately 19 designated Local Wildlife Sites.

Objective 3: To support efficient use of resources, including soils:

The majority of land in Harborough is Grade 3 agricultural land, with smaller areas of both Grade 2 and Grade 4 land. Grade 2 agricultural land is present in small areas between the A47 and A6 and to the east and south of Lutterworth. Due to the rural nature of Harborough District, 263 residential, 59 mixed use, 27 employment, and a retail and energy infrastructure site options are expected to have significant negative effects on this SA objective. Due to the prevalence of Grade 3 agricultural land in the district, there are limited areas which offer poorer quality of and which could be prioritised as the most appropriate for development.

Objective 4: To conserve and enhance the historic environment including the setting of heritage features:

The majority of development sites are expected to have negative effects on this SA objective due to being within or at least 1km of a heritage asset. This reflects the historic nature of the district, market towns and rural villages. There are approximately 1,356 listed buildings and 62 Conservation Areas.

Objective 5: Protect and improve air quality:

Only two housing sites (24/10501 and 24/9639), one mixed use site (21/8060) and one employment (21/8073) are expected to have significant negative effects as they are within 100m of Kibworth AQMA and Rugby AQMA which lies with Rugby Borough outside of the district.

Objective 6: Safeguard and improve health, safety and wellbeing:

All site options perform positively against this objective, specifically sites near Fleckney, Great Bowden, Billesdon, Ullesthorpe, Husbands Bosworth, Broughton Astley, Kibworth, Great Glen, Bushby, Thurnby and a small number of sites at Market Harborough.

Objective 7: Achieve social inclusion and equality for all:

The location of new development will determine the effect on this objective and this was scoped out of the SA site appraisals.

Objective 8: To provide access to services, facilities and education:

Overall, the site options have mixed effects overall. Only four residential (21/8052, 24/12204, 24/12208 and 24/12218) and one mixed use (24/10711) site option have significant positive effects overall. Have these been noted in the assessment summaries?

Objective 9: Provide affordable, sustainable, good-quality housing for all:

Large sites of 500 homes or more are identified as to have significant positive effects, there are a large number of mixed-use sites which have been assessed against this objective which would have significant positive effects sites of this size are able to achieve a wide mix of housing and affordable housing to meet local needs.

Objective 10: Support the sustainable growth of the economy and provide employment opportunities:

All new employment sites are likely to have a positive effect on this objective by ensuring that new job opportunities are provided. Therefore, all employment site options will have positive effects.

Objective 11: Reduce waste generation and increase levels of reuse and recycling:

The likely effect of all site options in relation to this objective is negligible.

Objective 12: To manage and reduce flood risk from all sources and to protect the quality and quantity of water resources:

The majority of Harborough District falls within Flood Zone 1. There are some areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 which are mainly associated with the watercourses in the district. The majority of site options fall within Flood Zone 1 and are at a low risk of flooding. However, the higher levels of surface water flood risk in Harborough have resulted in the majority of site options being found to have a likely significant negative effect. If any of the sites with potential significant negative effects associated with flood risk are taken forwards for allocation in the new Local Plan, the SA recommends that mitigation requirements are built into any associated site allocation policies, for example the incorporation of SuDS.

Objective 13: Promote sustainable transport use and active travel:

The majority of the residential, mixed use, employment and retail site option are expected to have positive effects on SA objective 13.

Objective 14: To conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the landscape:

The positive/negative effects of all site options relates to if sites fall within the countryside and are on greenfield land. Sites that fall in the countryside and are less than 500 homes and are likely to have minor negative impacts.

- 5.4 Further details, including the site assessment of all the developable sites is set out in the Harborough District Council Site Options Appraisal Summary Note [\[insert link\]](#), including how objectives were considered. The outcomes of the sustainability appraisal have been used to inform which sites progress through the site selection process; however this does not determine the outcome of the site assessment process, SA is part of the overall appraisal of sites when considering a range of factors.
- 5.5 Overall, nine sites were identified to have negative effects across five or more SA objectives these were (21/8089, 21/8137, 21/8147, 21/8160, 21/8161, 21/8214, 24/10053, 24/10169 and 24/10229). None of these sites have been taken forward to Stage 4 and a technical assessment undertaken as set out below.
- 5.6 Each site SA appraisal summary has been included within the Stage 4 - technical site proformas for each site set out within Appendix 4.

6 Stage 3: Assessment of sites against the development strategy and key policies

- 6.1 The SHELAA provides the starting point for site assessment in plan-making and is a high-level assessment but does not allocate sites. The aim of this site assessment and methodology is assess the ‘pool of sites’ from the SHELAA and determine which sites are appropriate for allocating for development in the new Local Plan. 184 Sites have been brought forward for assessment as part of the site selection process.
- 6.2 Stage 3 of the assessment process includes the initial assessment of sites to screen out those with a key policy constraint or which are not located in accordance with the emerging spatial strategy. Each site has been assessed against the criteria set out in Table 3 Below:

Table 3: Stage 3 Assessment Criteria

1	Is the site within or would it form a logical extension to a settlement identified for residential / mixed use growth in the Development Strategy?	Sites which are clearly remote or isolated from a settlement within the Development Strategy hierarchy will be rejected at Stage 3.
2	Is the overall scale of development appropriate to settlement function and in accordance with the development strategy settlement targets?	Sites with a development capacity exceeding 15% of the settlement target set out in the Development Strategy will be rejected at Stage 3.
3	Is the site within or adjoining a settlement, the Strategic Road Network/Major Road Network or an employment area identified for employment growth in the development strategy?	Sites which are not within or adjoining (Medium village or above in the Development Strategy hierarchy) will be rejected at Stage 3
4	Is the overall scale of the site appropriate to the objectively assessed employment needs of the District?	Sites of an inappropriate scale will be rejected at Stage 3
5	Will the site compromise, either alone or in conjunction with other existing or proposed development, the effectiveness of an Area of Separation in protecting the identity and distinctiveness of these settlements?	Sites that are wholly or partly within an Area of Separation will be rejected at Stage 3.
6	Would the site have a significant impact on a Green Wedge which	Sites that are wholly or partly within a Green Wedge will be rejected unless

	cannot be mitigated for instance through compensatory provision as part of a strategic development?	the impact can be mitigated through appropriate compensatory provision/mitigation.
7	Are there any other reasons to exclude the site at this stage of the assessment?	<p>Appropriate reasons to remove a site at this stage include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites with planning permission; • Sites with major constraints in terms of infrastructure or utilities on site. • Site can not be accessed.

The new Local Plan Development Strategy

6.3 Policies DS01 to DS05 in the new Local Plan explain the overall development strategy for Harborough District which in summary include:

- Delivering diverse housing options, focusing development in the most sustainable locations in terms of levels of transport accessibility as well as accessibility to services whilst ensuring the scale of development is appropriate to individual towns or villages.
- Promoting job creation and economic growth by allocating land for a variety of employment uses, from local shops to large-scale distribution.
- Supporting development with necessary infrastructure, highlighting strategic needs and leveraging developer contributions for delivery.
- Combating climate change by situating developments to reduce car travel and avoid effects of extreme weather, creating multifunctional green spaces and protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- Preserving the rural landscape and historic character, safeguarding the distinct identity of settlements and celebrating local heritage.

6.4 The overall development strategy for the Local Plan is focused upon meeting both:

- a) the strategic growth plan for Leicester and Leicestershire as a whole – which for Harborough District promotes housing delivery on strategic sites within a growth corridor close to the Leicester Urban Area and identifies an A5 improvement corridor and
- b) growth across the established District settlement hierarchy with a focus upon the more sustainable and larger settlements within the hierarchy including market towns, large villages and medium villages.

- 6.5 The new Local Plan seeks to locate allocations in the most sustainable settlements in the district. Sites which align to the settlement hierarchy within the Principal Urban Area, Market Towns, Large and Medium Villages will be taken forward for further consideration and a detailed site assessment undertaken. The spatial strategy does not allocate sites in Small Villages and therefore sites within or next to these villages have not been included within this assessment.
- 6.6 The development strategy has been reviewed as part of preparing the new Local Plan. It is proposed that the new Local Plan will include the area around the Principal Urban Area, Oadby, Scraftoft, Thurnby & Bushby, Market Towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth, four Large Villages and five Medium Villages.
- 6.7 A key component of the new Local Plan development strategy is to focus upon integrated spatial growth – connecting the effective use of land use planning with sustainable transport and existing infrastructure.
- 6.8 The overall distribution of growth to meet the total minimum housing requirement of 13,182 dwelling across the plan period of 2020-2041 is set out below in Table 4. The new Local Plan Growth Targets relate to allocations to be made within the Local Plan.
- 6.9 It can be noted that the overall distribution (total including completions, commitments and allocations) is significantly weighted (just over 88%) towards delivering growth within the upper tiers (Leicester urban area, market towns, large and medium villages) of the settlement hierarchy.
- 6.10 Sites related to the following settlements have been assessed:
- Sites adjacent to the Principal Urban Area of **Oadby, Scraftoft, Thurnby & Bushby.**
 - Market Towns: **Market Harborough and Lutterworth.**
 - Large Villages: **Broughton Astley, Fleckney, Great Glen and Kibworth.**
 - Medium Villages: **Billesdon, Great Bowden, Houghton on the Hill, Husbands Bosworth and Ullesthorpe.**

6.11 These are the largest settlements which provide the widest range of employment opportunities, services and facilities and are therefore considered to be the most appropriate, sustainable, locations for new development. Sites which are not located in these settlements have been screened out at Stage 3 and are included within Appendix 3.

Table 4: Distribution of Housing Growth

Settlement Hierarchy	Settlements	Completions	Commitments (as at 1 st April 2023)	New Local Plan Growth Target	Total	% of Overall Growth
Tier 1: Adjoining Leicester Urban Area	Land adjoining the built-up areas of Leicester City and the Borough of Oadby and Wigston	0	0	1,200	1,200	
	Scraptoft /Thurnby/ Bushby	334	134	1,250	1,718	
Sub-total		334	134	2450	2918	19.76%
Market Towns	Lutterworth	255	1,704	250	2,209	
	Market Harborough	959	2,008	1,350	4,317	
Sub-total		1214	3712	1600	6526	44.19%
Large Villages	Broughton Astley	145	118	475	738	
	Fleckney	266	326	150	742	
	Great Glen	146	64	400	610	
	Kibworth	224	31	475	730	
Sub-total		781	539	1500	2820	19.09%
Medium Villages	Billesdon	5	71	63	139	
	Great Bowden	56	9	100	165	
	Houghton on the Hill	44	35	104	183	
	Husbands Bosworth	41	20	105	166	
	Ullesthorpe	58	6	80	144	
Sub-total		204	141	452	797	5.40%
Small Villages	Small Villages - Various	375	328	350	1053	
Sub-total		375	328	350	1053	7.13%
Other	Other / Countryside	59	146	0	205	
	Windfall Allowance	0	0	450	450	
Sub-total		59	146	450	655	4.44%
Totals		2,967	5,000	6802	14,769	100%

- 6.12 In Large and Medium Villages the development strategy and planning judgement has been used taking into consideration the scale of development relating to the existing settlement site, if the site would result in significant encroachment into the countryside or would breach a natural or physical boundary of development (severance) these sites have been discounted at Stage 3 and are listed and identified on individual settlement Maps in Appendix 1.
- 6.13 Sites within the Principal Urban Area, Market Harborough and Lutterworth with constraints in terms of landscape sensitivity or agricultural land value have been assessed against the balance of the scale of growth proposed for these settlements within the development strategy. This is because the scale of development identified in the more sustainable and larger settlements is higher than in the villages, landscape sensitivity will impact sites located on the edges of both towns and cannot therefore be used in such a simplistic way to determine which sites to consider in greater detail.
- 6.14 Sites within the Principal Urban Area, Market Harborough and Lutterworth have also been assessed against the development strategy. Sites within an identified Area of Separation or Green Wedge have not been rejected at Stage 3 in these locations. These two policy considerations cannot be used simply to screen sites out in and around the largest settlements in the district and further detailed assessment in these locations has been undertaken in Stage 4.
- 6.15 Individual site assessments for sites removed at stage 3 are set out in Appendix 3. The outcome of the Stage 3 assessment is also shown at a settlement level in Appendix 1- these sites are identified in red.

7 Stage 4: Settlement Level Assessment of sites and identification of preferred allocations

- 7.1 The Stage 4 assessment comprises an assessment of sites to identify sufficient land in the most appropriate locations to meet the Development Strategy growth requirement for each settlement. The Stage 4 analysis has been undertaken by a detailed technical assessment of sites informed by an analysis of the characteristics of each settlement.
- 7.2 For each settlement identified, a Settlement Profile has been produced – see Appendix 1. These profiles look at a range of factors that may influence the location of growth such as existing services, scale and character of the settlement and constraints and opportunities. The Development Strategy growth requirement for each settlement is also provided.
- 7.3 Each site taken forward to Stage 4 was assessed in detail by officers within the context of its settlement setting against the technical criteria and constraints set out in Table 5 below. The assessment was undertaken using a combination of:
- site visits
 - google earth
 - desk top assessment of the suitability and deliverability of each site against the various constraints criteria.

Technical Site Assessment and outcomes

Table 5: Technical Constraints and Assessment Criteria and data source

Factor/technical detail	Data source/assessment/technical evidence
Technical Constraints	
Flood risk/Assessment against SFRA	SFRA 2024 – Level 1 and Level 2. Consultation with the LLFA.
Heritage	GIS constraints assessment. Officer assessment to identify potential assets. Conservation Officer Appraisal of preferred allocation sites taking into consideration guidance set out in <u>The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans</u> (historicengland.org.uk)
Landscape Sensitivity	Harborough District Council Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2024
Mineral Safeguarding Area	GIS desk top constraints assessment and in consultation with Leicestershire County Council Minerals and Waste
Ecology Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity	GIS constraints assessment of Local Wildlife Sites.
Air Quality	GIS constraints assessment noting proximity to Kibworth AQMA, Lutterworth AQMA and outside of the district in Rugby Borough.
Agricultural Land Value	GIS constraints assessment data.
Potentially contaminated land uses	GIS constraints check. Consultation with Environmental Health Officers.
Archaeology	GIS site constraints check. Where sites have been identified as having a high risk, detailed comments have been provided by Leicestershire County Council Archaeology.
Topography	Where significant variances in topography which would impact on the deliverability/developability/viability of the site this has been noted.

Infrastructure	
Transport and Access Safe (or ability to make safe) access to the road network. Transport implications known and package of proposed mitigation measures (including active travel and public transport, as appropriate)	In consultation with LCC Highways. AECOM Harborough Site Assessments 2024.
Other constraints	Public Rights of Way crossing sites, utilities infrastructure such as pylons, gas pipelines, sub stations. Tree coverage and any other on-site constraints.
Deliverability and viability	
Lead in times and delivery rates	Site delivery times and start dates have been informed by the SHELAA.
Other constraints and considerations as part of site conclusions.	
Proximity to services and facilities	Site within (or ability to be within) safe walking distance to a reasonable level of services and facilities
Compatibility with neighbouring uses	There are no neighbouring uses that would not be compatible with proposed use. Consideration of noise and other environmental impacts. Consultation with Environmental Health Officers where appropriate.

In addition, consideration of the accessibility of each site to the following key facilities informed the assessment. See Appendix 5.

- Distance to nearest primary school (metres)
- Distance to nearest secondary school (metres)
- Distance to nearest town or local centre (metres)
- Distance to nearest walking path (metres)
- Distance to nearest health facility (metres)
- Distance to nearest bus stop (metres)

- Distance to nearest cycle route (metres)
- Distance to nearest train station (metres)

7.4 The outcomes of the Stage 4 assessment are set out for each growth settlement in Appendix 1 and identifies sites which have been discounted at this stage and those sites which are preferred allocations. These sites are identified in Amber (Sites discounted) and identified Preferred Allocation Sites.

7.5 Full details of the technical assessment, conclusion and explanation for each site assessed at Stage 4 is set out in individual site proformas in Appendix 4. The new Local Plan will only allocate sites to meet the residual housing needs.

Employment Site Allocations and Site Assessments

- 7.6 The Harborough Housing and Employment Study (2025) sets out future employment land needs for the district. The report identifies that the overall general employment land requirement for Harborough District during the plan period (2020-41) is 60 hectares. Taking into consideration employment commitments and completions since the beginning of the plan period there is a modest need to allocate additional sites within the new Local Plan.
- 7.7 An overview of the employment distribution is set out within the supporting Development Strategy paper [\[insert link\]](#).
- 7.8 The search for new employment allocations is targeted in and around the most sustainable growth locations with supporting services and transport networks, this includes the Leicester Urban Area, market towns, large and medium villages. Employment sites within small villages have not been assessed.
- 7.9 The approach to selecting sites for potential employment allocations has been assessed alongside the approach to housing in Stages 1-2. . However, additional technical evidence has been commissioned to consider commercial attractiveness and additional location criteria has been applied which is covered within Stage 3 above.

Existing General Employment Areas and Key Employment Areas

7.10 The Local Housing and Employment Study (2025) carried out a 'fit for purpose' review of existing Employment Areas (Key Employment Areas (KEAs) and General Employment Areas (GEAs)) already allocated in the adopted Local Plan (2019) as well as undeveloped and partially developed extant allocations in the Local Plan (2019). The study recommends that most sites assessed are suitable to continue to form part of the district's employment land supply. Where land is identified but does not currently have planning permission within existing KEA/GEAs it is proposed that this land should be allocated within the new Local Plan. The assessment of these sites can be found here [\[insert link\]](#).

Potential Employment Allocation Site Assessment Criteria

- 7.11 Sites which have been submitted as part of the SHELAA for employment uses provide a 'pool of sites' for potential employment allocation in the new Local Plan. These are sites for general employment development – i.e. for use classes E(g), B2 and small-scale B8 development (in units of < 9,000 sq.m).
- 7.12 Stage 3 set out above applies the principles for identifying appropriate locations for employment allocations . In summary, employment sites are rejected within isolated locations, small villages and sites not well connected to the Strategic Road Network/Major Road Network. Sites for employment which have been rejected at Stage 3 are set out in Appendix 3.
- 7.13 Sites which are considered to be in appropriate locations for employment have been assessed against Stage 4 which applies a further detailed technical constraints analysis of sites.
- 7.14 Appendix B of the Local Housing and Employment Study (2025)- Assessment of Commercial Attractiveness of Candidate Employment Sites reviews proximity to the Strategic Road Network and Major Road Network but also ;local access in terms of suitability for light goods vehicles and heavy good vehicles having regard to access arrangements and infrastructure improvements which would be required to bring the site forward. Public transport access and labour market access have been considered as well as proximity to existing settlements and new residential development to ensure new employment opportunities and housing are co located.
- 7.15 This study has assessed 22 potential candidate employment allocations taking into account market demand and deliverability factors set out below:

7.16 The conclusion of preferred employment allocations has been brought together using planning judgement drawing on the evidenced employment needs, the spatial distribution identified within the development strategy market attractiveness and the principle of the co location of homes and jobs together to create sustainable communities. Site conclusions for employment sites are set out in Appendix 4

Strategic B8 sites –

7.17 The need for additional land for strategic B8 development (warehousing and logistics units of >9,000sqm) and Harborough's contribution, on an interim basis, towards meeting it is set out in the Strategic B8 Needs Sensitivity Report (2024). New site/s are necessary, and candidate sites have been assessed independently (by Icen Projects Limited) within the study using a bespoke methodology to address the specific locational requirements and nature of the sector.

7.18 The two stage, initial and detailed, assessment process including the criteria applied in each are set out in section 7 of the study [add link]. Sites were screened out after the initial stage. Summary conclusions are stated in Table 7.1 and full assessment proforma are provided in an Appendix of the study [add link].

Sites promoted for both housing and employment –

7.19 Where a mixed-use site has been proposed in the SHLEAA for both housing and employment. If a site promoted for residential development is not considered an appropriate location for housing then it has not been considered separately for employment. These sites are predominantly in unsustainable locations for development.

8 Sustainability Appraisal Regulation 19

- 8.1 The SA is integral to the plan making process and must be carried out during plan preparation from the outset. At Regulation 18 stage sites were assessed against SA objective. Sites which have been through the site selection process to Stage 4 and sites which have been identified as preferred options have been subject to further SA.
- 8.2 Sites that have been selected for allocation have originally been appraised as part the Sustainability Appraisal of sites under 'policy off' assessment against SA objectives. This assessment does not take into consideration any proposed mitigation or site-specific 'policy on' criteria within the emerging new Local Plan that address and mitigate any impact on identified site specific constraints which would need to be addressed to bring sites forward for allocation and that these sites were the most sustainable.
- 8.3 A total of 31 sites have been identified as preferred allocations for housing and employment across the district covering the Leicester Principle Urban Area, Market Harborough, Lutterworth and large and medium villages. The conclusions on the sites can be found within the Harborough Local Plan Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal 2025 [\[insert link\]](#).
- 8.4 The SA concludes on the most sustainable development options and reports on the process in full. In addition to this process the Development Strategy Paper [\[include link\]](#) sets out the preferred growth options and spatial strategy, taking into account SA findings as well as further Local Plan evidence considerations for the proposed development strategy in the new Local Plan.

9 Site Selection Conclusions and Preferred Site Allocation Recommendations

- 9.1 The purpose of the site selection process is to explain the methodology that has been followed to develop a shortlist of preferred housing and employment sites that have been taken forward within the new Local Plan for allocation.
- 9.2 The final stage of the process is to draw conclusions and to make officer recommendations about the suitability of each site for inclusion in the new Local Plan for both housing and employment as allocations.
- 9.3 Following the completion of the Stage 4 assessment Table 7 below sets out by settlement the sites that are being taken forward as preferred allocations in the Submission Draft Local Plan.

Table 7: Preferred Allocation Sites

Site Ref	Site name	Parish / Settlement	New Local Plan Policy Ref	Proposed Use
8202	Former Lorry Park, Gaulby Road	Billesdon	B3	Residential
8190	Billesdon Depot, South of Gaulby Road	Billesdon	B2	Residential
8155	Land at Gaulby Road	Billesdon	B1	Residential, community hub, school grounds extension
10554	Land off Frolesworth Road	Broughton Astley	BA1	Residential
10042	Land North of Fleckney Fields / Land north of Kilby Road	Fleckney	F1	Residential
8055	Land to the West of the Longgrey, Fleckney	Fleckney	F1	Residential
8151	Land north of Dingley Road	Great Bowden	GB1	Residential
8054	Land off Dingley Road and Nether Green	Great Bowden	GB2	Residential
8631	Land South of Gartree Road and East of Oadby	Great Glen	OA1	Mixed Use
8230	Land to the North of London Road and east of Leicester Grammar School, Great Glen	Great Glen	GG1	Residential
8135	Land North of Stretton Lane	Houghton on the Hill	HH2	Residential
8206	Land to the north of Uppingham Road	Houghton on the Hill	HH1	Residential
8064	Land east of Welford Road	Husbands Bosworth	HB1	Residential

10642	Land South of Priory Business Park	Kibworth	K2	Gen Employment
8247	Land west of Warwick Road	Kibworth	K1	Residential
8179	Land south of Lutterworth Road/ Coventry Road	Lutterworth	L3	Gen Employment
8104	Land at M1 Junction 20/Swinford Road	Lutterworth	L2	Residential
8167	Land off Leicester Road, Lutterworth	Lutterworth	L1	Residential
10649	Land South of Ashby Road	Ullesthorpe	U1	Residential
8180	Land north of Ashby Road	Ullesthorpe	U2	Residential
10253	Land East of Compass Way Spine Road, Market Harborough	Market Harborough	MH6	Gen Employment
10248	Land east of Northampton Road, north of Harborough Enterprise Centre, Market Harborough	Market Harborough	MH6	Gen Employment
8737	Land OS 3073, Leicester Road	Market Harborough	MH5	Mixed Use
10240	St Marys Road	Market Harborough	MH7	Mixed use- Leisure/ Retail
8143	Land east of Leicester Road and south of Grand Union canal	Market Harborough	MH1	Residential
8122	Market Harborough North, East of Harborough Road	Market Harborough	MH2	Residential
10597	Land South of Gallow Field Road	Market Harborough	MH3	Residential

12231	Commons Car Park	Market Harborough	MH8	Retail
12235	Land at Beeby Road	Scraptoft	S2	Residential
8227	Land between Scraptoft & Bushby	Scraptoft	S1	Residential
8241	Land north of the A47, east of Zouche Way	Thurnby & Bushby	TB1	Residential

Appendix 1 – Settlement Profiles

Appendix 2 – Sites rejected not taken forward from the SHELAA

Appendix 3 – Sites rejected at Stage 3

Appendix 4 – Technical Site Assessments

Appendix 5 – Sustainability Appraisal Distance Accessibility
Data

Appendix 6 – Large Strategic Sites Assessment (1,500+
homes)
