

Chelmsford City Council

Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) Report 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Chelmsford City Council conduct a Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) to gain an understanding of the potential developability of sites proposed for future residential or employment development.
- 1.2 Previously known as the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), the purpose of the SHELAA is to help the City Council make informed decisions of where to allocate future development and in preparing the annual housing and employment trajectories.
- 1.3 With the aim of remaining transparent across this process, this report has been prepared to provide a detailed overview of the development of the SHELAA and how the assessment is carried out. This document also delivers a summary of results from the most recent assessment, conducted between January-May 2021, with additional comments on refinement steps that have taken place within this assessment. Finally, the report addresses the different indicators that would lead to a review of the SHELAA.

2. Background

- 2.1 Paragraph 67 of the 2019 update of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that:

“Strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability”.

- 2.2 As such, Chelmsford City Council have created a process to enable anyone to put land forward for consideration and facilitate a thorough desk-based assessment of each site accounting for numerous suitability, availability and achievability criteria (including economic viability) including:
- Physical limitations including access, ground conditions and flood risk
 - Potential impacts upon landscape features and heritage assets
 - Appropriateness of the type of development
 - Environmental/amenity impacts
 - Legal/ownership issues
 - Viability

2.3 The assessment determines if a site is likely developable, likely deliverable or neither. To be developable, the NPPF states that:

“sites should be in a suitable location ... with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged”.

2.4 To be deliverable, a site must meet additional criteria. The NPPF states that deliverable sites:

“... should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. In particular: a) sites which do not involve major development and have planning permission, and all sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until the permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (for example because they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans).

b) where a site has outline planning permission for major development, has been allocated in a development plan, has a grant of permission in principle, or is identified on a brownfield register, it should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years.”

2.5 As such the Criteria Note (See Appendix 1) and assessment database have been created to reflect these definitions. Sites that lie in unsuitable areas will not be considered as developable or deliverable. Each site is checked against council records to see if the site features on the Brownfield Register and if planning permission has been granted. If planning permission has been granted, additional searches are undertaken to see what the trajectory of delivery is.

2.6 Ultimately, though the SHELAA provides a wide range of information to officers on a variety of site characteristics, it is not the purpose of the SHELAA to allocate land for future development. The assessment provides a broad overview of sites to enable officers to undertake compare and contrast exercises when making their own informed determinations as to whether a site is truly developable or deliverable.

3. Methodology

3.1 The SHELAA consists of an in-house database used to facilitate a desk-top assessment of all submitted sites and has been designed to account for local policy designations as well as national requirements. From this database, a report sheet for each site can then be produced to summarise performance against suitability, availability and achievability criteria, and categorises sites in terms of their deliverability and developability.

3.2 Where proposed amendments are received in respect of any site, these are considered at the start of a new assessment period, and where appropriate, necessary updates are made to the database to reflect new/additional information received.

Step 1: Criteria Note

- 3.3 To provide a basis for the assessment, officers have created a Criteria Note (See Appendix 1) that provides a clear breakdown of how sites will be scored against a range of suitability, availability and achievability criteria. These scores then determine whether a site is considered deliverable, developable or neither.
- 3.4 Each criterion featured has been developed to critique sites for their performance against national policy and local policy set out within the Local Plan. Sites will receive a score against each applicable criterion. To ensure that that different proposed use classes all assessed appropriately, the Criteria Note highlights which use class each criterion will be assessing.
- 3.5 The note explains how total suitability, availability and achievability scores are then weighted to ensure that site performance is comparable against other sites within the database – irrespective of the proposed use class.
- 3.6 The Criteria Note also sets out a list of “absolute constraints” and “capped constraints”. An “absolute constraint” is a designation considered undevelopable due to critical issues faced, resulting in affected land to be discounted from the assessment. A “capped constraint” is a designation considered to have substantial policy compliancy issues which will ultimately result in the overall category of the site being capped.

Step 2: Creating the Database

- 3.7 The assessment database has been created in-house and enables officers undertaking the assessment to record all relevant site information. The database features an array of formulae so as to be able to automatically and algorithmically carry out the suitability, availability and achievability assessments – as set out within the Criteria Note – and to determine the site categorisation.
- 3.8 In addition to this, a reporting feature has been added into the database to enable officers to run off summary reports on each site, which provides an overview of how the site has performed against the criteria.

Step 3: Site Submissions

- 3.9 To identify available land for all types of use, the City Council held a call for sites in winter 2014; winter 2015/16, alongside the new Local Plan Issues and Options consultation; spring 2017, alongside the Preferred Options consultation; and spring 2018, alongside the Pre-Submission consultation.
- 3.10 In autumn 2018, the City Council created an online questionnaire open all year round to facilitate the submission of new sites and proposed amendment to existing sites. Cut-off dates for submissions occur when each new assessment period begins.
- 3.11 Sites that have been submitted within the aforementioned call for sites or via the live submission facility are included within the SHELAA.

Step 4: Ensuring the data is relevant

3.12 Data to inform the suitability and availability aspects of the site assessment is predominantly gathered from the submitted SHELAA form and from the Council's planning map software.

Among other criteria, data collected on each site includes:

- Legal constraints on the site
- Provision of utilities present on the site
- Whether the site lies within a Flood Zone
- Proportion of greenfield and previously developed land on site
- Whether the site falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt or a Green Wedge
- Access to public transport facilities
- Presence of natural protected features or heritage assets
- Impact on community facilities
- Contamination details
- Existing and proposed use of site

3.13 Alongside this, Chelmsford City Council have assessed the viability of a number of specific site typologies which are representative of the range of sites and uses being considered within the SHELAA (See Appendix 2). The outputs from testing these typologies have informed the achievability component of the SHELAA.

Step 5: Inputting data into the database

3.14 The assessing officer gathers all relevant data available to them to input into the suitability, availability and achievability components of the assessment.

3.15 As part of the suitability assessment, for the purposes of the SHELAA only, sites are categorised as either PDL or Greenfield based on whichever is the largest proportion of the site. This does not necessarily mean that the whole site is PDL or Greenfield land. Determination as to whether land is PDL or Greenfield is undertaken using the 2019 NPPF definitions.

3.16 Within the achievability component of the assessment, the typology characteristics and viability outcomes from the Viability Study are added into the database as formulae. This is to ensure that as site details are inputted into the database, a typology and viability outcome are automatically assigned.

3.17 It is important to note that the actual developability of individual sites is based on multiple factors relevant to the individual characteristics of the site. Undertaking individual suitability, availability and achievability assessments – including individual viability appraisals of all sites – is not a feasible option given the number of sites involved. However, by utilising a typology approach and carrying out desk-top assessments to identify key characteristics of each site the City Council is able to appropriately consider potential sites to the strategic remit of a SHELAA assessment.

Step 6: Outputs & Refinement

3.18 Individual summary reports are produced which provide the key information on the performance of a site against the various suitability, availability and achievability criteria (See Appendix 3). Assessed sites are then plotted onto Parish maps as a visual aide (See Appendix 4).

- 3.19 The outputs from the SHELAA provide gross figures for all sites in the Council’s SHELAA Database. However, a refinement of these figures is required to provide a more accurate assessment of available land. Sites which have an approved planning consent or have been allocated within the Local Plan are included within the Council’s Housing Site Schedule. Therefore, the gross outputs would represent, potentially significant, double counting of land and a double counting of yield within the various site categories. As a result, the area and yield of these sites are discounted to give a more accurate picture of the quantum of land available. Once development has commenced/completed on these sites, the submission is removed entirely from the assessment.
- 3.20 Additionally, there are instances where submissions lie wholly within other submissions. Again, to avoid a double counting of yield and area, these sites are also discounted from the outputs.
- 3.21 Site submissions can also be omitted from the assessment in the following circumstances:
- If the site is considered to be identical or almost identical to another submission. Where a site is considered almost identical to another site, the assessing officer makes a judgement to remove the site if they feel the discrepancy would not likely impact the assessment outcome
 - If subsequent to submission, site has commenced/completed development
 - If removal of site is requested by the landowner. In the case where only a portion of a SHELAA site is owned, only this portion will be omitted from the submission
 - If removal of site is requested by the person/organisation who submitted the site
- 3.22 Sites that have been omitted from this year’s assessment are listed with their removal reasons (See Appendix 5). To avoid confusion, these sites are not featured on the Parish Maps.

4. Outputs: January-May 2021 Assessment

4.1 The January-May 2021 SHELAA assessed a total of 333 sites, of which 65 sites have been discounted. Of these 65 sites, 30 have either been allocated within the Local Plan or have an approved planning permission, whilst the remaining 35 lie wholly within another SHELAA submission. As stated in Step 6 of the methodology above, these sites areas and yields have been discounted to avoid, potentially significant, double counting. The tables below provide details of these 65 sites:

Table 4.1: SHELAA sites allocated within the Local Plan or have an approved planning permission, where the permission covers the entire SHELAA submission.

Site Reference	Site Address	Permitted Planning Reference	Site Area (ha)	Yield	Category	PDL / Greenfield
CFS36	Land South of Runnymede Cottage, Main Road, Little Waltham	18/01349/OUT	0.42	13	2	Greenfield

Site Reference	Site Address	Permitted Planning Reference	Site Area (ha)	Yield	Category	PDL / Greenfield
CFS60	Land South of The Brewers Arms, Main Road, Bicknacre	16/02021/OUT	1.4	39	1	Greenfield
CFS75	215 Main Road, Great Leighs	20/01239/FUL	0.14	4	2	Greenfield
CFS79	Montpelier Farm, Blasford Hill, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 3PG	Allocated	12.25	300	2	Greenfield
CFS94	Land South East of Little Waltham, East and West of Essex Regiment Way	Allocated	154.3	2,592	3	Greenfield
CFS101	Land North West of Park and Ride Terminus, Woodhill Road, Sandon	Allocated	13.5	329	3	Greenfield
CFS139	Boreham Airfield, Waltham Road, Boreham	Allocated	475.4	7,976	2	Greenfield
CFS181	Land North and South of Brick Barns Farm, Broomfield	Allocated	156.8	2,629	2	Greenfield
CFS189	Land at Sturgeons Farm, Cow Watering Lane, Writtle	Allocated	0.39	12	2	Greenfield
CFS199	Land at Sturgeons Farm, Cow Watering Lane, Writtle	Allocated	0.69	0	3	Greenfield
CFS203	Countryside Skills Centre, Cow Watering Lane, Writtle	Allocated	6.57	426	3	Greenfield
CFS204	Chelmsford City Racecourse, Great Leighs Bypass, Great Leighs	Allocated	158.5	2,663	2	Greenfield
CFS241	Civic Centre Land Site, Duke Street	Allocated	1.93	130	2	PDL
CFS252	Former Church Hall, Woodhall Road	19/01579/FUL	0.37	11	1	Greenfield
CFS255	Brand and Howes Ltd, 47 Baddow Road	Allocated	0.09	3	1	PDL
CFS256	Garages rear of 44 St Nazaire Road	Allocated	0.24	10	1	PDL
CFS257	Garages rear of 27 Medway Close	Allocated	1.28	36	1	Greenfield

Site Reference	Site Address	Permitted Planning Reference	Site Area (ha)	Yield	Category	PDL / Greenfield
CFS260	Land North of Galleywood Reservoir, Beehive Lane, Galleywood	Allocated	0.78	117	1	PDL
CFS261	Sandford Mill Water Works, Sandford Mill, Springfield	Allocated	7.4	173	3	PDL
CFS262	Land North West of Lockside Marina, Hill Road South	Allocated	1.8	151	3	PDL
CFS263	Baddow Road Car Park, Baddow Road	Allocated	0.95	27	1	PDL
CFS265	Galleywood Hall, 279 Beehive Lane, Great Baddow	19/01180/FUL	1.03	29	2	PDL
CFS266	Waterhouse Lane Depot and Nursery, Waterhouse Lane	Allocated	0.54	126	1	PDL
CFS276	Former St Peters College, Fox Crescent	Allocated	11.19	274	1	Greenfield
CFS280	Land South East of Ilgars Farm Cottages and North of Burnham Road, South Woodham Ferrers	Allocated	21.88	368	1	Greenfield
CFS282	Land North of South Woodham Ferrers, South Woodham Ferrers	Allocated	135.3	32	1	Greenfield
15SLAA1	Land North Of Woodhouse Lodge, Woodhouse Lane, Little Waltham	Allocated	28.21	474	2	Greenfield
15SLAA23	Land North East Of Telephone Exchange, Burnham Road, South Woodham Ferrers	Allocated	44.93	748	1	Greenfield
15SLAA25	Land North West Of Woodlands And Rose Marie, Banters Lane, Great Leighs	Allocated	1.44	40	2	Greenfield
15SLAA43	7 St Giles, Moor Hall Lane, Bicknacre	Allocated	7.56	185	2	Greenfield

Table 4.2: Site submissions that wholly lie within another submission

Site Reference	Site Address	Site lies within	Site Area (ha)	Yield	Category	PDL / Greenfield
CFS21	Land East of Junction with Hyde Lane and Mill Lane, Danbury	CFS57, 15SLAA45	2.5	70	2	Greenfield
CFS44	Land North of Cranham Road, Little Waltham	CFS125	9.73	0	3	Greenfield
CFS56	Land North of Mill Lane East of Barley Mead and South of Maldon Road, Danbury	15SLAA45	12.3	301	2	Greenfield
CFS57	Land North of Mill Lane East of Barley Mead and South of Maldon Road, Danbury	15SLAA45	12.22	299	2	Greenfield
CFS78	Staceys, School Lane, Broomfield	CFS181	48.79	820	2	Greenfield
CFS113	Land North East of Skeggs Farm, Chelmsford Road, Writtle	17SLAA13	16.47	404	2	Greenfield
CFS122	Land Northwest of Wheelers Hill Roundabout, Wheelers Hill, Little Waltham	CFS94	9.2	225	2	Greenfield
CFS123	Land South East of Little Belsteads, Back Lane, Little Waltham	CFS94	2.15	60	3	Greenfield
CFS124	Land Opposite Mid Essex Gravel Pits Ltd, Essex Regiment Way, Little Waltham	CFS94	7.6	175	3	Greenfield
CFS138	Land East of Hallfield House, Back Lane, Little Waltham	CFS94	3.3	92	3	Greenfield
CFS156	Land South West of 2 Scotts Green, Hollow Lane, Broomfield	CFS183	9.8	240	2	Greenfield
CFS187	Land North South East and West of Pontlands Park Hotel, West Hanningfield Road, Great Baddow	CFS73	30.63	493	2	Greenfield
CFS219	Land North of Cricketers Close, Broomfield	CFS53, CFS62	9.7	238	2	Greenfield
CFS232	Land North East of Meadow Road, Rettendon	15SLAA40	9.58	235	1	Greenfield

Site Reference	Site Address	Site lies within	Site Area (ha)	Yield	Category	PDL / Greenfield
CFS268	Land between Highview and High House Farm, Woodham Road, Battlesbridge	CFS269, CFS270	2.27	64	3	Greenfield
CFS269	Land between Highview and High House Farm, Woodham Road, Battlesbridge	CFS270	4.2	103	3	Greenfield
CFS271	Land between Highview and High House Farm, Woodham Road, Battlesbridge	CFS268, CFS269, CFS270	1.04	29	3	Greenfield
15SLAA20	Land North Of St Swithins Cottages, Howe Green	CFS5	23.49	393	3	Greenfield
15SLAA47	Sports Centre, Partridge Green, Broomfield, Chelmsford	CFS181	12.72	312	2	Greenfield
15SLAA48	Land South Of Rough Hill Complex, The Tye, East Hanningfield	CFS130	8.93	219	1	Greenfield
17SLAA11	Land North Of Cranham Road, Little Waltham	CFS125	8.49	0	3	Greenfield
17SLAA18	Lathcoats Farm Shop, Beehive Lane, Great Baddow, Chelmsford, CM2 8LX	CFS63	15.29	375	2	Greenfield
17SLAA25	Land South East Of Main Road, Great Leighs	CFS119	1.48	39	3	Greenfield
17SLAA26	Land East Of The Crescent, Little Leighs	CFS119	3.88	98	3	Greenfield
17SLAA30	Land North Of Communication Station At Bushy Hill, Edwins Hall Road, Woodham Ferrers	CFS282	36.74	617	3	Greenfield
18SLAA3	Pondside Nursery And Yard, Chatham Green, Little Waltham	CFS27	0.19	5	3	PDL
18SLAA6	Poolman Ltd, Bakers Lane, West Hanningfield	18SLAA5	0.2	6	3	Greenfield
18SLAA8	Land North Of Oat Leys, Broomfield	CFS183	1.92	54	2	Greenfield
18SLAA9	Land South Of Mashbury Road, Chignal	CFS182	4.67	114	3	Greenfield
18SLAA11	Land South West Of Broomfield Place, Main Road, Broomfield	CFS183	19.54	479	1	Greenfield

Site Reference	Site Address	Site lies within	Site Area (ha)	Yield	Category	PDL / Greenfield
18SLAA12	Land West Of Blue Cottage, Chignal Road, Chignal Smealy	CFS182	24.32	409	2	Greenfield
18SLAA13	Land West Of Avon Road	CFS182	53.34	896	2	Greenfield
18SLAA14	Land North Of The Larthings, Chignal	CFS183	10.92	268	2	Greenfield
18SLAA17	Land North Of The A12 East Of Southend Road, Great Baddow	CFS73	12.12	135	3	Greenfield
19SHELAA12	The Causeway, Highwood Road, Writtle	CFS14	0.99	0	3	Greenfield

4.2 In light of the above, the following overall figures have been removed from the SHELAA total outputs.

Table 4.3: Figures discounted from the SHELAA outputs

	Previously Developed Land			Greenfield			Yield Total
	No. Sites	Area (ha)	Yield (dwellings)	No. Sites	Area (ha)	Yield (dwellings)	
Category 1	5	2.9	283	10	254.4	4,655	4,938
Category 2	2	2.96	159	25	1,111.23	19,700	19,859
Category 3	3	9.39	329	20	296.97	5,272	5,601
TOTAL	10	15.25	771	55	1,662.59	29,627	30,398

4.3 Taking account of the above discounts, the SHELAA outputs are detailed below in Table 4.4, Table 4.5 and Table 4.6.

Table 4.4: Proposed Uses

Proposed Use	Number of Sites	Site Area (ha)
Residential	211	1,211.75
Employment	10	126.19
Retail	1	5.37
Specialist Accommodation	2	1.65
Gypsy & Traveller	2	0.9
Mixed Use	39	1,560.63
Other	3	5.48
TOTAL	268	2,911.96

Table 4.5: Contribution to housing by Category

Category	Number of Sites	Site Area (ha)	Yield (dwellings)
Category 1 – Deliverable	34	249.07	4,922
Category 2 – Developable	101	1,201.42	21,160
Category 3 – Not currently developable	133	1,461.47	27,761
TOTAL	269	2,911.96	53,843

4.4 As can be seen from Table 4.5, a yield of 4,922 dwellings can be achieved from Category 1 sites and 21,160 from Category 2 sites. Category 3 sites, those which are not currently developable, amounts to 27,761 dwellings.

Table 4.6: Contribution to housing by Category and land type

	Previously Developed Land			Greenfield			Yield Total
	No. Sites	Area (ha)	Yield (dwellings)	No. Sites	Area (ha)	Yield (dwellings)	
Category 1	3	1.74	148	31	247.33	4,774	4,922
Category 2	3	1.25	123	98	1,200.17	21,037	21,160
Category 3	23	41.38	1,520	110	1,420.10	26,241	27,761
TOTAL	29	44.37	1,791	239	2,867.60	52,052	53,843

4.5 Table 4.6 provides a greater level of detail including the land type. The yield of previously developed (brownfield) sites from category 1 amounts to 148, compared to a yield of 4,774 greenfield dwellings. The yield of previously developed (brownfield) sites from Category 2 amounts to 123, compared to a yield of 21,037 greenfield dwellings. Finally, Category 3 sites yield 1,520 dwellings from previously developed (brownfield) sites and 26,241 dwellings from greenfield sites.

4.6 It should also be noted that there are some sites which overlap each other. Since some of these overlapping sites may fall within differing categories and have varying levels of Greenfield/Brownfield splits between them it is impossible to discount site areas and site yields in a fair and consistent manner. As such the reporting output figures should be viewed with some caution as, although the majority of double counting has been removed, there will be elements of site overlapping, but is not possible to give an accurate figure for how much and in which categories.

5. Reviewing the SHELAA

5.1 We aim to review the SHELAA on an annual basis, with assessment planned to start in January of each calendar year. For those who submit sites using the online facility that runs all year round, the 31st December acts as the cut of date between assessment periods.

5.2 During the review process, any new submissions or any information that has been provided to us in relation to an existing site will be added to the assessment database accordingly. The assessing officer then checks to ensure the relevant sites have been removed and relevant discounts have been made before following through with the assessment as per the Criteria Note.

5.3 Earlier reviews of the SHELAA may take place in the case of policy amendments – either locally or nationally – and this will include a review of the Criteria Note to ensure that each criterion is still relevant.

6. Uses of SHELAA outcomes

- 6.1 As previously mentioned, the purpose of the SHELAA is not to allocate land for future development. The assessment helps officers make their own informed decisions of where to allocate future development.
- 6.2 The assessment does this by highlighting areas of likely deliverable land. This is a particularly useful feature when looking at how the Council's Housing target is going to be met within the plan period, and further into the future, as the assessment offers an indicator of how many dwellings could possibly be delivered, what size site is needed and whether the type of development would likely be viable or not.
- 6.3 Additionally, the assessment acts as a sieve to filter through sites that could be eligible to be added onto the Council's Part 1 of the Brownfield Register. If the assessment deems the site to be predominantly previously developed land, an officer will review the site against the Brownfield Register Regulations to see if it is eligible to be added to the register.

7. Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Criteria Note

Appendix 2 – Viability Study

Appendix 3 – Site Assessment

Appendix 4 – Parish Maps

Appendix 5 – List of Omitted Sites