



# Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) Spring 2026

Part 9 of 9  
Frequently Asked  
Questions

April 2026



**Chelmsford**  
City Council

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q: What is a ‘Call-for Sites’ and what is the SHELAA?**

A: To meet housing and employment needs of the future, the Council must find land that can be allocated for development. As a starting point, we reach out to the public, to landowners, to land promoters and all other interested bodies to ask for suggestions of sites that we could use. This process is known as a ‘Call for Sites’.

The Council must then look to see which of these sites may be suitable, available, and achievable for development. The Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is the assessment we use to determine this.

**Q: How do I submit a site to be included within the SHELAA?**

A: Sites can be submitted to Chelmsford City Council via the SHELAA site submission facility which can be found on our website. The facility is open all year round, and there are cut-off points (pauses) to allow the assessment to take place.

Site promoters can either:

- [Submit a new site](#) that has not previously been included within a call for sites or SHELAA submission, or
- [Update or amend a site](#) that is already on our SHELAA database

Amendments can include adding or removing land, providing additional details to the proposal, or notifying us of change of ownership).

**Q: When will the next assessment take place?**

A: We aim to undertake assessments yearly. The cut-off point usually falls on 31<sup>st</sup> December of that year. Occasionally, cut-off points are changed to reflect a review of the Local Plan.

When you make a submission through our [Consultation Portal](#), you will be able to see when the next cut-off point is.

**Q: What happens if I submit a site after the cut-off point?**

A: If you submit a new site or propose an amendment to an existing site through our [Consultation Portal](#) after a cut-off point, your submission will not be considered until the next cut-off point. The submission will be considered in the following assessment, which will normally be held the following year.

**Q: When will the outcomes of the assessment be published and how can I view them?**

A: The assessment usually takes around three months to complete but this can vary depending on the number of new sites or amendments that have been submitted. It is then published on our [SHELAA webpage](#).

Upon publication, we will contact everyone who has made submissions to let them know that the assessment outcomes are now viewable.

**Q: How do the SHELAA outputs feed into the Local Plan?**

A: The assessment outcomes help the Council to decide where to allocate future development within the Local Plan.

The SHELAA does not allocate sites for future development. The sites submitted within the SHELAA are considered together with other documents in the Local Plan evidence base to help the Council allocate sites within the Local Plan.

**Q: How are sites assessed and how are they categorised?**

A: Sites are assessed against a range of criteria according to their proposed use. The Criteria Note explains what criterion is used and why. The proposed uses considered are as follows:

- Residential
- Employment
- Retail
- Community Facility
- Mixed Use
- Renewable Energy Generation.

The criteria consider the Suitability, Availability and Accessibility of each site to come up with a score. The site is then RAG (Red, Amber, Yellow and Green) rated to see if the site may be developable or deliverable. The RAG rating is shown below:

Red	Site is contrary to national policy and/or faces significant constraints or adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated.
Amber	Site scores less well against criteria or has some characteristics contrary to local policy and faces moderate constraints that would require mitigation.
Yellow	Site scores well against criteria but has some characteristics contrary to local policy. Site faces minor constraints that would require mitigation. Site is considered developable.
Green	Site scores highly against criteria and demonstrates compliance with national and local policy. Site faces minimal constraints and is considered deliverable.

Sites need to fall within Yellow and Green categories to be considered developable or deliverable, respectively.

**Q: My site has been categorised as Green, does that mean it will be:**

- a) allocated for development?
- b) granted planning permission?
- c) is eligible for entry on the Brownfield Register?

A: a) No. The SHELAA does not allocate sites for development. Sites are allocated for development in the Local Plan and are subject to public consultation and consideration within the Local Plan review and examination.

The SHELAA is one of many evidence-based documents that are considered by the Council when making informed decisions on where to allocate future development.

b) No. The SHELAA is a desk-based assessment that assesses promoted sites against a range of criteria (see Criteria Note) to see if they are suitable, available, and achievable for development.

Planning permission will need to be applied for and granted for development to take place. As part of the planning application, the proposal will be considered by a team of Officers to see if the site is suitable for development.

c) Not necessarily. Whilst the SHELAA provides a high-level overview of sites, [The Town and Country Planning \(Brownfield Land Register\) Regulations 2017](#) sets out specific criteria that a site must meet to be eligible for entry onto the Brownfield Register. Sites that perform well within the SHELAA will be assessed by Officers to see if they are also eligible for entry on the Brownfield Register.

**Q: My site has a scored well but is still categorised as Amber/Red. Why is this?**

A: The score does not determine if a site is suitable for development. A site needs to fall within Yellow and Green categories (see above) to be considered developable or deliverable.

Some criteria carry greater weight than others. These criteria are identified within the 'Capped Constraints' section of the Criteria Note. Where a score of '0' is received against one of these criteria, this means that it is not able to comply with National and/or Local Planning Policy and the site cannot be considered deliverable (Green) nor developable (Yellow).

**Q: My site has been categorised at Amber/Red, does that mean it can never be developed?**

A: No. An Amber/Red rating indicates that the site has moderate/significant constraints that at the time of the Assessment could prevent the delivery of the proposed use in accordance with Local and/or National Planning Policy.

Where there is potential to mitigate / reduce the harm of these constraints to comply with planning policy, development of the site may be feasible.

**Q: The site performance summary says my site has a potential yield of X number of dwellings. What does this mean?**

A: The Yield means the number of dwellings that could be delivered on a site.

The potential yield of the site provides an estimate of how much housing could be delivered on the site. The yield is calculated from the assumptions in the Viability Study that supports the Achievability element of the SHELAA.

The potential yields of all the SHELAA sites are added together to work out how much housing could be provided if all of the sites were to be developed. It helps us to understand how much land we need to allocate for development and the possible locations for it.

The yield is used as a guide only. The actual number of dwellings that will be allocated / developed will be considered within the Local Plan Review or as part of a planning application.

**Q: I believe an error has been made in the assessment of my site. How do I arrange to have this amended?**

A: If you believe an error has been made in the assessment of your site, please contact the Spatial Planning Team at: [planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk)

**Q: I do not agree with the criteria that has been used to assess the sites. How can I provide feedback to Officers?**

A: Feedback can be provided to us at any time. Please email this to Spatial Planning at: [planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk) to ensure this is considered.

As set out in the SHELAA Methodology, the first stage of the assessment is for officers to undertake a review of existing SHELAA criteria. At this point, all feedback and comments received to the Spatial Planning inbox or have been provided in response to any dedicated formal consultation, will be considered.

For any other questions that have not been addressed here, please contact the Spatial Planning Team at [planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk)