



Local Plan Site Assessment Methodology

2026

Stage 1

and

Initial Stage 2 Site Assessment

## Disclaimer

### (What Site Assessment does not do)

Inclusion or exclusion of a site in the Site Assessment does not guarantee that a site will or will not be allocated for development in a local plan or that planning permission will or will not be granted for development.

The absence of a site in the Site Assessment does not preclude that site being allocated in a Local Plan or planning permission being granted for its development.

The site assessment process does not grant or refuse planning permission. A decision to allocate a site for development is made through the adoption of a Local Plan, whilst planning permission is granted/refused by the Council's Planning Committee following a planning application.

A sites inclusion in the assessment is not an indication that the Council supports development of that land.

The assessment is a snapshot in time and a site's availability, suitability, achievability and its boundaries may change following the publication of a sites results.

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### Introduction

The Chesterfield Borough Local Plan 2018-2035 was adopted in July 2020 and sets out the land use requirements for the Chesterfield Borough including for new

homes and employment development. The Local Plan's policies map identifies on which sites development should happen and where it should not happen, to meet the social, environmental and economic needs of the Borough's population.

Whilst the current Local Plan looks ahead to 2035 the Government requires<sup>1</sup> that it is reviewed by the Borough Council (as Local Planning Authority), every 5 years. A review should ensure that the plans policies remain relevant and effective and so 'up to date'. Chesterfield Borough Council has reviewed its current Local Plan and is now preparing a new Local Plan. As part of this work it needs to identify and assess new sites for development.

### What site assessment does

Site assessment is a process where the council identifies land/sites and broad areas and then assesses their potential for new uses/development.

To find sites the council asks publicly for suggestions through the Call for Sites and looks at a variety of types<sup>2</sup> of land. Once identified the assessment of development potential considers whether a site is available, suitable and achievable for a range of land uses within the timeframes of 5, 10 and 15 years. This document sets out how availability, suitability and achievability are assessed by the council.

Site assessment gives the Council an understanding of the land available in Chesterfield Borough. From this a sufficient supply and mix of sites to meet plan objectives and identified housing and economic needs will be identified through the local plan process in accordance with a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>3</sup>.

The council can also uses the site assessment to identify sites which may have potential for land uses other than housing or economic development, such as nature enhancement, albeit it has a less detailed assessment process for other such land uses.

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 062 Reference ID: 61-062-20190315

<sup>2</sup> National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 3-011-20190722

<sup>3</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2024 Paragraph 72

## How site assessment is done

The council's process of site assessment is compatible with the guidance on Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance<sup>4</sup> (NPPG) and follows the emerging guidance on the new local plan system.

The process also is complementary to the joint methodology for carrying out LAA which was agreed between the Local Planning Authorities within the North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw Housing Market Area<sup>5</sup>.

The following document sets out the method of how the council has identified and assessed sites in more detail. Below is a flowchart (Diagram 1) to illustrate the stages.

The Chesterfield approach will merge stages 2 and 3 of the new system by taking a 'strategy option on' approach to suitability and will show which sites are suitable or unsuitable against different reasonable alternative strategy options.

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<sup>4</sup> National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 3-001-20190722 to 026 Reference ID: 3-026-20190722

<sup>5</sup> North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw Land Availability Assessment 2015 Methodology

## 1. Identification of sites and broad locations

### Assessment area and site size

1.1. The assessment uses the local plan-making area which is the administrative boundary of Chesterfield Borough Council.

1.2. The minimum site sizes for sites to be included in the LAA are as follows:

Type of Land Use/Development	Size of Site	
Residential (market/affordable)	5 or more dwellings	
Residential (Self-build/custom build)	1 or more dwellings	
Biodiversity (enhancement/gain)	500m <sup>2</sup> or more in area	0.05ha
Retail or Commercial	50m <sup>2</sup> or more in floorspace	0.005ha
Economic (office/industrial/Warehouse)	500m <sup>2</sup> or more floorspace	0.05ha
Traveller accommodation	500m <sup>2</sup> or more in area	0.05ha
Public Open Space	2000m <sup>2</sup>	0.2ha
Community Facilities	No minimum	n/a
Other uses	500m <sup>2</sup> or more in area	0.05ha

1.3. These thresholds have taken into account the national planning practice guidance<sup>6</sup> (NPPG), guidance on site assessment in the new planning system and the North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw HMA LAA methodology. Smaller sites potential contribution to development needs will be estimated based on previous development rates of similar sized small sites (described as a windfall calculation in national guidance<sup>7</sup>).

1.4. In respect of possible Traveller Sites. the Derbyshire and East Staffordshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment<sup>8</sup> concludes that a pitch site of at least 500m<sup>2</sup> would accommodate hard standing for 1 touring/mobile caravan and 1 static caravan, 2 car parking spaces, 1 amenity block, hard

<sup>6</sup> National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 3-010-20140306

<sup>7</sup> National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 3-023-20190722

<sup>8</sup> Paragraph 10.62 of the Derbyshire and East Staffordshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2015

standing for storage shed and drying and a garden/amenity area. This is considered a reasonable minimum size of site for one pitch.

### Types of sites and sources of data

1.5. The council uses the types of site and sources of data set out in the NPPG and draft new Government guidance on site assessment (see appendix 2).

### Initial survey and assessment

1.6. The council carries out an initial survey and assessment of sites to record the following information:

- site location, size and boundaries
- current land use and character;
- land uses and character of surrounding area;
- physical constraints (eg access, contamination, steep slopes, flood risk, natural features of significance, location of infrastructure/utilities);
- potential environmental constraint's;
- consistency with the development plan's policies;
- proximity to services and other infrastructure, such as public transport;
- where relevant, development progress (eg ground works completed, number of units started, number of units completed); and

1.7. The above information is recorded in a database, a spreadsheet and a geographical information system.

## 2. Categorising sites

2.1. The draft new Government guidance on site assessment advises that the next step in site assessment is to categorise sites. The purpose of categorising sites is to:

- give an early indication of the type and amount of different development opportunities available in the area
- signpost early in the process where evidence may be needed to support certain types of development opportunities
- help inform the emerging spatial strategy
- allow the assessment of similar types of sites consistently
- inform decisions on the type of sites to take forward as draft allocations

2.2. The following categories of site have been used to group sites taking into account their size, location and proposed uses. It also factors in to a degree the lead in times for development, differing evidential requirements, policy designations and the types of sites and developments already evident in the borough.

Table 2: Site Categories	
Urban/town centre regeneration	
Description	Justification/further description
Larger regeneration sites in the built-up-area for primarily housing but including mixed uses and new infrastructure.	<p>Sites in the built-up-area of the Borough which are in multiple ownerships, require multi-agency collaboration, public and private sector partners and gap funding to achieve.</p> <p>The borough has a number of such areas comprising of one or a number of sites together. These tend to be in locations that are relatively accessible to existing services and facilities.</p> <p>These sites present an opportunity for improving the character and vitality of an area with higher density housing and commercial development in sustainable locations. They will make contribution to meeting development needs in combination with other types of site.</p>
Residential infilling within towns and villages	

Description		Justification/further description
Very large dwellings	901- upwards	Sites within the built-up-area of a town or village/settlement which could be previously developed land or greenfield and may involve the development of open spaces. These tend to be small to medium sized sites and are likely to be relatively accessible to existing services and facilities. They vary in terms of impact depending on; their scale, the feasibility of mitigation of any adverse impacts, the existing neighbourhoods ability to absorb the development's effects and any increase in population.
Large dwellings	401- 900	
Medium-large dwellings	101- 400	
Medium dwellings	51- 100	
Small dwellings	5-50	
<b>Previously developed land outside of towns or villages</b>		
Description		Justification/further description
Large previously developed sites away from settlements for mixed use development and new infrastructure.		<p>These are sites that reflect former industrial premises in locations away from settlements and services and facilities. These sites usually are large and require the remediation of contaminated land and significant investment in new and enhanced infrastructure of all types, which means they are normally unviable without substantial public sector funding.</p> <p>These sites provide an opportunity for mixed used development to make a substantial contribution to meeting national, regional and local housing and employment land requirements.</p>
<b>Town/village extensions into countryside (green belt / not green belt)</b>		
Description		Justification/further description
Very large dwellings	901- upwards	These are sites located on the edge of settlements, and whilst they have potential to make a substantial contribution to meeting housing requirements they vary in their accessibility to existing services and facilities. They also vary in the scale and nature of their impacts on the environment including in terms of landscape and visual effects and the adequacy of existing infrastructure to support traffic and new residents.
Large dwellings	401- 900	
Medium-large dwellings	101- 400	
Medium dwellings	51- 100	
Small dwellings	5-50 dwellings	

	<p>These are split into site sizes as this does influence their impact, the need for new infrastructure.</p> <p>Their location in Green Belt or not will affect viability given current national requirements within the NPPF's 'Golden Rules'.</p>
<b>Employment Areas including new estates, expansions and redevelopment</b>	
Description	Justification/further description
Established industrial and warehousing areas.	Sites within industrial and warehouse estates/areas where opportunity exists for new units, redevelopment or expansions to accommodate new business or the relocation of existing businesses.
<b>Individual commercial sites or premises</b>	
Description	Justification/further description
Stand-alone sites for significant new commercial premises.	These sites may be located in existing centres and existing neighbourhoods and include opportunities for new supermarkets, local convenience stores.
<b>Biodiversity receptor site</b>	
Description	Justification/further description
Large open areas of open land.	These sites are likely to be outside the built-up-area of settlements and typically include land used for farming or land which cannot be used for other purposes such as former landfill sites. They are likely to be over 20ha in size and registered or be in the process of being registered with Government as site where biodiversity loss on development sites can be compensated and also a net gain achieved.
<b>Renewable energy site</b>	
Description	Justification/further description
Large areas of open land.	These are likely to be outside the built-up-area of settlements and typically include land used for farming. They may include land over 10ha and have variable impacts on landscape character, amenity and agricultural productivity.

### 3. Assessing sites suitability, availability and achievability – Initial Filter

3.1. The aims of this element of the assessment process are:

- filter out any sites obviously unsuitable for development
- assess each site for their suitability, availability and achievability for development
- estimate development potential of sites
- score each site based on criteria and local context
- determine the deliverability or developability of sites proposed for housing use
- understand what information to record about sites

#### Initial filter of any sites which are obviously unsuitable for development

3.2. The intention of this step in assessment is to filter out any sites which are clearly unsuitable for development and so are not to be assessed further for a particular land use. This is in line with the emerging guidance on site assessment and existing national guidance (NPPG<sup>9</sup>) an initial assessment of site suitability for a particular land use or mix of uses.

3.3. In light of changes to the NPPF in 2024 in the case of Green Belt, Strategic Gaps and Green Wedges these will not be used as fundamental policy constraint's initially but will be used in the next step of assessment to assess sites alignment with different spatial strategy options.

3.4. The following is a list of the specific types of constraint including national policy areas and designations that will be used to initially exclude sites or parts of sites.

Table 3: National Policy and Designations protecting areas or assets of particular importance. <sup>10 11</sup>	
Broad land type / designation	Specific land type/designation
Habitat Sites and Core Ecological Network	Internationally important nature conservation sites (RAMSAR sites,

<sup>9</sup> National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 3-014-20190722

<sup>10</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 11 (i) footnote 6

<sup>11</sup> NPPF paragraph 188

	<p>Special Areas for Conservation, Special Protection Areas)/potential such sites.</p> <p>Sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites.</p> <p>Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)</p> <p>National Nature Reserves (NNRs).</p> <p>Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).</p> <p>Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs)</p> <p>Irreplaceable Habitat</p>
Local Green Space	NPPF and planning designation.
Irreplaceable Habitats	Veteran trees, ancient woodland and also other sites where specific assessments have identified an irreplaceable habitat.
High Risk Flooding Areas	Flood Zone 3 Flood Storage Areas
Infrastructure	High Voltage Power Lines (within 50 metres of)  Wastewater treatment sites and other elements of essential infrastructure
Health and Safety Executive Consultation Zones	Inner, middle and outer zones will be used to restrict development as advised by the HSE.

- 3.5. The above constraints are thought to be appropriate to the borough as a starting point for site assessment. They will be applied with sites or parts of sites being excluded from further consideration for certain land uses unless

adequate evidence has been provided that constraints are likely to be able to be overcome within the requirements of planning policy and law.

- 3.6. Sites may be excluded where it is obvious to the Council that a combination of factors other than those in Table 2 above will constrain a site and mitigation is unlikely to be possible. In such cases the Council will record why the site has been excluded.

#### **4. Estimating Development Capacity**

- 4.1. Development potential is the amount of development (such as the number of homes or floorspace), that is thought to be feasible on a site. The feasibility of achieving a particular amount of development depends on environmental, physical, economic and planning policy considerations and remains an estimate until such as time as a detailed planning permission has been granted.
- 4.2. It is therefore done iteratively with the following being factored in:
- Remove areas with fundamental constraints and use the remainder as the gross site area upon which a certain percentage will be development for housing (a gross to net ratio dependant on site sizes).
  - Accessibility to public transport and/or a range of services and facilities and density uplifts.
  - Adjoining areas densities.
  - Viability.
  - National Planning Policy requiring the most efficient use of land.
- 4.3. The Chesterfield local plan does not have generic density policies applicable to development types or accessible locations but does set housing number requirements for some housing sites and strategic sites. The local plans design policy does not set minimums, requiring that: - All development will be expected to be at a density appropriate to the character of the area whilst not excluding higher densities in and close to designated local, district and town centres.

#### **Residential development potential**

- 4.4. Initially a basic approach is used to give an overall estimate for strategic decision making on spatial strategy options. This approach is as follows:

- 4.5. Work out the gross developable area by calculating what size of site remains following the removal of any areas of fundamental constraint e.g. flood zone 3, Local Wildlife Sites.
- 4.6. Apply a gross to net development ratio of 80% regardless of site size as follows:

Table 5: Development area assumptions and densities for residential				
Developable area estimate	80% of the site once areas of fundamental constraint have been clipped out			
Density estimates	Prevailing density or a minimum of 30dph	40dph	60dph	90dph

- 4.7. The above is carried out for all sites giving a range of estimates for assessing strategic spatial strategy options. The prevailing density of existing development is calculated using the method set out in appendix 2.
- 4.8. Further to this at later stages in the Local Plan process where sites are being considered for allocation, a more informed working capacity estimate will be applied where there is more information is available such as a development brief, master plan, planning application or a planning permission.

Economic development potential

- 4.9. Where specific information on development potential already exists for a site and land use (including development briefs, masterplans, planning permissions, submissions at call for sites), this will be used to help inform a judgement on capacity.
- 4.10. Where no site-specific information is available, a simple ratio will be used instead, based on research, to calculate an estimate as follows:

Table 4: Plot Ratio Assumptions (Square metre per Hectare)	
<u>Land Use</u>	Plot Ratio (floorspace in sqm per 1 ha of site)
Industrial - Use class B2	6500
Light industrial - Use class E(g)	9000
Office - Use class E(g)	9000
Warehouses - Use class B8	6500
Other commercial - Use class E(a) to (c)	6500

4.11. Other land uses

4.12. The potential of sites for land uses such as nature recovery/biodiversity, agriculture, tourism, retail, leisure, public open space will be assessed individually based on any available information, including any site-specific surveys and assessments. No set methodology has yet been developed.

4.13. For all land uses where specific information on development potential already exists for a site and land use (including development briefs, masterplans, planning permissions, submissions at call for sites), this will be used to help inform a judgement on capacity.

## 5. Appendix 1: List of mapped constraints used at Stage 1 and Initial Stage 2

Constraint Name	Data Source	Constraint Level
Special Areas for Conservation	Natural England Open Data	Fundamental
Special Protection Areas	Natural England Open Data	Fundamental
Potential Special Areas for Conservation	Natural England Open Data	Fundamental
Potential Special Areas for Conservation	Natural England Open Data	Fundamental
Compensatory Sites for adverse effects on Habitat Sites	Natural England Open Data, County Council and Borough Council Data	Fundamental
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Natural England Open Data	Fundamental
National Nature Reserves (NNRs).	Natural England Open Data	Fundamental
Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).	Natural England Open Data	Fundamental
Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) Irreplaceable Habitat	Derbyshire Wildlife Trust	Fundamental
Local Green Space	County Council and Borough Council Data	Fundamental
Ancient Woodland	Natural England Open Data	Fundamental
Flood Zone 3 Flood Storage Areas	Environment Agency Dataset	Fundamental
High Voltage Power Lines	National Grid Electricity Transmission Network and Infrastructure – Network Route Maps	Fundamental
Health and Safety Executive Consultation Zones	HSE consultation portal	Inner, middle and outer zones will be used to restrict development as advised by the HSE.

## 6. Appendix 2: Method of calculating prevailing density

6.1. Whilst no detailed comprehensive urban character assessments of the Borough have been undertaken to identify discrete character areas, another approach is possible for residential development in order to estimate a prevailing density for a locality.

6.2. Census Output Areas<sup>12</sup> can be used as the equivalent of character areas as these represent broadly similar housing types, tenures and are bounded by roads and other obvious boundaries. A baseline residential density can be worked out by counting the number of residential addresses within an area of existing residential development.

6.3. The Ordnance Survey Mastermap data is used to count the number of residential addresses<sup>13</sup> and the area of existing residential development is identified by drawing a line around land falling within the following categories:

- Residential development;
- local access roads;
- private gardens;
- footpaths; and
- local open space and amenity space serving residential development.

6.4. The following land uses are not counted as 'residential development' and so excluded from the area of residential development:

- Main roads;
- Open space serving a wider area; and
- Shops and other non-residential facilities.

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<sup>12</sup> An area used for the national census which have about 310 residents per output area. They are the smallest area used by the census and use similar house types, bounded by roads and other clear boundaries. They are used as a proxy for 'character areas' and fit well with other datasets. [\[ARCHIVED CONTENT\] Census geography - Office for National Statistics \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk)

<sup>13</sup> Ordnance Survey Addressbase Plus product [AddressBase Plus | OS Products \(ordnancesurvey.co.uk\)](https://ordnancesurvey.co.uk)

6.5. Once the number of residences and residential area are known a density can be calculated as follows

$$\boxed{\text{Number of residential addresses}} \div \boxed{\text{Residential area within output/character area}} = \boxed{\text{Density (dwellings per hectare)}}$$

6.6. The above density can be used to calculate an estimated potential capacity (number of homes) for a potential site, simply by multiplying the sites area (in hectares) by that density e.g. a site of 1.4ha and a density of 30 dwellings per hectare would be  $1.4 \times 30 = 45$  homes.

6.7. A minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare is also applied as a starting point where there are a limited number of residences in a Census Output Area.

6.8. This initial estimate of potential capacity represents a site being developed at a density which would complement existing development nearby. It can be used as a comparison to densities set by officers based on a policy option or judgement which can factor in the following:

- Policy requirements for higher densities in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport.
- Detailed site information such as a planning application, master plan or a development brief.

6.9. The Council also has examples of sites<sup>14</sup> that have been developed for housing since 2012 with known final densities, which can also be used where the potential development site is similar in terms of its context.

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<sup>14</sup> Chesterfield Borough Council Housing Density Study January 2019