

# Appendix A

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## Assessment Criteria



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## **The Assessment Criteria Explained**

- The criteria in this Appendix set out the key topics and questions which form the basis of the assessment of identified sites in the Land Availability Assessment (LAA). The list of questions under each topic is not exhaustive.
- The assessment criteria in **Table A-1 and A-2** are overarching assessment criteria that apply to all land uses.
- **Tables A-3 to A-8** set out specific **suitability, availability and achievability** considerations by development type considered in the LAA. These are not exhaustive and further considerations may be applicable.

**Please note that criteria and associated questions listed below indicate a range of considerations for a high level assessment of the identified sites. The identification of a potential constraint does not automatically result in a site being considered unsuitable for development. Further investigation will be required prior to any potential allocation of a site in the new South Downs Local Plan or any future Neighbourhood Development Plan. The determination of planning applications will require a high level of detail and understanding of any constraints and communities and applicants cannot rely on the findings or conclusions in the LAA in isolation.**

## Stage 1 – Site / Broad Location Survey

Table A-1 - Exclusion from Assessment Criteria

Exclusion from Assessment Criteria
<p>Sites located wholly or largely within any one of the following designations (if a larger site has any of these designations within its boundaries, then there will need to be consideration as to whether any portion of the site is developable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Ancient Woodland.</li><li>➤ Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).</li><li>➤ Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).</li><li>➤ National Nature Reserves (NNR).</li><li>➤ Local Nature Reserves (LNR).</li><li>➤ Local Geological Sites (also known as Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)).</li><li>➤ Ramsar sites.</li><li>➤ Scheduled Ancient Monuments.</li><li>➤ Special Protection Areas (SPA).</li><li>➤ Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).</li><li>➤ Sites on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.</li><li>➤ Sites designated as Local Green Space (LGS).</li><li>➤ Sites within the 400m buffer zone of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA (<i>applicable to sites proposed for new homes. Other uses, including high dependency C2 care homes, will be assessed on a case by case basis</i>).</li><li>➤ Existing nutrient or biodiversity net gain offsetting sites.</li></ul>

## Exclusion from Assessment Criteria

### **Site Location**

Greenfield or non-Previously Developed Land (as defined in the NPPF Glossary) that is not within, adjacent, or well related (in terms of access and reflecting settlement character) to those settlements with an identified settlement boundary, either within or outside the National Park, will be excluded from Stage 1 of the Assessment. This exclusion criteria does not apply to offsetting sites.

### **Site Size Threshold**

For residential sites, the site size threshold for the LAA is based on an estimated yield of 5 or more net additional dwellings. An exception to this is for sites for 100% affordable housing. It may not be possible to determine the estimated yield of all sites at this stage and they may be excluded on these grounds later in the assessment process.

For economic / commercial sites, the site size threshold for the LAA is 0.25 hectares or 500 square metres net floorspace or more.

There is no site size threshold for offsetting sites.

The sites identified for renewable energy development - and/or permanent or transit gypsy, traveller, and travelling showpeople accommodation - have separate and different assessment criteria as set out, respectively, in:

- The Renewable Energy Study [*published in 2024 and addendum anticipated for 2026*]; and
- The Gypsies, Traveller & Travelling Showpeople Site Identification Report [March 2026].

## Stage 2 – Site / Broad Location Assessment

Table A-2 – Landscape Assessment Criteria

Landscape Assessment Criteria
<p><b>Historic Landscape Analysis</b></p> <p>Historic Landscape character (HLC) maps time depth in the existing landscape in terms of land use patterns. Of particular relevance to the National Park designation, HLC is important for identifying old landscapes which have remained unchanged or ‘intact’. Typically, older areas of landscape exhibit high sensitivity in landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage terms and have a landscape quality which is highly valued. Reference will be made to the HLC for the South Downs National Park and the Pan-Sussex HLC where relevant. Historic mapping may also be used.</p>
<p><b>Landscape Character</b></p> <p>The landscape in which the site is located will be considered in terms of landscape character with reference to the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment 2020 and local landscape character assessments (where available and relevant). Landscape character is what makes an area unique and is defined by district and recognisable and consistent pattern of elements be it natural (for example, landform) and/or human (for example, settlement pattern, historic rural roads).</p>
<p><b>Visual Sensitivity</b></p> <p>This will be assessed in the following 3 ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The probability of change in the landscape being highly visible, based particularly on the nature of the landform and the extent of tree cover, both of which have a major bearing on visibility;</li><li>2. The numbers of people likely to perceive any changes and their reason for being in the landscape, for example as residents, staying visitors, travellers, or visitors engaged in recreation or work;</li></ol>

## Landscape Assessment Criteria

3. The likelihood that change could be mitigated without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on landscape character or visual quality.

### **Relationship to Settlement Pattern and Settlement Edge Qualities**

- Does the site relate to the settlement pattern of the relevant adjacent/nearby settlement in terms of location and scale?
- What features comprise the settlement edge? E.g. open space, topography, proximity to historic core.
- How does the site relate to these features?
- What are the qualities of these features? Are they weak or strong?
- Are there opportunities to improve the settlement edge through new development?

### **Landscape Framework and Scale**

- What are the component features of the landscape?
- What is the scale of the Landscape?
- How does the site relate to these components?

### **Impact on Key Characteristics and Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park**

This will be considered for each site in relation to the Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park, for example tranquillity, and the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment 2020. Any statutory designations will also be referenced in this section. Reference to the National Park designation criteria and the designation process for the South Downs National Park may also be made.

The Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park can be found online at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SDNP-Special-Qualities.pdf>

**Table A-3 – Criteria for Residential (including C2 Specialist Care) Development Sites**

<b>Stage 2 Assessment Type</b>	<b>Residential (including C2 Specialist Care) Development Assessment Criteria</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Suitability</b></p>	<p><b>Noise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site affected by significant rail or road noise?</li> </ul> <p><b>Neighbouring or Nearby Land Uses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site affected, or has the potential to be affected, by neighbouring development and current uses? The nature of any issue will be considered.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site within or in close proximity (800m – average walking distance) to a settlement with a defined settlement policy boundary? Are there any barriers for pedestrians, cyclists, or differently abled people accessing local services and facilities e.g. crossing an A-road?</li> <li>• If located beyond 800m, is there good access to non-motorised user routes providing opportunities for active travel? Or can new non-motorised user routes be created?</li> <li>• For C2 specialist care, is there access to public transport and walkable proximity to local facilities?</li> </ul> <p><b>Previous Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the previous use of the land?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Residential (including C2 Specialist Care) Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Affordable Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the site is adjacent to a settlement and on greenfield land, does the site have potential to deliver 100% affordable housing?</li> </ul> <p><b>Density, Character of Surrounding Area, Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As assessed under the Landscape Assessment above.</li> </ul> <p><b>Biodiversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a reasonable likelihood that protected species could be present?</li> <li>• Could development have a potential impact on habitats or species of principal importance?</li> <li>• Could development have a potential impact on habitat connectivity?</li> <li>• Is there scope to adequately mitigate any potential impacts on protected areas, species or habitats? This will include consideration of the potential impact of new housing on Special Protection Areas (SPA) and the consideration of opportunities to mitigate potential impacts (e.g. through provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)).</li> <li>• Is there scope for creation/enlargement of habitats and connectivity and/or green infrastructure enhancement or creation including potential for multifunctional benefits?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Residential (including C2 Specialist Care) Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Flood Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site at risk of flooding, taking into account of climate change? Is the site located with Flood Zones 2 or 3? Is access to the site through areas of flood risk? Is there a history of flooding?</li> <li>• Is the site affected by other sources of flooding other than fluvial, such as groundwater or surface water flooding?</li> </ul> <p><b>Ground Conditions/Topography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site affected by any ground conditions? (e.g. unstable ground, steep slopes etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>Land Contamination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site affected by any potential land contamination?</li> <li>• Will land contamination severely affect deliverability of the site or is there potential for mitigation?</li> </ul> <p><b>Minerals and Waste</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site within a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) or Mineral Consultation Area (MCA)?</li> <li>• Is the site located within 250 metres of a historic landfill site?</li> </ul> <p><b>Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any Tree Preservations Orders on the site or on the boundary of the site?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Residential (including C2 Specialist Care) Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Agricultural Land</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the site is currently in agricultural use, what grade is the land?</li> </ul> <p><b>Archaeology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the site have any archaeological potential which may require investigation prior to development or during construction?</li> </ul> <p><b>Listed Buildings/Heritage Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there listed buildings or heritage assets within the site?</li> <li>• Could development potentially adversely affect listed buildings or heritage assets?</li> </ul> <p><b>Conservation Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site within a conservation area?</li> <li>• Could development potentially affect a conservation area and/or its setting?</li> </ul> <p><b>Open Space and Recreation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site wholly or predominately within an open space of public value (e.g. playground, playing fields)?</li> <li>• Can equal or better replacement open space provision be made?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Residential (including C2 Specialist Care) Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Public Rights of Way (PRoW)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any public rights of way running through the site or around the boundary of the site?</li> <li>• Are there any potential views of the site from any public rights of way?</li> </ul> <p><b>For C2 specialist care homes, amenity for residents and parking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there sufficient space for on-site landscaping / communal gardens with level access?</li> <li>• Does the site offer potential for tranquillity and for views for residents?</li> <li>• Is there sufficient space for employee and visitor car parking?</li> </ul>
<b>Availability</b>	<p><b>Ownership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site in a single or multiple ownership?</li> <li>• Will multiple ownerships prevent land assembly and subsequent deliverability of the site as a whole or is there evidence of opportunities for a coordinated approach?</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there planning history which is relevant to the assessment (e.g. pre-application enquiries, lapsed permissions)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention to develop</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the owner/controller of the site expressed a clear intention to make the site available?</li> <li>• What timescale has the owner/controller suggested development could come forward?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Residential (including C2 Specialist Care) Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Legal Constraints</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any legal matters which may prevent the site from being available?</li> </ul>
<b>Achievability</b>	<p><b>Highways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could development on the site impact on the Strategic Road Network?</li> <li>• Are there any potential highways issues associated with the site?</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on Safeguarded Routes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could development on the site impact on safeguarded routes as defined in SDLP Policy SD20?</li> </ul> <p><b>Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there an existing safe access point to the site?</li> <li>• Are there opportunities for alternative access points to the site?</li> <li>• If no access currently exists, are there opportunities to create a safe access to the site?</li> </ul> <p><b>Exceptional Costs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any exceptional works necessary to enable development?</li> </ul> <p><b>Site Preparation Costs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are site preparation costs expected to affect the site being successfully developed?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Residential (including C2 Specialist Care) Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Third Party Land</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is third party land required to deliver sites (e.g. access land or ransom strips)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic Viability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the economic viability of the current use of the site make development less or more attractive?</li> </ul>
<b>Ability to overcome constraints</b>	As acknowledged under a number of criteria listed above, there may be the option to overcome certain constraints to development through mitigation. This will be considered alongside the survey and assessment of a site.

**Table A-4 – Criteria for Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation**

The assessment criteria for sites identified for permanent or transit gypsy, traveller, and travelling showpeople accommodation is set out in the **Gypsies, Traveller & Travelling Showpeople Site Identification Report** [March 2026].

**Table A-5 – Criteria for Economic / Commercial Development Sites**

<b>Stage 2 Assessment Type</b>	<b>Economic / Commercial Development Assessment Criteria</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Suitability</b></p>	<p><b>Noise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site affected by significant rail or road noise?</li> </ul> <p><b>Neighbouring or Nearby Land Uses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site affected, or has the potential to be affected, by neighbouring development and current uses? The nature of any issue will be considered.</li> <li>• Is there a proximity to other business i.e. forming a business cluster?</li> </ul> <p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there access to local services, amenities and public transport for employees?</li> <li>• Is the site within or in close proximity (800m – average walking distance) to a settlement with a defined settlement policy boundary? Are there any barriers for pedestrians, cyclists, or differently abled people accessing local services and facilities e.g. crossing an A-road?</li> <li>• If located beyond 800m, is there good access to non-motorised user routes providing opportunities for active travel? Or can new non-motorised user routes be created?</li> </ul> <p><b>Previous Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the previous use of the land?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Economic / Commercial Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Suitability for Key Sector Businesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site suitable for relevant key sector businesses including wood-related activities, food and beverages, recreation and tourism?</li> </ul> <p><b>Access to the Strategic Road Network</b></p> <p><b>Density, Character of Surrounding Area, Landscape</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As assessed under the Landscape Assessment above.</li> </ul> <p><b>Biodiversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a reasonable likelihood that protected species could be present?</li> <li>• Could development have a potential impact on habitats or species of principal importance?</li> <li>• Could development have a potential impact on habitat connectivity?</li> <li>• Is there scope to adequately mitigate any potential impacts on protected areas, species or habitats?</li> <li>• Is there scope for creation/enlargement of habitats and connectivity and/or green infrastructure enhancement or creation including potential for multifunctional benefits?</li> </ul> <p><b>Flood Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site at risk of flooding, taking into account of climate change? Is the site located with Flood Zones 2 or 3? Is access to the site through areas of flood risk? Is there a history of flooding?</li> <li>• Is the site affected by other sources of flooding other than fluvial, such as groundwater or surface water flooding?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Economic / Commercial Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Ground Conditions/Topography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site affected by any ground conditions (e.g. unstable ground, steep slopes etc.)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Land Contamination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site affected by any potential land contamination?</li> <li>• Will land contamination severely affect deliverability of the site or is there potential for mitigation?</li> </ul> <p><b>Minerals and Waste</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site within a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) or Mineral Consultation Area (MCA)?</li> <li>• Is the site located within 250 metres of a historic landfill site?</li> </ul> <p><b>Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any Tree Preservations Orders on the site or on the boundary of the site?</li> </ul> <p><b>Agricultural Land</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the site is currently in agricultural use, what grade is the land?</li> </ul> <p><b>Archaeology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the site have any archaeological potential which may require investigation prior to development or during construction?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Economic / Commercial Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Listed Buildings/Heritage Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there listed buildings or heritage assets within the site?</li> <li>• Could development potentially adversely affect listed buildings or heritage assets?</li> </ul> <p><b>Conservation Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site within a conservation area?</li> <li>• Could development potentially affect a conservation area and/or its setting?</li> </ul> <p><b>Open Space and Recreation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site wholly or predominately within an open space of public value (e.g. playground, playing fields)?</li> <li>• Can equal or better replacement open space provision be made?</li> </ul> <p><b>Public Rights of Way (PRoW)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any public rights of way running through the site or around the boundary of the site?</li> <li>• Are there any potential views of the site from any public rights of way?</li> </ul>
<b>Availability</b>	<p><b>Ownership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site in a single or multiple ownership?</li> <li>• Will multiple ownerships prevent land assembly and subsequent deliverability of the site as a whole or is there evidence of opportunities for a coordinated approach?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Economic / Commercial Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Planning Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there planning history which is relevant to the assessment (e.g. pre-application enquiries, lapsed permissions)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention to Develop</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the owner/controller of the site expressed a clear intention to make the site available?</li> <li>• What timescale has the owner/controller suggested development could come forward?</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal Constraints</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any legal matters which may prevent the site from being available?</li> </ul>
<b>Achievability</b>	<p><b>Highways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could development on the site impact on the Strategic Road Network?</li> <li>• Are there any potential highways issues associated with the site?</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on Safeguarded Routes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could development on the site impact on safeguarded routes as defined in SDLP Policy SD20?</li> </ul> <p><b>Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there an existing safe access point to the site? Including for HGVs if relevant.</li> <li>• Are there opportunities for alternative access points to the site?</li> <li>• If no access currently exists, are there opportunities to create a safe access to the site?</li> </ul>

Stage 2 Assessment Type	Economic / Commercial Development Assessment Criteria
	<p><b>Exceptional Costs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any exceptional works necessary to enable development?</li> </ul> <p><b>Site Preparation Costs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are site preparation costs expected to affect the site being successfully developed?</li> </ul> <p><b>Third Party Land</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is third party land required to deliver sites (e.g. access land or ransom strips)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic Viability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the economic viability of the current use of the site make development less or more attractive?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ability to overcome constraints</b></p>	<p>As acknowledged under a number of criteria listed above, there may be the option to overcome certain constraints to development through mitigation. This will be considered alongside the survey and assessment of the site.</p>

**Table A-6 – Criteria for Renewable Energy Development Sites**

The assessment criteria for sites identified for renewable energy development is set out in the **Renewable Energy Study** [*published in 2024 and addendum anticipated for 2026*].

**Table A-7 – Criteria for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Offsetting Sites**

The cover report has explained that the sites identified for biodiversity net gain (BNG) offsetting were not found to be suitable for further consideration in the new South Downs Local Plan.

**Table A-8 – Criteria for Nutrient Neutrality Offsetting Sites**

The cover report has explained that the sites identified for nutrient neutrality offsetting were not found to be suitable for further consideration in the new South Downs Local Plan.