

Site Allocations – a summary

The Local Plan is required to plan for an appropriate level of housing growth in accordance with the “Standard Method” which is set out in national policy. The Plan needs to allocate sufficient land to meet this need. The Place Policies chapter of the Preferred Options Local Plan identify the preferred sites in each settlement which are allocated for future housing growth. This Summary Topic Paper provides further explanation of the process that has been followed to reach the preferred proposed allocations.

An extensive set of evidence-based documents have informed the recommended site allocations. A range of considerations are applied, and this must be recognised in the context of the whole of the Colchester district.

One of the first stages usually carried out in plan making is a Call for Sites, which is an essential stage in preparing local plans because it helps identify potential future uses for land. In Colchester the Call for Sites consultation took place between October 2023 and January 2024. A total of 195 submissions were received. In addition to the Call for Sites and in accordance with national Planning Policy Guidance (PPG), the Council proactively identified sites for development through a desktop review which identified a further 80 sites (approx.).

Having established a list of potential sites, combining those promoted through the Call for Sites and those identified through the desktop study, the sites were assessed through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). This is a key evidence document required in considering site allocations. The SLAA used set criteria for evaluating the development potential of land. An initial sieve, related to specific criteria, ruled some sites out at this early stage, and these were not subject to any further assessment.

The sites that progressed beyond the initial sieve were then subject to further testing in relation to the preferred spatial strategy and against a range of evidence, such as biodiversity assessment and flood risk. This shortlist of sites was provided for the purpose of informing some key evidence including infrastructure, transport and water, which are location specific.

The full SLAA report is available on the [website](#). Sites received a red, amber or green (RAG) rating for each criteria/question. A green rating was used if there were no significant issues. Amber and red ratings do not necessarily rule out a site, but identify where further consideration is needed, for example consideration of avoidance and mitigation measures.

Other evidence informed site selection, including the Settlements Evidence, which reviewed the settlement boundaries (sometimes known as village envelopes) in Colchester and assessed the comparative sustainability of places.

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of the plan and reasonable alternatives was also used. For each reasonable alternative, i.e. all sites that passed the first sieve of

the SLAA, the SA used a GIS model to appraise the likely effects of each site against the SA Framework.

A summary of all sites filtered by settlement has been produced and can be viewed on the Local Plan Evidence web page. This summary lists opportunities and constraints for each site. Appendix E of the SA includes an audit trail of decision making for site options considered for the Preferred Option Local Plan.

The approach of testing sites set out above identified opportunities and constraints which have been reflected in policy requirements for preferred allocations. It is expected that these will be refined following consultation.

The next stage will be to further consider the evidence base and review representations made during the Preferred Options consultation. The sites will be reviewed in terms of their suitability and any site-specific requirements to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts and ensure delivery of required infrastructure. This stage of the process will also assess any alternative sites submitted as part of the consultation. This will lead to site allocations in the Submission version of the Local Plan. Further consultation will then take place before the Plan and the consultation responses are submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.