

Wokingham Borough Council

Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)

September 2024



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) forms part of the evidence base supporting the preparation of the council's Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan. It specifically considers the broad suitability, availability and achievability of land for development, and in so doing assists in the identification of a pool of land that might reasonably form part of potential strategies to manage development.
- 1.2. It is important to note that the HELAA is a purely technical exercise. It examines the broad potential of land from a largely 'policy off' position, meaning land is not automatically seen as unsuitable if it is not supported by policies in current local plans. The HELAA does not determine the strategy that is chosen to manage development in the Local Plan Update, nor does the HELAA in itself determine or identify what or sites should be allocated for development.
- 1.3. This HELAA uses the base date of 31 March 2023 as assess the capacity of deliverable, developable or potentially developable sites. Where sites have been subject to planning applications and a decision has resolved to granted planning permission or planning permission has been granted, this has been reflected in the assessment up to 1 July 2024. The outcome of these applications has not been reflected. This HELAA supersedes previous studies.
- 1.4. Details of where land has currently been promoted into the local plan process can be viewed via the interactive map on the council's website.¹ The interactive map can be searched by address, post code or the HELAA site reference.

National Policy and Guidance

- 1.5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023) states that local plans promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to meet the development needs of their area. Strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses. Strategic policies should also set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for uses including housing, employment, retail, leisure and other commercial developments.
- 1.6. Understanding where land might be suitable, available and achievable for development is key to understanding what realistic choices exist for managing development.
- 1.7. With regards to housing, the NPPF states:

*"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
- 1.8. The HELAA process represents a combination of the assessment of the supply of land for housing and economic development. This means that a single exercise identifies the uses that are most appropriate for a site. This combined approach is advocated by the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG): Housing and economic land availability assessment.

¹ <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/monitoring-and-promoting-land/promoting-land>

² NPPF, paragraph 69.

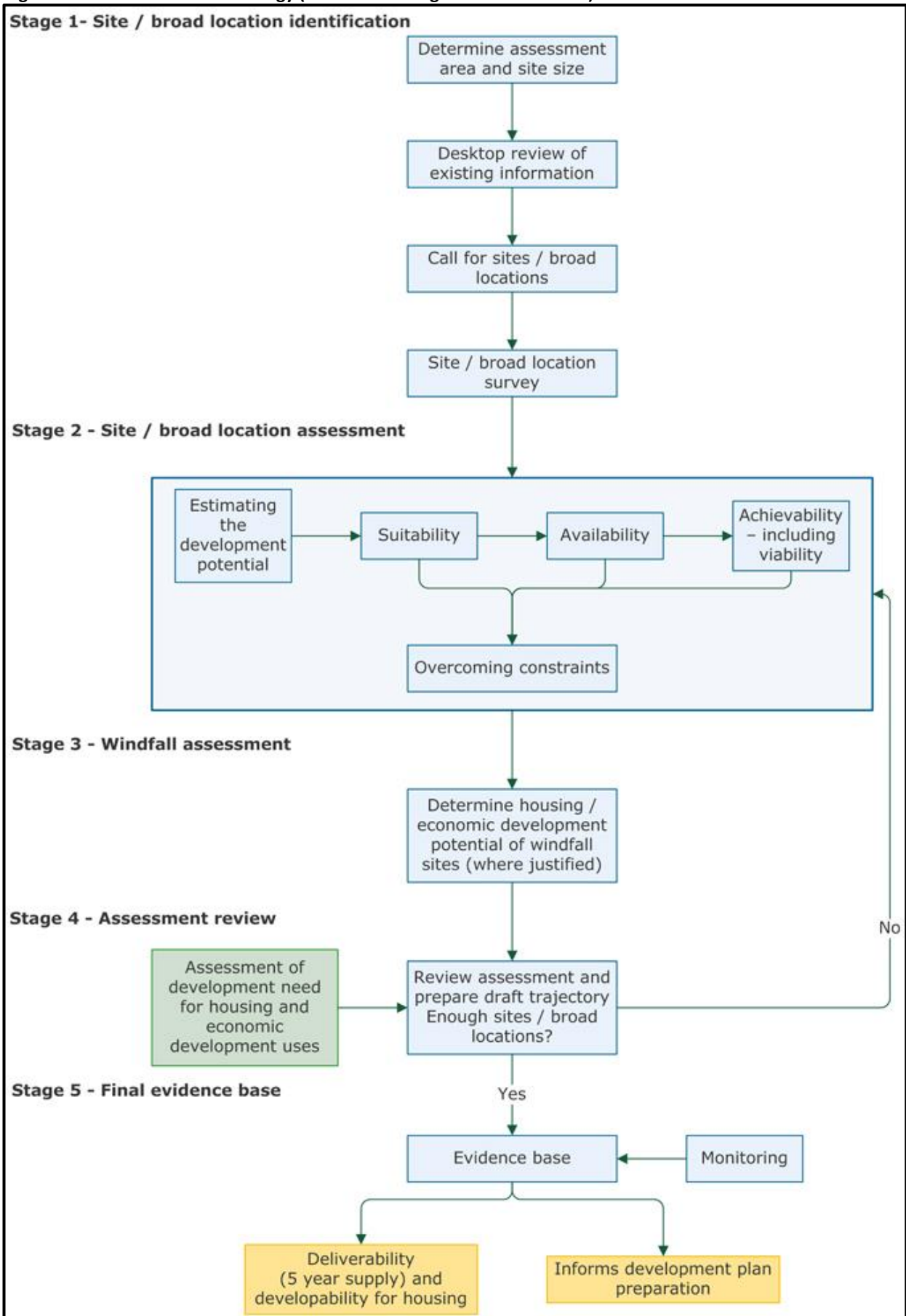
1.9. The PPG sets out more detail on undertaking a HELAA. This includes defining the purpose as listed below and a basic methodology:

- Identify sites and broad locations with potential for development;
- Assess their development potential; and
- Assess their suitability for development and the likelihood of development coming forward (availability and achievability).³

1.10. Figure 1 is a reproduction of the flow chart from the PPG illustrating the basic methodology for undertaking a HELAA.

³ PPG: Housing and economic land availability assessment, paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 3-001-20190722.

Figure 1 - Basic HELAA methodology (Source: Planning Practice Guidance)



- 1.11. To supplement the basic HELAA methodology, a joint 'Berkshire Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Methodology' (2016) was agreed by Reading Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council and Wokingham Borough Council. Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) did not sign up to the joint methodology, as work was already underway on their own study at the time. Notwithstanding, BFC contributed to discussions around the methodology, with the approach taken by BFC being broadly compatible with this joint methodology.
- 1.12. Stakeholders, including the development industry and neighbouring local authorities, were engaged in the preparation of the joint methodology, being consulted on an initial draft version. All representations were considered in confirming the final joint methodology.
- 1.13. The main stages of the joint methodology broadly follow that set out in the basic methodology, being:
- Stage 1 – Identification of sites and broad locations.
 - Stage 2 – Site/broad location assessment.
 - Stage 3 – Minor development and windfall assessment.
 - Stage 4 – Assessment review.
 - Stage 5 – Final evidence base.

2. STAGE 1: SITE IDENTIFICATION AND BROAD LOCATIONS

2.1. Stage 1 of the HELAA process is to identify sites and broad locations for subsequent further assessment. The stage is divided into 4 steps:

- Determining site size.
- Desktop review of existing information.
- Call for sites/broad locations.
- Site/broad locations survey.

Determining site size

2.2. It is important to identify a lower limit to the size of site that will be considered in the assessment, as otherwise this assessment would take in an unmanageable number of potential sites.

2.3. The basic methodology includes the advisory thresholds of residential site being capable of accommodating 5 or more dwellings, or other land uses of 0.25ha capable of accommodating 500m² of floorspace.

2.4. For Wokingham Borough, an indicative capacity⁴ of 10 dwellings has been used for residential promotions, and 0.25ha for other types of development. Exceptions to these thresholds have been made for land promoted for Gypsy and Traveller pitches and land within town centres, where a higher level of development might be anticipated from smaller sites. This threshold is considered to appropriately respond to the character of Wokingham Borough and the nature of development. This threshold is also considered to be appropriate in response to the scale of affordable housing need locally and the NPPF advice that affordable housing should not be sought from residential developments that are not major, that is developments of nine or fewer dwellings.

Desktop review of existing information

2.5. In addition to land specifically promoted for development by the landowner or other interested party, other sources of potential sites or broad areas have been considered. These include:

- Sites allocated in the adopted development plan.
- Sites with planning permission which were either not started or under construction.
- Sites where a planning application has yet to be determined, or sites where planning applications has been withdrawn or refused.
- Land in local authority ownership which is likely to become surplus to operational requirements.
- Vacant and derelict land.

Call for sites

2.6. The council publicised initial 'Call for Sites' from 11 January 2016 to 5 February 2016 and from 9 May 2016 to 3 June 2016. Subsequently, the council has invited further site promotions through all consultation exercises and continued to accept land promotions when approached.

⁴ The indicative capacity reflects the council's planning judgement and may differ from that of the promoter.

- 2.7. A focused call for sites with the potential for Gypsy and Traveller pitches was publicised from 6 January to 17 February 2023 in order to understand whether any additional opportunities existed which should be assessed, given that few opportunities had to been identified by previous calls and through consultations.
- 2.8. Sites which have been promoted, but which have subsequently gained planning permission for the promoted or alternative use have been excluded from the HELAA to avoid unnecessary assessment or potential double counting with housing commitments. As noted in the Introduction, this HELAA uses the base date of 31 March 2023 but has sought to take account of decisions on planning applications up to 1 July 2024. At this time a number of the identified sites were the subject of ongoing planning applications. The outcome of these pending applications has not been reflected to avoid the need for continuous updating.

Site / Broad Location Survey

- 2.9. The PPG advises that all sites (subject to a site size threshold) should be assessed against national policies and designations to establish those which have reasonable potential for development and should be included in the site assessment.
- 2.10. If when taking account of national policy and designations, it is clear that a site is unsuitable for development, the joint methodology provides a filter excluding such sites from further detailed assessment, thus ensuring proportionality and the efficient use of resources, and avoiding unnecessary further assessment.
- 2.11. The joint methodology agreed several circumstances where sites would be excluded from further detailed assessment. These are sites which are significantly constrained by one or more of the following criteria with the effect being to inhibit potential development:
- Functional flood plain.
 - Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
 - Special Protection Area (SPA).
 - Within 400m of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
 - Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance).
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
 - Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).
 - Ancient woodland.
 - Notified safety zones.
- 2.12. Where a site is partially constrained by one of the above criteria, a planning judgement is made as to whether the remaining unaffected area provides a reasonable and practical developable area. Where this is the case, the site will proceed to more detailed assessment, recognising that the constrained part of the site will not be developable.
- 2.13. The sites excluded from further consideration are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sites excluded at Stage 1

| Site Ref | Site Name | Area (ha) | Reason For Exclusion |
|----------|--|-----------|--|
| 5AR016 | Land adjoining Hunters Point, Hughes Green | 0.09 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5BA011 | Land to the rear of 370 – 384 Barkham Road | 0.41 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5CV004 | 3 Norris Green | 0.30 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |

| Site Ref | Site Name | Area (ha) | Reason For Exclusion |
|----------|--|-----------|--|
| 5FI007 | Land to the rear of 5 Clayside | 0.64 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5FI014 | Land to the rear of 6 – 8 The Village | 0.15 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5FI016 | Broughton Farm, Heath Ride | 0.37 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5FI026 | Land adjacent to 294 Nine Mile Ride | 0.48 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5HU002 | Land adjacent to Whistley Green Cottage, Whistley Green | 0.37 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5HU007 | Land at St Swithins Cottage, Hinton Road | 0.37 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold Site is fully within the functional floodplain |
| 5HU042 | Land at junction of Davis Street and Dunt Lane | 0.12 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5HU043 | Land to the west of Hurst Road | 12.29 | Majority of the site is within the functional floodplain |
| 5SH011 | Lane End House | 0.29 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5SH012 | Land at Cutbush Lane | 0.22 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5SH060 | Smallmead Cottages, Kirtons Farm | 0.16 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5SW001 | Land on the north-east side of Part Lane and the south-west side of Church Road, Part Lane | 1.77 | Majority of the site is within the functional floodplain |
| 5SW008 | Arkley, Lambs Lane | 0.06 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5SW012 | Land at Part Lane | 1.63 | Majority of the site is within the functional floodplain |
| 5SW016 | Land adjacent to Oakleigh Farm, Part Lane | 3.39 | Majority of the site is within the functional floodplain |

| Site Ref | Site Name | Area (ha) | Reason For Exclusion |
|-----------------|---|------------------|--|
| 5SW022 | Land at Swallowfield Street | 0.24 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5SW025 | Land at Robin Lodge Nursery | 1.33 | Site is fully within the functional floodplain |
| 5TW008 | 134 Wargrave Road | 0.4 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5WI003 | 498 Reading Road | 0.10 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5WI005 | Winnersh Garden Centre, Reading Road | 5.09 | Majority of the site is within the functional floodplain |
| 5WI016 | 9 Winnersh Gate | 0.11 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5WK021 | Land at the Bowers | 0.22 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5WK033 | Land adjacent to 229 Barkham Road | 0.06 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5WW005 | Old Sawmill Lane | 0.05 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |
| 5WW012 | Heathlands, Land to the east of Heathlands Road | 0.08 | Site below minimum capacity / size threshold |

3. STAGE 2: SITE AND BROAD LOCATION ASSESSMENT

3.1. Stage 2 of the HELAA process assesses the development potential of each of the sites that were not excluded during Stage 1. This was carried out through a combination of desktop assessments and site visits. The stage is divided into 6 steps:

- 2a – initial suitability sift.
- 2b – estimating development potential.
- 2c – assessing suitability.
- 2d – assessing availability.
- 2e – assessing achievability.
- 2f – assessing deliverable and developable potential.

3.2. Where a site or land has been promoted for multiple potential uses, e.g., retail and residential, a separate planning judgement has been made on each.

Approach to assessment

3.3. Where appropriate, individual sites have been clustered where they have a significant functional relationship for the purpose of assessment. This is to make the later stages of the assessment process more efficient by reducing repetition, and allow the opportunity offered by combined sites to be appropriately considered.

3.4. The potential of large clusters to provide for strategic scale development is recognised within the assessments. This reflects the NPPF which acknowledges that large numbers of homes can often be best achieved through planning for large scale developments, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns.⁵ To assist the assessment process, the council commissioned masterplanning studies to inform the opportunities, constraints, infrastructure ask and high-level viability of the following areas:

- Grazeley.
- Twyford / Ruscombe.
- Barkham Square.
- Ashridge.
- Hall Farm / Loddon Valley.
- South Wokingham.

Step 2a – Initial suitability sift

3.5. An initial sift was applied to provide a proportional initial assessment of sites.

AWE Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone

3.6. Since the publication of the joint methodology, the emergency planning arrangements around the Atomic Weapons Establishment Burghfield⁶ (AWE Burghfield) has been reviewed. The associated Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) now covers a geographical area which extends further into Wokingham

⁵ NPPF, paragraph 74.

⁶ AWE Burghfield is a licenced nuclear installation within the adjoining local authority of West Berkshire District Council. Activities undertaken include the assembly, maintenance and decommissioning of warheads on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

Borough than in the past and now incorporates the villages of Grazeley, Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood along with the surrounding countryside.

- 3.7. The council has engaged with emergency planning officers, AWE and the Ministry of Defence, and the Office for Nuclear Regulation to understand the consequences of development on the operation of AWE Burghfield itself and the operation of emergency planning arrangements. Their advice is that development which increases the number of people living, working, shopping and/or visiting the area is unsuitable unless it can be demonstrated that the increase in population can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of “blue light” services and the emergency off-site plan for AWE Burghfield. Local planning authorities, including the council, are currently being advised that an increase in the residential population within the DEPZ as a result of additional housing cannot be safely accommodated. An increase in workforce population as a result of new commercial activities is also unlikely to be safely accommodated, however given the varying nature of commercial uses, advice will need to be provided on an individual proposal basis.
- 3.8. Reflecting the above advice, the initial suitability sift excludes sites promoted for housing (including Gypsy and Traveller pitches) within the DEPZ from further detailed assessment. Sites promoted for commercial will be progressed to detailed assessment.

Relationship to settlements

- 3.9. Locations which are detached from or relate poorly to defined settlements are not in general considered to be sustainable.
- 3.10. The initial suitability sift excludes sites which are detached from defined settlements from further detailed assessment unless the following exceptions applied:
- Site was promoted for Gypsy and Traveller pitches or Travelling Showpeople plots.
 - Site was promoted for employment/economic use.
 - Site was promoted for forms of open space, including Sustainable Alternative Greenspace.
 - Site was promoted for renewable energy generation.
 - Site comprises previously developed land (brownfield land) or is characterised by substantial built form.
 - Site was of a scale which offered the opportunity for the creation of a new settlement (minimum 1,500 dwellings).
- 3.11. A judgement was applied to those sites that were recognised as being adjacent or close to a defined settlement, taking account of permanent physical features on the ground such as major roads and watercourses.
- 3.12. The exceptions for sites promoted for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, employment/economic uses, open space and renewable energy is a practical response to such uses being potentially acceptable in countryside locations. The exception for new settlements reflects that such opportunities have the potential to support the delivery of a new community with new infrastructure as an integral element.

Sites with planning permission

- 3.13. Sites which have received planning permission for the promoted or alternative use in the period since the site was last promoted by the landowner are excluded from further detailed assessment on the assumption that the land is no longer available or the landowner’s intentions have been achieved.

Step 2b - Estimating development potential

- 3.14. It should be noted that estimates made to inform the HELAA are high level and made without prejudice to further detailed assessment and consideration by the council, including any subsequent planning application.

Residential uses

- 3.15. The assessment of the development potential for sites proposed for residential use is an estimate based on a 'pattern book' approach. This estimate may be adjusted to reflect site specific matters such as the present of constraints and the shape of the site. Where concept plans have been provided by the landowner, these too will be considered and may result in an adjustment.
- 3.16. In 2021, the council commissioned David Locke Associates (DLA) to advise on how the assessment of site capacity could reasonably be undertaken at a high level. DLA concluded that for Wokingham Borough, the most appropriate approach was to categorise sites based on location and accessibility, with this informing development density and thereby capacity.
- 3.17. The starting point for the calculation of the development potential is the whole (gross) site area. To this, a developable area percentage has been applied which varies depending upon the size and the proximity of the site to the built-up area, as illustrated in the Table 2 below:

Table 2: Density Zones

| Density Zone | Very Small (<0.5ha) | Small (0.5-1.0ha) | Medium (1-5ha) | Large (5-50ha) |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Major development location; Very high accessibility | 100% | 100% | 90% | 70% |
| Major development location; High accessibility | 100% | 100% | 90% | 70% |
| Major development location; Medium accessibility | 100% | 90% | 70% | 70% |
| Major development location; Low accessibility | 100% | 90% | 70% | 60% |
| Modest development location; Medium accessibility | 100% | 90% | 70% | 60% |
| Modest development location; Low accessibility | 100% | 90% | 70% | 60% |
| Limited development location | 100% | 80% | 70% | 50% |
| Countryside | 100% | 80% | 70% | 50% |

% = net residential development area as a percentage of gross site size.

- 3.18. Once the developable area has been established, density ranges are applied which vary depending on the site's position within the latest settlement hierarchy and level of accessibility. This is illustrated in the Table 3 below:

Table 3: Density ranges (dwellings per hectare) for different pattern book density zones

| Settlement Hierarchy | Very High accessibility | High accessibility | Medium accessibility | Low accessibility |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Major development location | 60-100 | 40-70 | 35-45 | 30-35 |
| Modest development location | NA | NA | 30-40 | 30-35 |
| Limited development location | NA | NA | NA | 30 |
| Countryside | NA | NA | NA | 30 |

NA = Not applicable.

- 3.19. For sites where a development proposal has previously been progressed, this has been taken into account alongside the pattern book to inform the development potential.
- 3.20. As an example, a 0.5ha site within Wokingham town centre would have a developable area percentage of 100% applied. This gives a developable area of 0.5ha. The density ranges fall between 40 to 70 dwellings per hectare. The development potential therefore ranges from 20 dwellings to 35 dwellings.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 3.21. An average pitch size of approximately 625m² has been assumed based on the recommendation of the council's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2023. This pitch size is sufficient to accommodate hardstanding for two parking bays and a vehicle turning circle, a twin-unit chalet/mobile home, a touring caravan, an amenity building measuring 4m x 4.8m for each space, amenity space and a small garden area/play space.

Other uses

- 3.22. Site capacities of other promoted uses, such as employment or retail, have been based on the information contained within the landowner / site promoter's documentation or details in a planning application. Where no information has been provided, the capacity is recorded as unknown.

Step 2c – Assessing suitability

- 3.23. The purpose of this step is to assess whether a site is suitable for development within the plan period. Information relevant to the assessment of the remaining sites has been used from a range of sources, including:
- Existing information on designations related to matters such as wildlife and heritage.
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.
 - Landscape Character Assessment.
 - Masterplanning exercises.
 - Surveys of sites.
 - Previous planning history.
 - Information provided by the land promoter.
 - Information provided by stakeholders.

3.24. Sites have been assessed using information available at the time of assessment. This is a broad assessment, considering a range of factors including:

Land use/ Green Belt:

- Relationship of the site to a recognised settlement in the hierarchy.
- Relationship to the settlement in the hierarchy.
- Whether the site is previously developed land (brownfield), characterised by substantial built form or greenfield.
- Whether the site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- Whether development would result in the substantial loss of best and most versatile agricultural land.

Vehicular highways and access:

- Whether suitable access could be achieved.
- Whether development would have an impact on highway capacity.
- Whether the site would have a good level of access to public transport services.
- Whether development would provide acceptable and achievable levels of accessibility and connectivity to services and facilities, employment opportunities etc.

Flooding:

- Whether the site is at risk of fluvial flooding.
- Whether the site is at risk of surface water flooding.
- Whether the site is at risk of groundwater flooding.
- Whether the site is at risk of reservoir flooding.

Air quality, pollution, and contamination:

- Whether the site is within or in proximity to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
- Whether the site has potential to contain areas of known contaminated land.

Landscape character and historic environment:

- Whether development would be appropriate in the context of the existing development form, pattern and character of the landscape, or would provide a strategic scale opportunity for a new sustainable community.
- Whether development would fall within a nominated, proposed or designated Site of Urban Landscape Value (SULV).
- Whether development has a relationship with any designated heritage assets situated on the site or in the surrounding area.
- Whether development has a relationship with any non-designated heritage assets situated on the site or in the surrounding area.
- Whether development would lead to any potential harm or loss of significance to heritage assets (designated and non-designated) and be appropriate in this context.

Recreation provision:

- Whether site is classified as public open space.
- Whether site is designated or promoted as a Local Green Space.

Supporting economic growth:

- Whether development falls within a Core Employment Area.
- Whether development would result in the loss of (or part of) a Core Employment Area.
- Whether development would protect the hierarchy of centres; support viability and vitality of town, district, local and village centres.

Nature conservation and green infrastructure:

- Whether development would have an adverse impact on nature conservation which may be capable of avoidance or mitigation.
- Whether the site falls within a recognised Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) and/or contributes towards wider habitat connectivity or species conservation.
- Whether development would result in the loss of green infrastructure.
- Whether there are any likely adverse impacts on ancient woodland or protected trees on site or immediately adjacent, which may be capable of avoidance.

Minerals and Waste:

- Whether development falls within an allocated or safeguarded minerals and waste site in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.
- Whether development falls within a proposed minerals and waste allocation or safeguarded area in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Emergency planning:

- Relationship of the site to the minimum Urgent Protective Action Zone around AWE Burghfield (currently 3,160m).
- Relationship of the site to the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) around AWE Burghfield.

Additional considerations:

- Relevant planning history.
- Whether development would result in the loss of Gypsy and Traveller pitches or other types of specialist accommodation.

3.25. Taking account the factors such as those outlined above, a conclusion on the overall suitability of the site for its promoted use has been reached. For sites or a cluster of sites which are of sufficient scale to support delivery of a new settlement, the assessment relates to housing and not the full picture of uses that might be delivered such as shops, schools, SANG and open spaces. As per the joint methodology (Table 4 below), each site is classified as 'suitable' / 'potentially suitable' / 'suitability unknown' / 'unsuitable'. A full assessment of the suitability of each site is set out in Appendix C.

3.26. Those sites classified as 'suitable' or 'potentially suitable' progressed to the next stage to be considered for their availability. Sites classified as 'suitability unknown' or 'unsuitable' did not proceed to further stages of the assessment process.

Table 4: Suitability classification

| Classification | Description |
|----------------------|--|
| Suitable | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The site offers a suitable location for development and there are no known constraints which significantly inhibit development for the defined use. |
| Potentially suitable | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The site offers a potentially suitable location for development but is subject to a policy designation which inhibits development for the defined use. The development plan process will determine the future suitability for the defined use. |
| Suitability unknown | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The site requires further assessment before a robust decision can be made on its suitability for being developed for the defined use. |

| | |
|------------|---|
| Unsuitable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site does not offer a suitable location for being developed for the defined use or there are known constraints which significantly inhibit development. The site is unlikely to be found suitable for the defined use within the next 15 years. |
|------------|---|

- 3.27. It should be noted that the existence of single or multiple constraints does not necessarily mean that a site is 'unsuitable'. It is necessary to make a judgement considering both the opportunities and constraints as a whole. Similarly, a classification of 'suitable' or 'potentially suitable' does not mean that a particular development is suitable when assessed through the more detailed planning application process.
- 3.28. No sites have been considered 'unsuitable' solely because of worsening air quality, pollution or contamination issues. Within the context of Wokingham Borough, such issues are likely to influence the design and layout of development rather than inhibit development in principle. Detailed assessments would be required to demonstrate a proposed development is suitable through the planning application process.
- 3.29. In some instances, a site cannot be considered 'unsuitable' but also cannot be considered 'suitable' or 'potentially suitable' on the available information, i.e., it will be 'suitability unknown'.

Step 2d: Assessing availability

- 3.30. As per the PPG, a site is considered available when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems (e.g., ransom strips, tenancy agreements, existing uses requiring relocation, unresolved multiple ownerships).
- 3.31. The starting point for assessing availability of sites was by either reviewing the information contained in an agent/landowner's response submitted to a 'call for sites', plan consultations or other correspondence. With landowners less likely to actively promote sites within urban areas, a judgement is made as to whether the site is available.
- 3.32. A conclusion on the availability of the site for the promoted use has been reached. As per the joint methodology (see Table 5 below), each site is classified as 'available' / 'potentially available' / 'availability unknown' / 'unavailable'. A full assessment of the availability of each site is set out in Appendix D.
- 3.33. Only those sites classified as 'available' or 'potentially available' progress to the next stage to be considered for their achievability.

Table 5: Availability classification

| Classification | Description |
|-----------------------|---|
| Available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of availability within the next 15 years has been received from the landowner and there are no known legal issues or ownership problems. |
| Potentially available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landowner or a third party with an interest in has promoted the land but conformation has not been received from the landowner that the land will be available within the next 15 years. The land is in multiple ownership and may have site assembly issues. The land accommodates an existing use which would require relocation but arrangements are not in place to achieve this. |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Availability unknown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landowner has not expressed an interest in promoting the site. Landownership remains unknown following investigation. • The landowner has expressed an interest in promoting the site in the past but has not responded to subsequent enquiries for a period no shorter than 3 years. • The land is subject to legal issues upon which further information is required before a robust decision can be made on availability. |
| Not available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landowner has confirmed that the land is not available for development in the next 15 years. • The land is subject to known legal issues which are unlikely to be overcome within the next 15 years. |

Step 2e: Assessing achievability

3.34. As per the PPG, a site is considered achievable where there is reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the broad economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete and let or complete and sell the development over within a certain period. The following considerations fed into the assessment of whether a site was achievable:

- The site is owned by a developer, or a developer has an option agreement with the landowner.
- Any known ownership factors (including ownership fragmentation) that would constrain development of the site.
- Any known legal factors that would constrain development of the site.
- Any known site factors that would and/or could constrain development of the site (e.g., availability of access, agreements over third party land etc.).
- Any known market factors that could constrain development of the site (e.g., adjacent uses, existing use value, potential market demand, attractiveness of location etc.).
- Any known cost factors that could constrain development of the site (e.g., site preparation, exceptional costs, strategic infrastructure costs, prospect of any external funding opportunities to address identified constraints etc.).

3.35. In general, the information above is largely based on information submitted by the landowner/developer. Therefore, development on sites was assumed to be achievable unless there were clear reasons to indicate otherwise.

3.36. A conclusion on the achievability of the site for the promoted use has been reached. As per the joint methodology (see Table 6 below), each site is classified as 'achievable' / 'potentially achievable' / 'achievability unknown' / 'unachievable'. A full assessment of the achievability of each site is set out in Appendix D.

Table 6: Achievability classification

| Classification | Description |
|----------------|--|
| Achievable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a reasonable prospect that the site will be developed for the defined use within the next 15 years. |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Potentially achievable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The achievability of the site is inhibited by an external factor where the timing of resolution is unknown. The delivery of the resolution will determine the future achievability of the site. |
| Achievability unknown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is subject to issues upon which further information is required before a robust decision can be made on achievability. |
| Unachievable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no reasonable prospects that the site will be developed for the defined use within the next 15 years. |

Step 2f: Assessing deliverable and developable potential

- 3.37. Taking the judgements on suitability, availability and achievability for each site, it is possible to determine the capacity of 'deliverable' (within 5 years), 'developable' (within years 6-10 and 11-15), 'potentially developable' land and land which based on current information is not developable or at least 'not developable within the next 15 years' (see Table 5 below).
- 3.38. The full set of information for each site is available in Appendix D.
- 3.39. In summary, the result of Stage 2 of the HELAA are set out in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Deliverable and developable classification

| Classification | Description |
|--|--|
| Deliverable (years 1-5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is available for development, offers a suitable location for the defined use, and is achievable with a realistic prospect that the defined use will be delivered on the site within 15 years. |
| Developable (years 6-10, 11-15) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is a suitable location for the defined use and there is a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed in years 6-10 or 11-15. |
| Potentially developable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site has been identified as potentially suitable and/or potentially available. Whether the site becomes developable will depend on further assessment through the plan making process, e.g. whether circumstances support the amendment or removal of existing designations, and further investigations into its availability. |
| Not developable within the next 15 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those sites assessed as having significant policy and/or environmental constraints that means that the site is unlikely to become suitable in the next 15 years. Those sites assessed as being unlikely to become available in the next 15 years. Those sites assessed as having no reasonable prospect of becoming achievable in the next 15 years. |

Potential Housing Supply

- 3.40. Of the promoted sites that included provision for housing, 4 were assessed as being deliverable, 7 as developable and 26 as potentially developable. The remaining sites were classed as being not developable at this time.

Table 8: Deliverable housing capacity identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (dwellings) |
|----------|---|----------------------|
| 5RU007 | Land to the rear of 9-17 Northbury Lane | 12 |
| 5RU008 | Land between 39-53 New Road | 20 |
| 5SH031 | Rustlings', 'The Spring' and land to the rear of 'Cushendall', Shinfield Road | 10 |
| 5WK053 | Lee Springs, Latimer Road | 42 |

Table 9: Developable housing capacity identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (dwellings) |
|----------|--|----------------------|
| 5SO001 | Land at Sonning Farm | 25 |
| 5WI008 | Winnersh Plant Hire | 60 |
| 5WI011 | Wheatsheaf Close | 24 |
| 5WK029 | Station Industrial Estate, Oxford Road | 40 |
| 5WK045 | Land at Bridge Retail Park | 59 |
| 5WK046 | Land at Wellington Road | 20 |
| 5WK054 | WBC council offices, Shute End | 100 |

Table 10: Potentially developable housing capacity identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (dwellings) |
|---|---|----------------------|
| 5AR011; 5AR014; 5AR015; 5AR025; 5AR029; 5AR030; 5AR032; 5WI001; 5WI002; 5WI015; 5WI018 | Land at Hall Farm | 3,930 |
| 5BA010 | Barkham Square | 600 |
| 5BA032 | 24 Barkham Ride | 30 |
| 5CV001 | Land east and west of Park View Drive North | 78 |
| 5CV002 | Land west of Park Lane | 61 |
| 5FI003 | 31 and 33 Barkham Ride | 80 |
| 5FI004 | Greenacres Farm, Nine Mile Ride | 100 |
| 5FI024 | Hillside, Lower Wokingham Road | 15 |
| 5FI028 | Westwood Yard, Sheerlands Road | 10 |
| 5HU006 | Land on the north side of Orchard Road | 23 |
| 5HU009; 5HU010; 5HU011; 5HU012; 5HU013; 5HU014; 5HU015; 5HU017; 5HU020; 5HU021; 5HU022; 5HU023; 5HU041; 5HU047; 5HU056 | Land at Ashridge | 3,000 |

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (dwellings) |
|--|--|----------------------|
| 5RU001; 5RU002; 5RU003; 5RU004; 5RU005; 5RU006 | Land at Twyford/Ruscombe | 2,500 |
| 5SH023; 5SH026; 5SH027 | Land east and west of Hyde End Road | 175 |
| 5SH025 | Land north of Arborfield Road | 191 |
| 5SW005 | Land east of Trowes Lane | 85 |
| 5SW019 | Land west of Trowes Lane | 70 |
| 5TW007; 5TW011 | Land north of the A4 | 230 |
| 5WI009; 5WI019 | Land on the north west side of Old Forest Road | 50 |
| 5WI012; 5WI021 | Land to the rear of Bulldog Garage and BP garage | 34 |
| 5WI014 | 69 King Street Lane | 28 |
| 5WK011 | Land south of London Road (Western field) | 12 |
| 5WK023 | Rosery Cottage and 171 Evendons Lane | 35 |
| 5WK028; 5WK032; 5WK034; 5WK039 | Land at Blagrove Lane | 387 |
| 5WK048 | Suffolk Lodge, Rectory Road | 20 |
| 5WW009 | Ravenswood Village | 135 |
| 5WW017; 5WW026; 5WW030; 5WW031 | South Wokingham SDL extension | 1,100 |

Table 11: Deliverable and developable housing capacity identified

| Classification | Capacity (dwellings) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Deliverable (years 1-5) | 84 |
| Developable (years 6-10, 11-15) | 328 |
| Potentially Developable | 12,979 |

Potential Gypsy & Traveller Pitch Supply

- 3.41. Of the promoted sites that included provision for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, 6 were assessed as being potentially developable and remaining sites were classed as not developable.

Table 12: Deliverable GRT capacity identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (pitches) |
|---------------------|---------|--------------------|
| No sites identified | | |

Table 13: Developable GRT capacity identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (pitches) |
|---------------------|---------|--------------------|
| No sites identified | | |

Table 14: Potentially developable GRT capacity identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (pitches) |
|----------|---|--------------------|
| 5BA013 | Woodlands Farm, Wood Lane | 15 |
| 5BA036 | High Barn Farm, Commonfield Lane | 20 |
| 5FI005 | Silverstock Manor, Lower Sandhurst Road | 10 |
| 5FI032 | Honeysuckle Lodge, Commonfield Lane | 4 |
| 5TW013 | Land opposite 136-144 Wargrave Road | 2 |
| 5WK042 | Woodside Caravan Park, Blagrove Lane | 4 |

Table 15: Deliverable and developable GRT pitch capacity identified

| Classification | Capacity (pitches) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Deliverable (years 1-5) | 0 |
| Developable (years 6-10, 11-15) | 0 |
| Potentially Developable | 55 |

- 3.42. There were no sites promoted for Gypsy and Traveller pitches within existing settlements. Gypsy and Traveller sites are almost exclusively located within the countryside. Whether a site is suitable for Gypsy and Traveller pitches requires a different judgement than that for conventional housing given the character of the use and the limited options. Six sites were identified as potentially developable.

Potential Employment Supply

- 3.43. Of the promoted sites for employment, 1 was assessed as being deliverable, and 3 were potentially developable. Potential employment capacity of sites was largely not stated through site promotions, meaning the capacity of sites is unknown

Table 16: Deliverable employment identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (floorspace) |
|----------|--|-----------------------|
| 5WK050 | Site of Former M&S Building, Wokingham | Unknown |

Table 17: Developable employment identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (floorspace) |
|---------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| No sites identified | | |

Table 18: Potentially developable employment identified

| Site Ref | Address | Capacity (floorspace) |
|----------|---|-----------------------|
| 5EA002 | Gasholders | Unknown |
| 5SH049 | Shinfield Grange | Unknown |
| 5SH063 | Land adjacent to Mere oak Park and Ride | Unknown |

- 3.44. In addition to the sites listed above, an extension to the Thames Valley Science and Innovation Park was promoted as part of a strategic scale opportunity, with the capacity for 100,000m² research and development floorspace. Some of this capacity has delivered or has planning permission.

Potential Retail Supply

- 3.45. One site was promoted for retail use and has been assessed as being not developable (5WO002). It is noted through the assessment process, that the land was granted planning permission (192826) on 6 February 2020 for the redevelopment of the site for a range of employment uses. This site is therefore unlikely to contribute to potential retail supply in the future.
- 3.46. Sites were also promoted within Wokingham town centre for mixed use schemes of ground floor retail floorspace and residential. These could provide retail capacity as part of the regeneration of the town centre.

Other uses

- 3.47. A number of sites were promoted for other uses including schools with a focus on Special Education Needs and Disabilities, open space and leisure, and renewable energy.

4. STAGE 3: MINOR DEVELOPMENT AND WINDFALL ASSESSMENT

- 4.1. The NPPF, PPG and the joint methodology advise that, where justified, an allowance may be included for development on previously unidentified sites. These sites are known as 'windfall'. The council considers that there is a clear case for an allowance for development of windfall sites within the calculation of future land supply.
- 4.2. The council has undertaken analysis of sites which were not identified by being allocated for development. In the period 2010/11 to 2022/23, housing completions of sites involving the construction of 9 or fewer dwellings completed an average of 81.1 dwellings each year. Over the same period, sites involving the construction of 10 or more dwellings delivered an average of 65.5 dwellings each year.
- 4.3. It is notable that that whilst delivery from unidentified sites has varied from year to year, the supply has been robust over an extended period with delivery not significantly impacted by the past economic downturn. The council believes applying an allowance based on this historic completion rate is justified and appropriate.
- 4.4. It is the council's judgement it is reasonable to assume 80 dwelling completions each year from sites involving the construction of 9 or fewer dwellings. It is also considered reasonable to assume 40 dwelling completions each year from sites delivering 10 or more dwellings from year 4 of the housing projection onwards. This ensures against double counting with sites which have planning permission. This also reflects the time taken to progress schemes of this scale from permission to completion.
- 4.5. Whilst there is no indication from evidence that the supply of windfall is likely to decrease, the assumed rate is notably lower than the historic trend since 2010/11, being a maximum of 120 dwellings each year compared to 146.1 dwellings each year.
- 4.6. Over the plan period 2023/24 to 2039/40, delivery from sites delivering 9 or fewer dwellings equates to 1,360 dwellings. Delivery from windfall sites delivering 10 or more dwellings equates to 520 dwellings. These together total 1,880 dwellings.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. The conclusions of the assessment when considered against development needs are set out below.

Housing

- 5.2. The capacity of deliverable, developable or potentially developable sites has been assessed as 12,979 dwellings, or 13,034 dwellings including Gypsy and Traveller pitches. This increases to 14,919 dwellings when account is taken of delivery from sites involving the construction of 9 or fewer dwellings and windfall sites involving the construction of 10 or more dwellings. This figure excludes sites delivering 10 or more dwellings which already benefit from planning permission.
- 5.3. When considering the assessed capacity against the minimum number of homes required by the standard methodology for calculating local housing need, the outcome suggests sufficient opportunity exists for this to be met without a further cycle of site review.
- 5.4. However, there a number of matters that should be borne in mind in interpreting this outcome.
- 5.5. Most of the sites which make up the potential capacity have been assessed being within the potentially developable classification. This is largely due to the joint methodology for assessing the suitability and availability of sites, which is broadly 'policy off,' with decisions on strategy to be considered through the local plan process. By way of example, a site on the edge of a settlement might be classified as potentially developable as whilst the site might be a reasonable option to consider, a decision is required through the local plan process as to whether the site is allocated for development with regard to all reasonable alternatives. Only sites which are acceptable when assessed against adopted planning policy are considered to be suitable at this time, and only sites with some evidence of intent from the landowner are considered to be available. Any site assessed as either potentially suitable and/or potentially available would automatically be added into the potentially developable category.
- 5.6. The assessment has considered and assessed sites on their own individual merits and they have not been considered cumulatively. For many smaller settlements, it would not be proportionate or sustainable to allocate multiple sites given the level of access to local services and facilities. Selecting the most suitable and sustainable sites will be a matter for the local plan process, as will be decisions about the overall spatial strategy and the role different places might have in within this.
- 5.7. The majority of the potentially developable capacity (9,430 dwellings) is as a result of three large promotions, each capable in broad terms of delivering a new community. Given the HELAA assessment is high level, detailed assessment and resolution of a range of matters would be required to ensure their developability. This includes resolving matters such as access or transport interventions necessary to support proposals, particularly where land outside of the promoter's control would be required. In one instance, developability would require exceptional circumstances to be found to release land from the Green Belt.
- 5.8. The assessment also does not assess the timing of delivery from sites in detail. Delivery from larger sites, particularly the three largest promotions, would likely occur over period which extends beyond a single plan period. Only a proportion of the developable capacity might therefore be achieved within the Local Plan Update.

Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 5.9. There is potential capacity to provide 55 Gypsy and Traveller pitches. This excludes sites which already benefit from planning permission.

Employment

- 5.10. Three sites have been found potentially developable for employment development. The capacity of these sites is not well understood, with promoters' providing no indicative plans. In addition, an extension to the Thames Valley Science and Innovation Park has been promoted as part of a strategic scale housing led opportunity, with the capacity for 100,000m² research and development floorspace.