

January 2021



Corsham

Wiltshire Council LOCAL PLAN

Looking to the future

● Site Selection Report for Corsham



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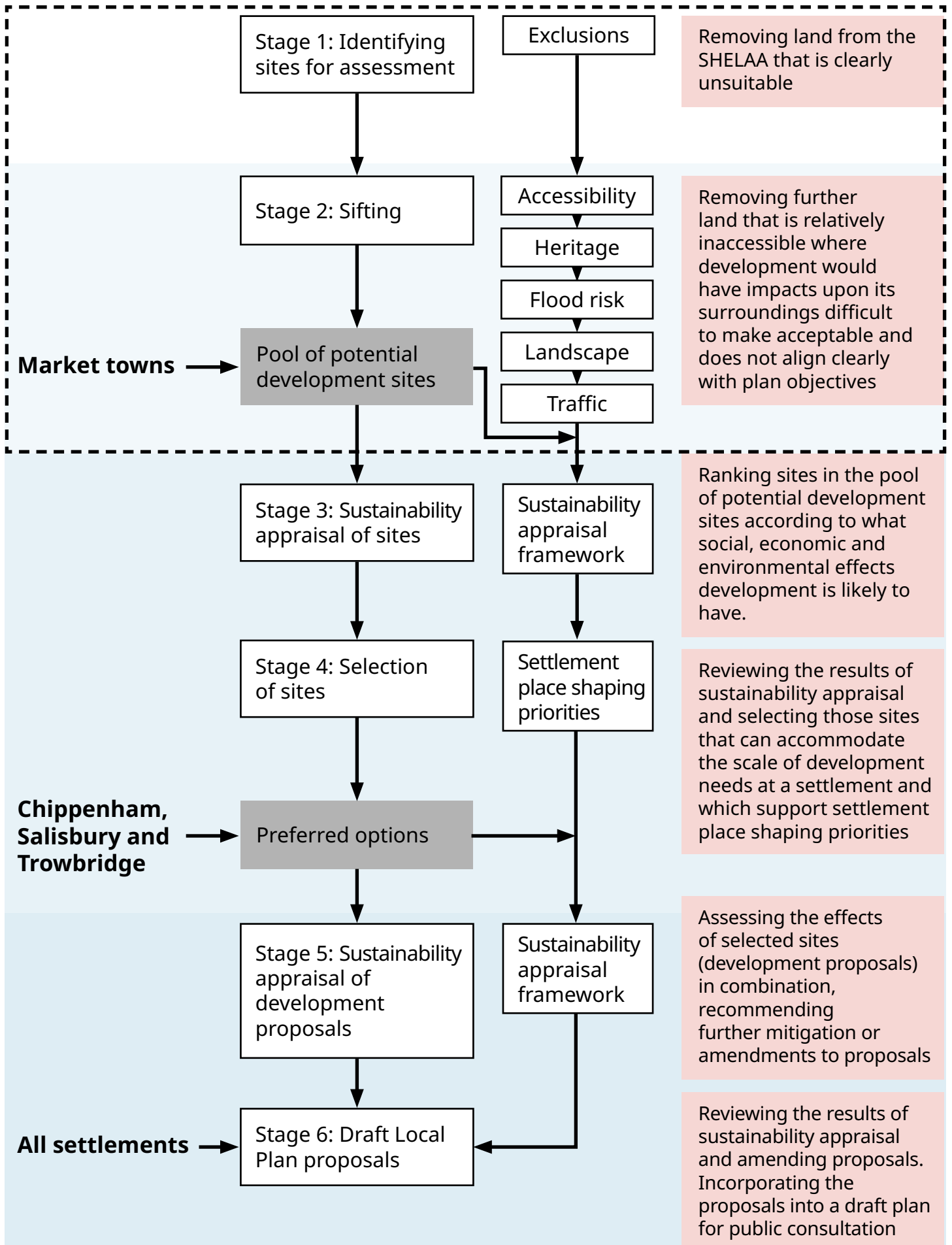
Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explain how the Council has arrived at a pool of potential development sites from which development proposals needing greenfield land may be chosen.

Context - Wiltshire Local Plan Review

1. The Wiltshire Core Strategy is the central strategic part of the development plan for Wiltshire that sets the legal framework for planning decisions and is the basis that all neighbourhood plans must follow. It covers the period 2006-2026.
2. The Wiltshire Local Plan Review is being prepared to update the Wiltshire Core Strategy with a plan period of 2016- 2036.
3. An important part of keeping the development plan up to date is ensuring that development needs are met. This means accommodating new homes, business and other new uses supported by the necessary infrastructure; and finding land on which to build them.
4. As much as possible of the land needed will be previously developed land. Inevitably, in lots of cases, to meet the scale of need forecast, towns will also expand. A challenging part of planning for the future is therefore managing the loss of countryside by identifying the most appropriate land to develop on the edges of our settlements. This is the focus of this document.
5. This paper documents the stages reached in the site selection process for the settlement and concludes by showing the reasonable alternative sites that could be appropriate for development around the built up area of Corsham – a pool of potential development sites. The content of this paper explains how this set of potential development sites has been arrived at. The Council considers these sites to be the reasonable alternatives based on a range of evidence and objectives of the plan that will be further assessed, including through sustainability appraisal.
6. Development proposals can be formulated using sites chosen from this pool. How much land depends upon the scale of need for development forecast over the plan period.
7. At Corsham the requirement emerging is for 815 new homes over the plan period 2016 – 2036. From this overall requirement can be deducted homes already built (2016-2019) and an estimate of homes already committed and in the pipeline in the form of either having planning permission awaiting completion, resolution to grant planning permission or on land allocated for development in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Corsham Neighbourhood Plan. Taking account of this amount approximately 120 additional homes remain to be planned for over the plan period.
8. How this scale of growth was derived is explained in an accompanying report to this one called the 'Emerging Spatial Strategy'.

Figure 1: Summary of the site selection process



The starting point – ‘Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment’

9. Figure 1 shows the entire site selection process. This document covers stages 1 and 2.
 10. The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment¹ (SHELAA) provides the pool of land from which sites may be selected. The SHELAA is a register of land being promoted for development by land owners and prospective developers. Parcels of land are submitted for consideration for inclusion in Wiltshire Council’s plan, as well as Parish and Town Council neighbourhood plans².
 11. Plan preparation and not the SHELAA determines what land is suitable for development as it selects the most appropriate sites.
- ## Stage 1 – Identifying Sites for Assessment
12. This initial stage of the site selection process excludes those SHELAA sites from further consideration that constitute unsuitable land for development.
- ## Stage 2 - Site Sifting
13. A second stage assesses further those sites that have passed through Stage 1 and results in a set of reasonable alternatives for further assessment through sustainability appraisal.
 14. Using a proportionate amount of evidence³, more land is therefore removed from further consideration. It can be removed because it is relatively inaccessible and where development would have impacts upon its surroundings that would be difficult to make acceptable.
 15. To determine what land to take forward for further consideration and which not, however, also involves considering how much land is likely to be needed and what areas around the settlement seem the most sensible. Such judgements take account of:
 - (i) emerging place shaping priorities⁴ for a community (these outline what outcomes growth might achieve);
 - (ii) the intended scale of growth;
 - (iii) what future growth possibilities there are for the urban area;
 - (iv) what the past pattern of growth has been; and
 - (v) what significant environmental factors have a clear bearing on how to plan for growth.⁵
 16. It may be appropriate for some SHELAA land parcels to be combined together to create more sensible or logical development proposals. Parcels of land may therefore be assembled together into one site for further assessment. This stage allows these cases to be recorded⁶.

¹Information about the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment can be found on the Council website.

²Other land, not included in the SHELAA, may possibly be capable of development but because neither a developer nor landowner has promoted the site for development, the site cannot readily be said to be available within the plan period.

³To meet national requirements, plans must be sound, justified by having an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence.

⁴The role and function of place shaping priorities is explained in the settlement statement.

⁵Regulations on the selection of sites allow those preparing plans to determine reasonable alternatives guided by the ‘plans objectives’ so long as this is explained. This stage does so explicitly.

⁶Land promoted for development is defined by land ownership boundaries and over what land a prospective developer has an interest. It does not necessarily represent what land is needed for a logical or sensible development proposal. A logical proposal may be smaller or larger or combine different owners’ interests.

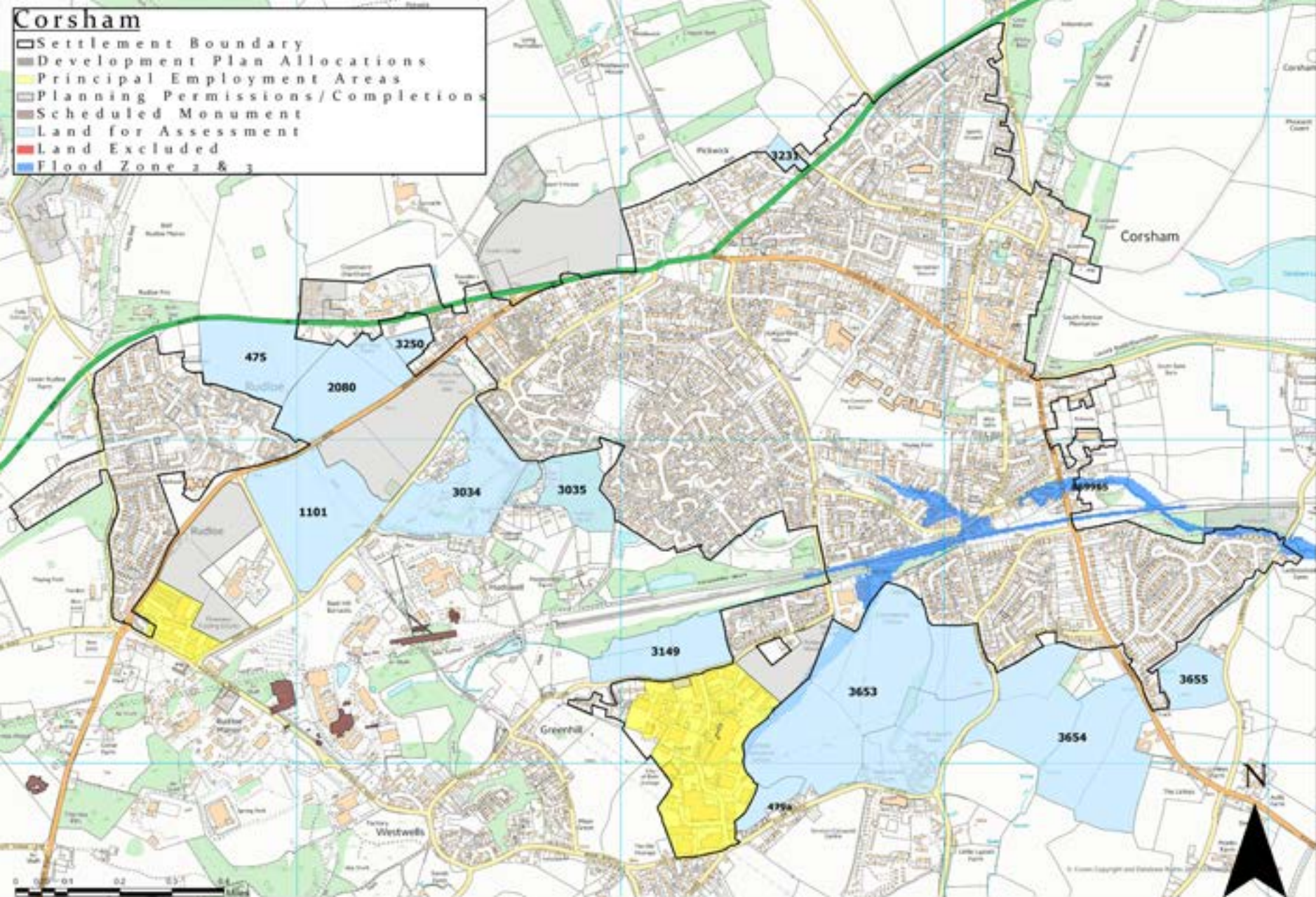
Next Steps in the site selection process

17. The result of this part of the site selection process is a set of reasonable alternative sites. Where greenfield land must be built on to meet the scale of need, land for development proposals will be chosen from this pool. Views on each site are invited alongside a settlement's suggested scale of growth over the plan period (2016-2036) and the plan's priorities for the community. The results of consultation will inform the formulation of development proposals.
18. Each of the sites that is a reasonable alternative will be examined in more detail. They will be subject to sustainability appraisal, stage three. This assesses the likely significant effects of potentially developing each site under a set of twelve objectives covering social, economic and environmental aspects. It helps to identify those sites that have the most sustainability benefits over those with less. It also helps to identify what may be necessary to mitigate adverse effects and what measures could increase benefits of development.
19. The most sustainable sites are those most likely to be suited to development. Sustainability appraisal may recommend sites, but it is also important to select sites that support the plan objectives and strategic priorities for a settlement, in particular. Carrying out this selection of sites is stage 4.
20. Stage 3 sustainability appraisal looked at how each potential development site performed individually. Stage 5 carries out sustainability appraisal looking at development proposals together and what effects they may have in combination. This will lead to amended proposals and more detailed mitigation or specific measures to maximise benefits from development.
21. Development proposals are also subject to more detailed assessments; by viability assessment to ensure that they can be delivered and by assessment under the Habitats Regulations in order to ensure no adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites. The results of these steps may amend development proposals.
22. Stage 6 therefore draws in the work of viability assessment, habitats regulation assessment and sustainability appraisal to produce proposals that can be published in a draft version of the reviewed Local Plan, which will then be published for consultation.
23. As stated previously, this document only covers stage 1 and 2 in detail. These stages are described further in the following sections.

Stage 1 Identifying Sites for Assessments

24. This stage starts with all SHELAA land parcels on greenfield land at the edge of Corsham and ensures they are appropriate for site selection. Land parcels that are not or could not be extensions to the existing built up area are not included. Figure 2 shows that no land has been excluded at this stage.

Figure 2 Map showing stage 1 SHELAA land excluded



Stage 2 Site Sifting

Methodology

25. This stage of the site selection process sifts out sites to provide a reasonable set of alternatives for further assessment. There are two parts to this stage of the process (A) accessibility and wider impacts and (B) strategic context.

A Accessibility and wider impacts

26. Firstly, the individual merits of each site are assessed to understand their strengths and weaknesses in terms of how accessible a site location may be and what wider impacts could result from their development. Sites more likely to have unacceptable impacts or which are relatively inaccessible are less reasonable options.

Accessibility

27. Sites that are relatively inaccessible are much less likely to be reasonable alternatives and may be rejected from further consideration.

28. Accessibility is represented as a heat map of travel times on foot, cycling and public transport to important destinations for residents - the town centre, principal employment areas (including employment allocations), secondary schools and hospital and health centres (including GP surgeries).

29. Sites are categorised overall as low accessibility (red), medium accessibility (amber) or high accessibility (green).

Wider impacts

30. **Landscape:** A site that creates a harmful landscape or visual impact that is unlikely to be successfully mitigated may be rejected.

31. **Heritage:** Assets outside the sites under consideration may be harmed by development. This stage identifies where those assets are, their nature and importance, and assesses the potential for harm that may result from the development of some sites.

32. **Flood Risk:** All land on which built development may take place, by this stage of the selection process, will be within zone

1; the areas of the country with minimal flood risk. Flood risks from all sources are a planning consideration, this step will identify sites where development may increase risks outside the site itself.

33. **Traffic:** Developing some sites may generate traffic that causes an unacceptable degree of harm, in terms of worsening congestion. Others may be much better related to the primary road network (PRN). This can lead to other harmful impacts such as poor air quality or impacts upon the local economy.

34. The results of each of these 'wider impacts' assessments are gathered together and categorised as high (red), medium (amber) and low (green) level of effects for each site under each heading.

B. Strategic Context

35. Having gained a picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each site, the next step is to draw this information together and decide which ones would be reasonable alternatives and which ones not.

36. Unlike the first part of this stage, this requires judgement about what pool of possible land for development constitutes a set of reasonable alternatives for consideration at a settlement. This must not pre-judge more detailed testing of options but rule out others that are clearly less likely to be characterised as being reasonable options and therefore unnecessary to assess in greater detail at later stages.

37. The distribution and number necessary to provide a reasonable pool of alternative sites can be influenced by each settlement's role in the spatial strategy and the scale of growth to be planned for, by the pattern of growth that has taken place at a town as well as significant environmental factors. This is called the site's strategic context.

38. Whilst the first set of evidence provides information about each individual site, evidence in the form of a settlement's 'strategic context' provides the basis for further reasoning by which some land

parcels are selected for further consideration and others rejected. They can indicate future growth possibilities, directions to expand, for an urban area.

39. This strategic context evidence describes the settlement's:

- Long-term patterns of development
- Significant environmental factors
- Scale of growth and place shaping priorities
- Future growth possibilities for the urban area

40. Referring to these aspects, there can be several influences upon whether a site is taken forward for further consideration. Common examples would be:

- The scale of the pool of sites that will be needed. The less additional land that is needed the smaller a pool of sites may need to be and so perhaps only the very best candidates need to be considered further.
- What SHELAA sites may be consolidated

into one (and sometimes which ones not). A historic pattern of growth, or the need for a new direction of growth may recommend a SHELAA site is combined with another in order to properly test such an option.

- A desirable pool of sites might favour a particular distribution or set of locations because it might help deliver infrastructure identified as a place shaping priority for the settlement.
- Continuing historic patterns or, in response to a significant environmental factor, looking for new directions for growth may recommend a site that helps to deliver such a course.

41. Sometimes these influences will not bear on site selection. In other instances, they may be important.

42. A description of the settlement strategic context for Corsham is shown in the table below:

Corsham Strategic Context

| Context criteria | Detail |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Long-term pattern of development | Strongly influenced by its Bath stone mining history Corsham has generally grown in a north and then westward direction between the A4 and the railway. More recent growth has extended towards Rudloe. |
| Significant environmental factors | <p>Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to the west and associated foraging habitat and flight corridors are significant constraints to development.</p> <p>There are some areas of flood risk associated with small tributaries heading east towards the River Avon.</p> <p>The Historic Park and Garden of Corsham Court restricts development to the east of the town</p> <p>Historic and current mining activity has influenced historic growth and potentially limits options for future growth, particularly to the north at Hartham Park which is an extensive and active mine.</p> <p>The need to maintain the character and identity of the Villages of Rudloe, Westwells and Neston also limits growth of the town. A rural green buffer has been identified in the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that the separation of settlements is maintained.</p> |

| Context criteria | Detail |
|--|---|
| Scale of growth and place-shaping priorities | <p>The scale of growth is relatively low, reflecting constraints to development at Corsham.</p> <p>Place-shaping priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the separate identities of Corsham from the settlements to the west of the town (Rudloe, Westwells and Neston). • Regeneration and /revitalisation of Corsham Town Centre, in particular the Martingate Centre. • Protect, improve and extend Corsham’s Green Infrastructure network • Improve transport infrastructure in and around Corsham and improve road network capacity (particularly to improve connectivity in and around the town and address congestion at junctions along the A4). • Safeguard land for the reopening of Corsham train station. • Provision of a second supermarket for the town to provide the opportunity for people to shop locally. |
| Future growth possibilities for the urban area | <p>The likeliest future growth possibilities are through small extensions to the town to the west and south.</p> <p>There are SHELAA sites being promoted between Corsham and Rudloe, which are in close proximity to ecological constraints (Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC) and may not support the maintenance of separation of settlements. Nor would this be consistent with the role and status of the Large Village of Rudloe. In this sense, sites to the south of the town (3653, 3654 and 3655) are potentially better located.</p> <p>It would be logical to consider this area comprehensively, to what extent and for what uses the area may be suitable for development.</p> |

Combining sites

43. Assessment may also suggest combining sites together. To be combined land must:

- be a smaller parcel within a larger one, the smaller site will be absorbed and subsequently removed; or
- abutting each other and not have any strong physical barrier between them, such as a railway, river or road.

45. The map that follows illustrates the results of this stage of the process showing those sites that have been removed and those that should go forward for further assessment through sustainability appraisal.

Site Assessment Results

44. The following table shows the results of Stage 2. It sets out judgements against each of the SHELAA sites, taking into account both the accessibility and wider impact considerations and strategic context described above. It identifies where it may be appropriate to combine sites and which sites should and should not be taken forward.

| SHELAA Reference | Site Address | Accessibility | Flood Risk | Heritage | Landscape | Traffic | Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement | Taken Forward |
|------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------|--|---------------|
| 475 | Land Adjacent to A4 at Rudloe | | | | | | <p>The site falls wholly within the Corsham Rural Green Buffer, designated in the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan (Policy CNP E5). The buffer seeks to retain open space to prevent coalescence of settlements and ensure that bat habitat connected to the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC is protected from unsuitable development.</p> <p>Part of the site is also adjacent to Rudloe and there seems limited scope to allow development of this site without unacceptable narrowing of the gap between Rudloe and Corsham, compromising the neighbourhood plan policy.</p> <p>The site has below average accessibility and is within 1,500m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>Remove from further consideration on landscape grounds.</p> | ✘ |
| 1101 (part of) | Land at Rudloe | | | | | | <p>The undeveloped part of this site falls wholly within the Corsham Rural Green Buffer, designated in the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan (Policy CNP E5). The buffer seeks to retain open space to prevent coalescence of settlements and ensure that bat habitat connected to the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC is protected from unsuitable development. The land to the north east of the site, permitted at appeal, is currently being built out. The approved layout of the site includes housing close to the site boundary.</p> <p>The site has above average accessibility but is within 1,500m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>Development of this site would be likely to result in unacceptable narrowing of the gap between Rudloe and Corsham. Remove from further consideration on landscape grounds.</p> | ✘ |

| SHELAA Reference | Site Address | Accessibility | Flood Risk | Heritage | Landscape | Traffic | Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement | Taken Forward |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------|---|---------------|
| 2080 | Box School | | | | | | <p>The site falls wholly within the Corsham Rural Green Buffer, designated in the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan (Policy CNP E5). The buffer seeks to retain open space to prevent coalescence of settlements and ensure that bat habitat connected to the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC is protected from unsuitable development.</p> <p>The site has below average accessibility and is within 1,500m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>Development of this site would result in unacceptable narrowing of the gap between Rudloe and Corsham. Remove from further consideration on landscape grounds.</p> | ✘ |
| 3034 | The Circus | | | | | | <p>The site lies adjacent to land (opposite side of Park Lane) currently being developed for housing. However, the site is also listed as community green space/green infrastructure, identified in the Corsham NP through policies CNP E4, CNP HW1 and CNP HW3. A substantial proportion of the site could potentially be part of the setting of the Grade II listed Hudswell House. This is likely to reduce the capacity of the site to accommodate housing development to the northern part of the site only.</p> <p>The site has below average accessibility and is within 1,500m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>Potential for development is considered to be limited by heritage and landscape issues but not enough to exclude at this stage. Carry forward for further assessment.</p> | ✔ |

| SHELAA Reference | Site Address | Accessibility | Flood Risk | Heritage | Landscape | Traffic | Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement | Taken Forward |
|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------|--|---------------|
| 3035 | CCC Wood | | | | | | <p>The site is a densely covered woodland area which provides a valuable green infrastructure corridor into the centre of Corsham. There is likely to be considerable harm to the green infrastructure of Katherine Park Field to the North if this site was developed.</p> <p>The site also constitutes a significant green gap maintaining relationship of historic core with rural surroundings and constituting rural setting of properties 17 and 19.</p> <p>The site has above average accessibility but is within 1,000m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>Remove from further consideration on landscape grounds.</p> | ✘ |
| 3231 | Pickwick Paddock, Bath Road | | | | | | <p>Whilst the site allows views into the wider countryside there is potential for a carefully designed small-scale scheme to be developed on the western half of the site, retaining connectivity with the rural setting. The number of dwellings deliverable on this site would however be reduced significantly (estimated in the region of 15 dwellings). Access appears to be achievable. Traffic impact from a scheme this size unlikely to be significant.</p> <p>The site has above average accessibility but is within 500m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>These issues are not considered sufficient to warrant excluding the site at this stage. Carry forward to next stage to test feasibility of achieving an acceptable layout in landscape terms.</p> | ✔ |

| SHELAA Reference | Site Address | Accessibility | Flood Risk | Heritage | Landscape | Traffic | Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement | Taken Forward |
|------------------|--|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------|---|---------------|
| 3250 | Land to the north of 16 Bradford Road | | | | | | <p>No significant issues identified. The site is generally well screened from views to the north and south and is immediately adjacent existing housing. Its small size and location ensures there is not a risk to coalescence with Rudloe and Corsham.</p> <p>The site has above average accessibility but is within 1,000m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development. Traffic impact from a scheme this size unlikely to be significant</p> <p>Carry forward to next stage of assessment.</p> | ✓ |
| 3653 | Land east of Leaffield Trading Estate & west of Lypiatt Road | | | | | | <p>The Corsham Rural Green Buffer is a constraint to development of this site in landscape terms (coalescence of settlements). However, the part of the site outside of the Green Buffer, and closer to the urban form at Corsham, is 9.3 hectares in area so could still accommodate a reasonably large-scale development. The site is open to potential long-distance views to Bowden Hill to the east although this could be mitigated with suitable planting along the eastern boundary.</p> <p>A limited area along the Western boundary of the site is within flood risk zones 2 and 3 but this shouldn't impede significantly on the development potential of the site.</p> <p>The site has above average accessibility but is within 1,500m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>These issues are not considered sufficient to warrant excluding the site at this stage. Carry forward to next stage for further assessment, including part of site within the Green Buffer which may have potential to provide mitigation through habitat/ landscape enhancement.</p> <p>The site is close to 3654, albeit separated by the Lypiatt Road, so these sites could be considered in combination.</p> | ✓ |

| SHELAA Reference | Site Address | Accessibility | Flood Risk | Heritage | Landscape | Traffic | Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement | Taken Forward |
|------------------|---|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------|---|---------------|
| 3654 | Land east of Lypiatt Road and west of B3353 | | | | | | <p>The Corsham Rural Green Buffer is a constraint to development of this site in landscape terms (coalescence of settlements). However, the part of the site outside of the Green Buffer, and closer to the urban form at Corsham, is 2.7 hectares in area so still offers reasonable potential for development.</p> <p>In heritage terms, the farmsteads have a fundamental relationship with their surrounding hinterland and mitigation likely to be a significant constraint here, although avoiding development within the Rural Green Buffer is likely to go some way to mitigate this impact.</p> <p>The site has above average accessibility and is less likely to impact on congested corridors, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>The part of the site within the Green Buffer may have potential habitat/landscape enhancement. The site is close to 3653, albeit separated by the Lypiat Road, so these sites could be considered in combination.</p> <p>These issues are not considered sufficient to warrant excluding the site at this stage. Carry forward to next stage of assessment.</p> | ✓ |
| 3655 | Land South of Brook Drive | | | | | | <p>The site is open to potential long-distance views to Bowden Hill to the east although this could be mitigated with suitable planting along the eastern boundary. The existing settlement boundary is open with built forms visible so developing this site provides the opportunity to create a stronger urban / rural settlement edge. Site would form a logical extension to existing built area.</p> <p>The site has below average accessibility but is less likely to impact on congested corridors, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> | ✓ |

| SHELAA Reference | Site Address | Accessibility | Flood Risk | Heritage | Landscape | Traffic | Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement | Taken Forward |
|------------------|--|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------|---|---------------|
| | | | | | | | These issues are not considered sufficient to warrant excluding the site at this stage. Carry forward to next stage of assessment. | |
| 3149 | Land North of Leafield Industrial Estate | | | | | | <p>The site falls wholly within the Corsham Rural Green Buffer, designated in the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan (Policy CNP E5). The buffer seeks to retain open space to prevent coalescence of settlements and ensure that bat habitat connected to the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC is protected from unsuitable development.</p> <p>The site has above average accessibility but is within 1,500m of a congested corridor, although this does not in itself preclude development.</p> <p>Remove from further consideration on landscape grounds.</p> | ✘ |

No sites have been combined.

Conclusion

46. **The map on page 18** shows the final pool of potential development sites. From these sites may be selected those necessary to meet scales of growth and priorities for the town over the plan period. Only some of the sites, if any, will be developed and not every part of those sites will be developed due to the need to include land for mitigation.

Figure 3: SHELAA land excluded at Stage 2

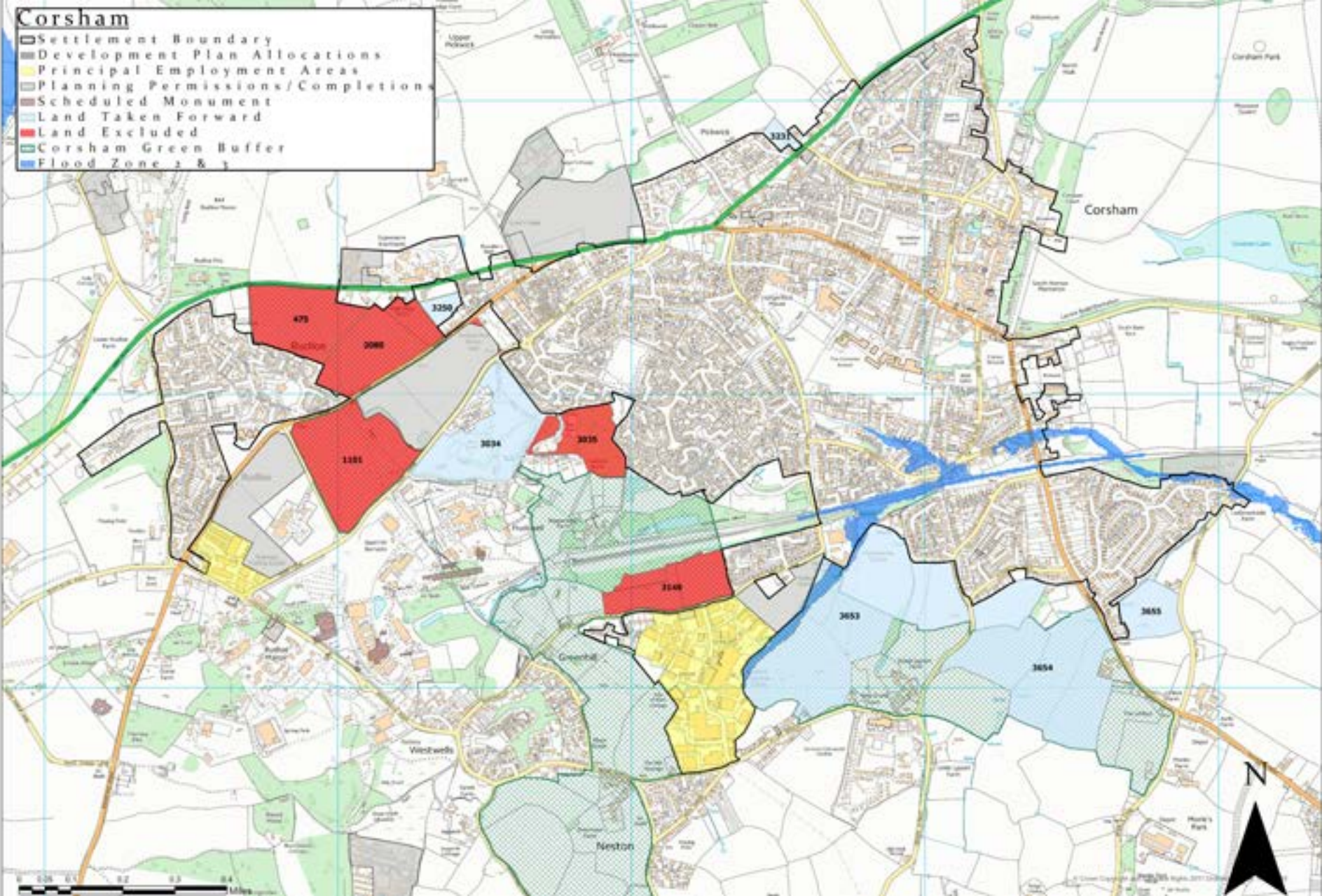
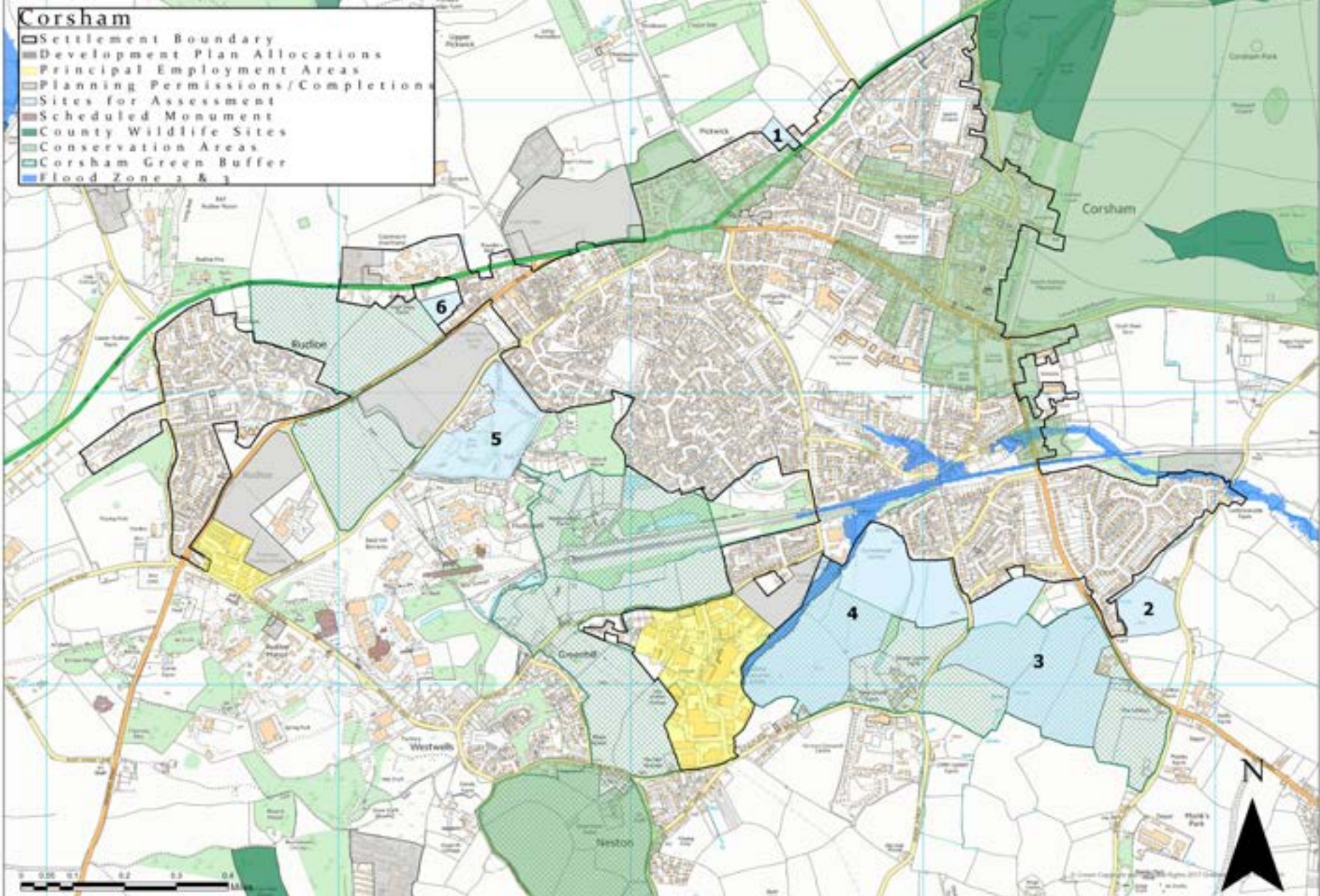


Figure 4: Final pool of potential sites for further detailed assessment



Wiltshire Council Local Plan Site Selection report for Corsham

**This document was published by the Spatial Planning Team,
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**For further information please visit the following website:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk**