

Botesdale and Rickingham Neighbourhood Plan

Site Assessment
Final Report

January 2018

Quality information

Prepared by



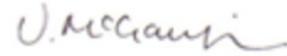
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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
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V2	20/11/17	Draft Review	UM	Una McGaughrin	Associate Planner
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Abbreviations used in the report

Abbreviation

BMSDC	Babergh District Council and Mid-Suffolk District Council
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DPD	Development Plan Document
Ha	Hectare
JLP	Joint Local Plan
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PDL	Previously Developed Land
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance (DCLG)
RPC	Rickinghall Parish Council
SHELAA	Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Executive Summary

Background

Site selection and allocations is one of the most contentious aspects of planning, raising strong feelings amongst local people, landowners, developers and businesses. It is important that any selection process carried out is transparent, fair, robust and defensible and that the same criteria and through process is applied to each potential site. Equally important is the way in which the work is recorded and communicated to interested parties so the approach is transparent and defensible.

The Neighbourhood Plan, which will cover the whole of Rickingham Parish in the district of Babergh and Mid-Suffolk, is being prepared in the context of the emerging Joint Local Plan and the existing Core Strategy. It is the intention for Rickingham Parish Council to allocate sites for development in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Rickingham Parish Council has made good progress in starting to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan, and it is now looking to ensure that key aspects of its proposals will be robust and defensible. The adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012) allocates 750 new homes across the ten key service centres which includes Botesdale and Rickingham (together makes one service centre). This would equate to approximately 75 new homes within Botesdale and Rickingham. In this context, the Steering Group has asked AECOM to undertake an independent and objective assessment of the sites that have been identified as potential candidates for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan, including sites from the Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites process and sites emerging from the Joint Local Plan supporting evidence such as the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

The purpose of the site appraisal is therefore to produce a clear assessment as to whether the identified sites are appropriate for allocation in the Plan, in particular whether they comply with both National Planning Policy Guidance and the strategic policies of Mid Suffolk's adopted Core Strategy and emerging Joint Local Plan; and from this pool of sites, which are the best sites to meet the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. In this context it is anticipated that the Neighbourhood Planning site selection process, aided by this report, will be robust enough to meet the Basic Conditions considered by the Independent Examiner, as well as any potential legal challenges by developers and other interested parties.

Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils assessed a number of sites in Botesdale and Rickingham through technical work (SHELAA) to support the emerging Joint Local Plan. This work has been reviewed, as well as an assessment of new sites that have arisen since (Call for Sites), as part of AECOM's site assessment.

Site Appraisal Summary

The assessment has found that there are five sites that are suitable for housing through the Neighbourhood Plan. In total, the five sites could provide approximately 437 homes. However if the recommendations are taken forward on restricting development on some of these sites to only part of the site, then these five sites would more likely accommodate 165 new homes.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent site appraisal for the Rickinghall and Botesdale Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of Rickinghall Parish Council. The work undertaken was agreed with the Parish Council and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in June 2017.

The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the emerging Joint Local Plan¹ and the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008)² and Core Strategy Focused Review (2012)³. The emerging Joint Local Plan, which will cover the period up to 2036, provides a framework for how future development across Babergh and Mid Suffolk will be planned and delivered.

The emerging Joint Local Plan is currently at consultation stage (Reg 18) (as of August 2017) until November 2017. The emerging Joint Local Plan will focus on strategic issues and priorities including the Council's overall strategy for where development should be located. It will also tackle issues that are of particular importance locally, such as affordable housing, and the preservation of a healthy, natural and attractive environment.

The emerging Joint Local Plan is also important in setting the framework for the development of neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood plans are required to be in conformity with the emerging Joint Local Plan, as well as the adopted Core Strategy, and can develop policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. In this way it is intended for the Joint Local Plan to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Botesdale and Rickinghall, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

Figure 1-1 provides a map of the Botesdale and Rickinghall Neighbourhood area, which covers the parish of Rickinghall. It is the intention of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group that the Plan will include allocations for housing.

Rickinghall Parish Council has made good progress in starting to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan, and it is now looking to ensure that key aspects of its proposals will be robust and defensible. The adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012) allocates 750 new homes across the ten key service centres which includes Botesdale and Rickinghall (together makes one service centre). This would equate to approximately 75 new homes within Botesdale and Rickinghall. In this context, the Steering Group has asked AECOM to undertake an independent and objective assessment of the sites that have been identified as potential candidates for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan, including sites from the Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites process and sites emerging from the Joint Local Plan supporting evidence such as the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

The purpose of the site appraisal is therefore to produce a clear assessment as to whether the identified sites are appropriate for allocation in the Plan, in particular whether they comply with both National Planning Policy Guidance and the strategic policies of Mid Suffolk's adopted Core Strategy and emerging Joint Local Plan; and from this pool of sites, which are the best sites to meet the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. In this context it is anticipated that the Neighbourhood Planning site selection process, aided by this report, will be robust enough to meet the Basic Conditions considered by the Independent Examiner, as well as any potential legal challenges by developers and other interested parties.

¹ Available here <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/new-joint-local-plan/joint-local-plan-consultation-document/>

² Available here <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Mid-Suffolk-Core-Strategy/Core-Strategy-with-CSFR-label-and-insert-sheet-07-01-13.pdf>

³ Available here <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Mid-Suffolk-Core-Strategy/CSFR-adopted-December-2012.pdf>

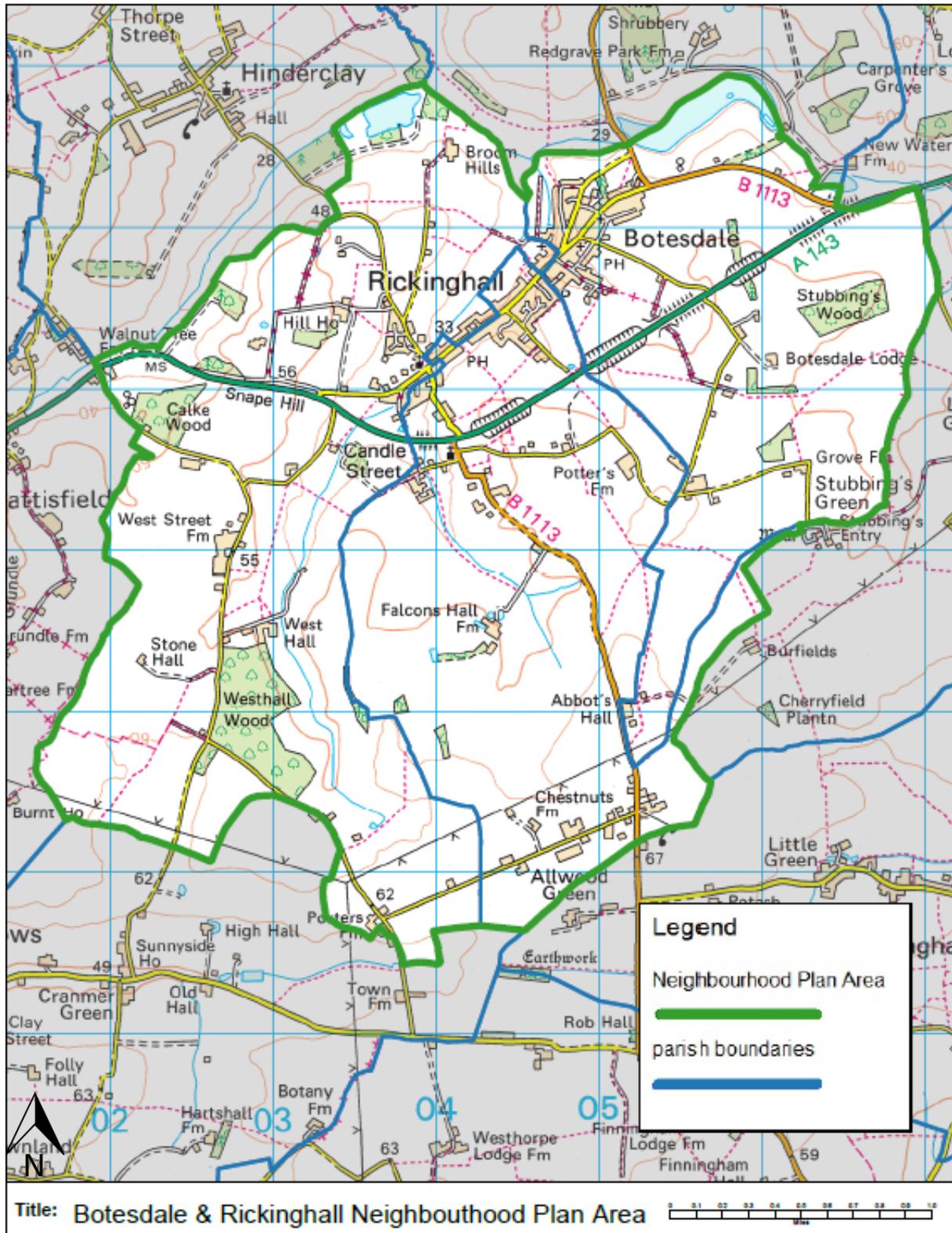


Figure 1-1: Botesdale and Rickinghall Neighbourhood Plan Boundary

(Source: Mid Suffolk District Council Website)

1.2 Planning Policy and Evidence Base

The Neighbourhood Plan policies and allocations must be in accordance with the strategic policies of the Local Plan, both emerging and adopted. The Local Plan evidence base also provides a significant amount of information about potential developments in Botesdale and Rickinghall.

The key documents for Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils planning framework include:

- Adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy DPD, 2008;
- Adopted Mid Suffolk Focused Review DPD, 2012;
- Joint Local Plan Consultation Document, August 2017⁴;
- Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Draft, August 2017⁵; and
- Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas: Strategic Housing Market Assessment. May 2017⁶.

1.2.1 Adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy DPD (2008)

The policies of relevance to development in Rickinghall include:

Policy CS1 Settlement Hierarchy – Botesdale and Rickinghall are designated as a Key Service Centre. These areas will be the main focus of development outside of the towns.

Policy CS9 Density and Mix – Housing developments should make best use of land by achieving densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare, unless there are special local circumstances that require a different treatment. Lower densities may be justified in villages to take account of the character and appearance of the existing built environment.

1.2.2 Adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012)

Policy FC2 Provision and Distribution of Housing – The key service centres, as a collective, are expected to provide 750 new dwellings by 2027. 300 of these dwellings are aimed on previously developed land, and 450 on green field sites. This would equate to, from the 10 service centres, approximately 75 dwellings in Botesdale/Rickinghall.

1.2.3 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2017)

The implication of the emerging Local Plan is that Botesdale and Rickinghall, and other villages developing Neighbourhood Plans will allocate the development needed through those Plans. However, BMSDC have assessed a number of sites in Botesdale and Rickinghall through the technical work to support the Local Plan, specifically the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) (August 2017). The SHELAA considered a total of nine sites within the parish (three were accepted and six rejected).

1.2.4 Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas: Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2017)

The Objectively Assessed Need from 2014-2036 for Mid Suffolk Local Authority area is 9,951 new dwellings, which equates to 452 new dwellings a year. However this figure only represents a 'starting point' in identifying housing requirements. There are a number of other factors that will be considered when setting the final figure in the Emerging Joint Local Plan.

⁴ Available at <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/new-joint-local-plan/joint-local-plan-consultation-document/>

⁵ Available at <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Current-Evidence-Base/Draft-BMSDC-Joint-SHELAA-Report-August-2017.pdf>

⁶ Available at <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Current-Evidence-Base/Ipswich-and-Waveney-Housing-Market-Areas-Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-Part-1-May-2017.pdf>

2. Site Assessment Method

The approach undertaken to the site appraisal is based primarily on the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (Assessment of Land Availability) published in 2014 with ongoing updates, which contains guidance on the assessment of land availability and the production of a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) as part of a local authority's evidence base for a Local Plan.

Although a Neighbourhood Plan is at a smaller scale than a Local Plan, the criteria for assessing the suitability of sites for housing are still appropriate. This includes an assessment of whether a site is suitable, available and achievable.

In this context, the methodology for carrying out the site appraisal is presented below.

2.1 Task 1: Identify Sites to be included in the Assessment

The first task is to identify which sites should be considered as part of the assessment.

This included:

- All SHELAA sites that were assessed as being suitable, available and achievable for development;
- All SHELAA sites that were not assessed due to being too small for the SHELAA's criteria; and
- All Sites identified through Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Call for Sites.

New sites which had not already been assessed through the SHELAA were put forward by landowners and considered as part of the assessment.

All sites included in the assessment are shown on **Figure 2-1**.

2.2 Task 2: Development of Site Appraisal Pro-Forma

A site appraisal pro-forma has been developed by AECOM to assess potential sites for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. It has been developed based on the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance, the Site Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans: A Toolkit for Neighbourhood Planners (Locality, 2015) and the knowledge and experience gained through previous Neighbourhood Planning site assessments. The purpose of the pro-forma is to enable a consistent evaluation of each site against an objective set of criteria.

The pro-forma utilised for the assessment enabled a range of information to be recorded, including the following:

- General information:
 - Site location and use; and
 - Site context and planning history.
- Context:
 - Type of site (greenfield, brownfield etc.); and
 - Planning history.
- Suitability:
 - Site characteristics;
 - Environmental considerations;
 - Heritage considerations;
 - Community facilities and services; and
 - Other key considerations (e.g. flood risk, agricultural land, tree preservation orders).
- Availability

2.3 Task 3: Complete Site Pro-Formas

The next task was to complete the site pro-formas. This was done through a combination of desk top assessment and site visits. The desk top assessment involved a review of the conclusions of the existing evidence and using other sources including google maps/ streetview and MAGIC maps in order to judge whether a site is suitable for the use proposed. The site visits allowed the team to consider aspects of the site assessment that could only be done visually. It was also an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the context and nature of the neighbourhood area.

2.4 Task 4: Consolidation of Results

Following the site visit, the desk top assessment was revisited to finalise the assessment and compare the sites to judge which were the most suitable to meet the housing requirement.

A 'traffic light' rating of all sites has been given based on whether the site is an appropriate candidate to be considered for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. The traffic light rating indicates 'green' for sites that show no constraints and are appropriate as site allocations, 'amber' for sites which are potentially suitable if issues can be resolved and 'red' for sites which are not currently suitable. The judgement on each site is based on the three 'tests' of whether a site is appropriate for allocation – i.e. the site is **suitable, available and achievable**.

The conclusions of the SHELAA were revisited to consider whether the conclusions would change as a result of the local criteria.

2.5 Indicative Housing Capacity

Where sites were previously included in the SHELAA, indicative housing capacity shown in this document has been used.

If landowners/developers have put forward a housing figure, this has been used if appropriate.

Where a site capacity figure does not exist, a calculation of the number of units at a development density of 30 dwellings per hectare has been applied in accordance with *Policy CS9 Density and Mix* of the 2008 Core Strategy.

Lower densities may be appropriate to apply to the sites in the Neighbourhood Plan than suggested in this report due to the rural nature of the settlement. It is recommended that number of houses allocated per site is consistent with the existing densities of the village and appropriate for the context and setting, taking into account the site specific characteristic and constraints.

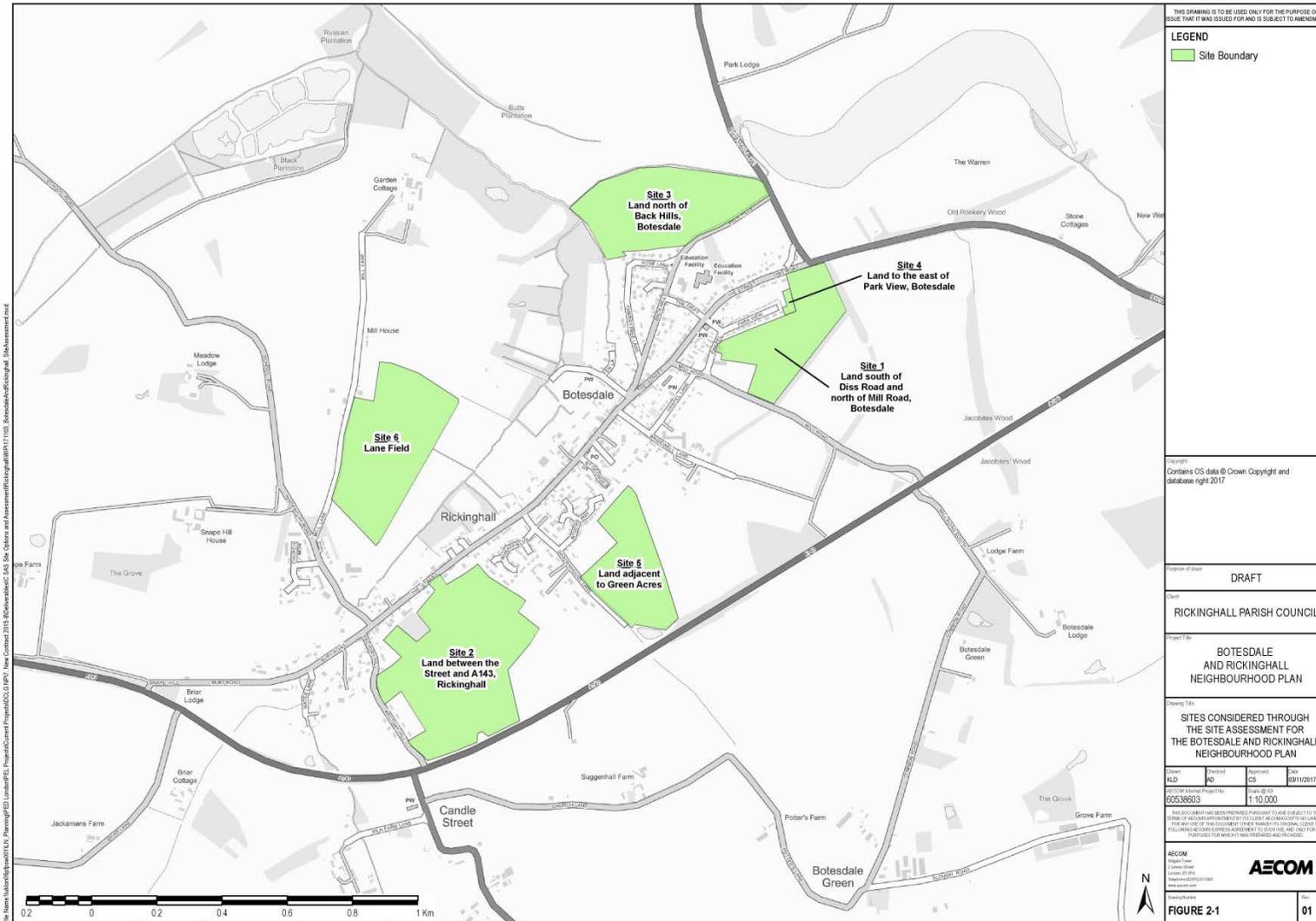


Figure 2-1: Map of Sites Included in Assessment

3. Site Assessment

3.1 Identified Sites

The 2017 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment considered sites in Botesdale and Rickinghall that could be suitable for housing. The sites in **Table 3.1** were found to be suitable, available, and achievable during the plan period.

Table 3.1: Sites Identified in the SHELAA (2017) that were suitable

Site Ref.	Site Address	Area (Ha)	Yield (residential units)
SS0949	Land south of Diss Road and north of Mill Road, Botesdale	7.46	50
SS0091	Land between the Street and A143, Rickinghall	17.4	100
SS0098	Land north of Back Hills, Botesdale	11	150

Six sites identified in the 2017 SHELAA were considered to be not suitable. These are presented in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2: Sites Identified in the SHELAA (2017) that were not suitable

Site Ref.	Site Address	Reason
SS0115	Land to the east of Common Road, Botesdale	The site is poorly related to existing settlement or services – in open countryside
SS0013	Land to the south of Bury Road, Rickinghall	A significant part of the site is located in Flood Zone 3
SS0030	Land between Rectory Hill and Water Lane, Rickinghall	Site has poor access to services, with limited opportunities for improvements
SS0129	Land south of Back Hills, Botesdale	Development of the site would result in the loss of open space
SS0352	Land to the south of Bridewell Lane	Suitable access cannot be achieved, poor access to services and a disjointed extension to the settlement
SS0701	Land to the east of Park View, Botesdale	The site size falls below the SHELAA threshold

Site SS0701 was rejected because the site size falls below the SHELAA threshold. This site assessment does not have a minimum site size threshold, and as a result it will be considered within this report.

3.2 Sites Considered through the Site Appraisal

Sites to be considered through the site appraisal have therefore been selected via the following methods:

- SHELAA sites in Botesdale and Rickinghall that currently have potential for development, i.e. they are suitable, available and viable and do not already have planning permission. SS0701 has also been considered as it was not assessed in the SHELAA due to size limitations; and
- Sites submitted through the Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites.

Table 3.3 sets out all sites included in the appraisal from the above two sources.

Table 3.3: Sites Considered through the Site Appraisal

Site Ref.	Site Source	SHELAA Ref.	Site Address	Land Type	Area (ha)	Yield
1	SHELAA	SS0949	Land south of Diss Road and north of Mill Road, Botesdale	Greenfield	7.46	50
2	SHELAA	SS0091	Land between the Street and A143, Rickinghall	Greenfield	17.4	100
3	SHELAA	SS0098	Land north of Back Hills, Botesdale	Greenfield	11	150
4	SHELAA	SS0701	Land to the east of Park View, Botesdale	Previously Developed Land and Greenfield	0.19	5
5	Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites	N/A	Adjacent to Green Acres	Greenfield	6.4	192
6	Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites	N/A	Lane Field	Greenfield	12	360

Figure 2-1 shows all sites included in the assessment on a map.

4. Summary of Site Appraisals

A number of sites were assessed to consider whether they would be appropriate for allocation in the Botesdale and Rickinghall Neighbourhood Plan. These include sites that were submitted through Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint SHELAA and found to be suitable, available and viable for development; and through the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's 'Call for Sites'.

Table 4.1 sets out a summary of the site assessments. This includes the SHELAA conclusion regarding each SHELAA sites' 'developability' and the conclusions of the Neighbourhood Plan site assessment.

The final column is a 'traffic light' rating for each site, indicating whether the site is appropriate for allocation. Red indicates the site is not appropriate for allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan. Green indicates the site is appropriate for allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan. Amber indicates the site is less sustainable, or may be appropriate for allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan if certain issues can be resolved or constraints mitigated.

All sites are considered to be available for development, as they were submitted through the Call for Sites or assessed as available in the SHELAA.

The summary table shows that three of the SHELAA sites are considered to be appropriate for allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan but some do have significant constraints. One of the sites is not considered suitable for allocation, even though it was deemed suitable in the SHELAA assessment.

From the Call for Sites process, one of the sites was considered to be suitable for allocation but with significant constraints and one was considered not suitable for allocation.

These constraints include limited current and potential access, and the natural topography of the settlement sitting at the bottom of the valley. This results in many of the potential sites sloping towards the settlement.

Table 4.1 should be read alongside the completed pro-formas presented in **Appendix A**.

Table 4.1: Site Assessment Summary Table

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Type (Greenfield/Brownfield)	Site Source	Site Area (Ha)	Capacity (no. dwellings)	SHELAA Conclusion	Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment
1	Land south of Diss Road and north of Mill Road, Botesdale	Greenfield	SHELAA	7.46	50 (taken from the SHELAA)	<p>The site is potentially considered suitable for residential development, taking identified constraints into consideration. The site is available and achievable within a 6-15 year timeframe.</p> <p>Further investigation is needed about access, impact upon the Grade II listed building to the north of the site and conservation area to the west of the site, and potential impact upon the protected species.</p> <p>Part development along the northern aspect is recommended to avoid disproportionate development to the settlement.</p>	<p>The site is considered suitable for allocation but it is recommended to follow the SHELAA's conclusion of part development along the northern aspect.</p> <p>The site has good access potential in the north, along Diss Road, but access on its southern boundary would be difficult because of drainage ditches along Mill Road and the narrowness of the road itself. Also development in the north, along Diss Road, would be proportionate with the current existing built up area of the settlement.</p> <p>The site also benefits from hedgerow screening on all sides but Mill Road, and consists of a flat topography. Any development would need to take account of impact upon the heritage assets adjacent to the site.</p> <p>50 dwellings are considered to be a conservative estimate of the site's capacity. A higher figure could be achievable.</p>
2	Land between the Street and A143, Rickinghall	Greenfield	SHELAA	17.4	100 (taken from the SHELAA). However if only the north-western aspect is developed, a maximum of 10 would be more suitable.	<p>The site is potentially considered suitable for residential development, taking identified constraints into consideration. The site is available and achievable within a 6-15 year timeframe.</p> <p>Further investigation is needed on the impact upon the adjoining Conservation Area, the scale of the site (consider reducing to be more in keeping with the existing settlement), potential impact upon protected species, and the impact of the site sitting within a Minerals Safeguard Area.</p> <p>Part development is recommended to avoid a disproportionate development to the existing</p>	<p>The site is considered suitable for allocation but it is recommended to follow the SHELAA's conclusions of part development along the north-western aspect.</p> <p>There is existing access to the site from The High Street. If only infill development on the empty plot on the High Street was developed then the linear character of this part of the village would be retained. This would maintain the existing landscape character of the area. As a result, even though the SHLAA recommends a capacity of 100, we feel a maximum of 10 would be much more suitable for the site.</p> <p>Any development would need to take account of impact upon adjacent heritage assets and the</p>

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Type (Greenfield/ Brownfield)	Site Source	Site Area (Ha)	Capacity (no. dwellings)	SHELAA Conclusion	Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment
						settlement.	impact of the site sitting within a Minerals Safeguard Area.
3	Land north of Back Hills, Botesdale	Greenfield	SHELAA	11	90 (based on 30 dwellings per hectare on 3 hectares of the site)	<p>The site is potentially considered suitable for residential development, taking identified constraints into consideration. The site is available and achievable within a 0-5 year timeframe.</p> <p>Further investigation is needed in regards to access, the impact of the site being within a Minerals Safeguard Area and Special Landscape Area, the potential impact upon a Conservation Area, and part of the site being within Flood Zone 3.</p> <p>Partial development in the southern half of site would be recommended due to flood restrictions in the north.</p>	<p>We consider that this site is suitable for allocation but it is recommended to follow the SHELAA's conclusions of part development in the southern half of the site.</p> <p>The site has poor existing access with narrow roads. The site is also very exposed to the surrounding area and does not have a flat or even topography.</p> <p>As a result it is suggested that the allocation is limited to a smaller number of dwellings for approximately 90 dwellings on 3 hectares of the site.</p>
4	Land to the east of Park View, Botesdale	Previously Developed Land and Greenfield	SHELAA	0.19	5 (based on 30 dwellings per hectare)	<p>The site size falls below the SHELAA threshold and therefore was not assessed in the SHELAA.</p>	<p>The site is considered potentially suitable for allocation but does have a significant constraint with the current access being a narrow laneway.</p> <p>The site is a moderate distance from local facilities and services, but is in close proximity to a bus stop. There are no environmental or heritage designations on site.</p> <p>More than half of the site is brownfield and it lies within the settlement boundary of Botesdale/Rickinghall.</p> <p>However the site has narrow laneway access which would need to be improved if more than a couple of dwellings are developed.</p>
5	Adjacent to Green Acres	Greenfield	Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites	6.4	192 (based on 30 dwellings per hectare) but unless access is improved, a	N/A	<p>The site is considered potentially suitable for allocation but has some significant constraints.</p> <p>The only potential access for the site is on Gardenhouse Lane. This is a single narrow laneway which would only be able to accommodate a small number of new dwellings.</p>

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Type (Greenfield/ Brownfield)	Site Source	Site Area (Ha)	Capacity (no. dwellings)	SHELAA Conclusion	Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment
					maximum of 10 would be more suitable.		<p>Unless this is improved, the potential capacity of 192 would need to be reduced a significant amount to approximately a maximum of 10.</p> <p>There are no environmental or heritage designations within or adjacent to the site. The site is fairly flat and has hedgerows protecting existing views except towards the built up area.</p> <p>The more appropriate direction for growth within the site would be the northern section, the area of land nearest to the existing built up area, and along Gardenhouse Lane. With the constraints on access in mind, BMSDC would more likely welcome a smaller number of dwellings exclusively on this section of the site (about 10 dwellings).</p>
6	Lane Field	Greenfield	Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites	12	0	N/A	<p>The site is not considered suitable for allocation.</p> <p>The site has poor access to it (narrow single laneway) and is physically separated from the main built up area.</p> <p>The site's topography is sloping towards the village which makes views onto it from the village very prominent. This would be difficult to mitigate.</p>

5. Conclusions

5.1 Site Assessment Conclusions

Six sites were assessed to consider whether they would be appropriate for allocation in the Botesdale and Rickinghall Neighbourhood Plan. These included sites that were submitted through Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Joint Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment and found to be suitable, available and achievable for development, sites that were not assessed due to being categorised as being too small under the SHELAA's criteria, and sites that were submitted through the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's Call for Sites process.

The site assessment needs to be understood in the context of the adopted and emerging planning policy documents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils. Botesdale and Rickinghall are considered a Key Service Centre within the District of Mid Suffolk. These Key Service Centres are expected to deliver 750 new homes by 2027, which equates to approximately 75 new homes in Botesdale and Rickinghall.

Table 4.1 sets out a summary of the site assessment and includes both the SHELAA conclusions (where applicable) and the conclusions of the Neighbourhood Plan site assessment.

The summary table shows that one of the SHELAA sites was considered to be appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. This site has existing visual screening and existing or good potential for access. However, in agreement with the SHELAA's conclusions, it is recommended that allocation/development only occurs in the northern aspect of this site. This would ensure that new development is proportionate with the existing built up area of the settlement without encroaching into the countryside. However, it is possible that this site could provide more than the 50 dwellings indicated by the SHELAA and potentially could accommodate the approximate dwelling requirement of 75 on one site.

Three of the SHELAA sites are considered appropriate for allocation but have significant constraints. The access to Sites 3 and 4 is currently restricted to a narrow laneway which would need improvement to accommodate more than a limited number of new dwellings. The development of the whole of Site 2 would result in a negative visual effect on the landscape due to the slope of the site, and as a result it is considered more suitable to restrict development to the existing linear form of the village in the northern aspect of the site. One of the sites submitted through the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's call for sites is considered suitable with, however, significant constraints. This site also has access restrictions, with current access only available on a single narrow laneway. Again this would need improvement to accommodate a significant number of new dwellings.

One of the sites submitted through the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's Call for Sites is not considered suitable for allocation. This site is physically separated from Rickinghall/Botesdale, situated on a narrow laneway, and due to topography is also quite exposed to the surrounding countryside.

The site assessment therefore shows that there are five sites in total that are potentially suitable to be put forward as proposals for housing allocations as part of the Botesdale and Rickinghall Neighbourhood Plan, if the identified constraints were resolved. These five sites are a 'pool' of potential development locations which in total could accommodate approximately 437 homes. However if the recommendations are taken forward on restricting development on some of these sites to only part of the site, then these five sites would more likely accommodate 165 new homes.

5.2 Next Steps

The suggested next steps are for the Neighbourhood Plan group to select the preferred sites to make up the approximate housing requirement of 75.

One approach would be to only select the most suitable site, Site 1, and to increase the capacity to slightly more than what is suggested in the SHLAA, to approximately 70. The development of this site would open the access up on Site 4, which could accommodate a further 5 dwellings. This would mean building out a large portion of Site 1 but would focus new development to only one part of the village.

Another approach would be to select all five of the potentially suitable sites and distribute the approximate housing need of 75 among them.

The site selection process should be based on the following:

- The findings of this site assessment;
- Discussions with Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils;
- Local criteria that can be applied to differentiate between the suitable sites, in particular the extent to which the sites support the vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan; and
- The potential for the sites to meet identified infrastructure needs of the community, including through Community Infrastructure Levy contributions⁷.

5.3 Viability

As part of the site selection process, it is recommended that the Steering Group discusses site viability with Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils. Viability appraisals for individual sites may already exist. If not, it is possible to use the Council's existing viability evidence (such as Ipswich, Babergh, Mid Suffolk and Suffolk Coastal's Affordable Housing Site Viability Study⁸) to test the viability of sites proposed for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. This can be done by 'matching' site typologies used in existing reports, with sites proposed by the Steering Group, to give an indication of whether a site is viable for development and therefore likely to be delivered. In addition, any landowner or developer promoting a site for development should be contacted to request evidence of viability.

⁷ Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils adopted the CIL Charging Schedules in January 2016, available here <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/community-infrastructure-levy-and-section-106/community-infrastructure-levy-cil/>.

⁸ Available here <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Historic-Evidence/AffHsngSiteViabilityStudyJun09.pdf>

Appendix A Completed Site Appraisal Pro-Formas

Site Assessment Proforma

General information

Site Reference / name	4
Site Address (or brief description of broad location)	Land to the east of Park View, Botesdale
Current use	Open space and garages
Proposed use	Residential
Gross area (Ha) Total area of the site in hectares	0.19
SHLAA site reference (if applicable)	SS0701
Method of site identification (e.g. proposed by landowner etc)	SHELAA



Context

Is the site: Greenfield: land (farmland, or open space, that has not previously been developed) Brownfield: Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated infrastructure.	Greenfield	Brownfield	Mixture	Unknown
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site planning history Have there been any previous applications for	None			

development on this land? What was the outcome?	
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Suitability

<i>Suitability</i>	
Is the current access adequate for the proposed development? If not, is there potential for access to be provided?	Current access in south-west corner of the site. The access is quite limited so would only be suitable for a small number of dwellings.
Is the site accessible? Provide details of site's connectivity	Site is less than 300m from the B113 and bus stops to Diss and Bury St Edmunds.

<i>Environmental Considerations</i>		
Questions	Assessment guidelines	Observations and comments
<p>Is the site within or adjacent to the following policy or environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt • Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) • National Park • European nature site • SSSI Impact Risk Zone • Site of Importance for Nature Conservation • Site of Geological Importance • Flood Zones 2 or 3 	No	Contains or is adjacent to no policy or environmental designations.
<p>Ecological value? Could the site be home to protected species such as bats, great crested newts, badgers etc.?</p>	Potential value	Potentially as site contains some green open space.
<p>Landscape</p> <p>Is the site low, medium or high sensitivity in terms of landscape?</p> <p>Low sensitivity: site not visible or less visible, existing landscape is poor quality, existing features could be retained</p> <p>Medium sensitivity: Site has only moderate impact on landscape character (e.g. in built up area);</p> <p>High sensitivity: Development would significantly detract from the landscape and important features unlikely to be retained- mitigation not possible</p>	Low sensitivity to development	The site is located within Area 19 (Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze) of the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance (2015), which concludes that it is "a narrow band of valleys with good tree coverage and poor dry grassland. The villages are fairly tightly clustered with the river terraces supporting the larger settlements such as Botesdale. The main landscape strategy for the area is to retain, enhance and restore. Important consideration of new development on the visual impacts on Conservation

		<p><i>Areas must be taken into account.”</i></p> <p>There are views from the site onto the adjacent houses and field. Due to the existing built up nature of the site, this should not be a constraint.</p>
<p>Agricultural Land Loss of high quality agricultural land (Grades 1,2 or 3a)</p>	<p>Loss of Grade 3 agricultural land</p>	<p>Contains Grade 3 Good to Moderate Agricultural Land.</p>

Heritage considerations

Question	Assessment guidelines	Comments
<p>Is the site within or adjacent to one or more of the following heritage designations or assets?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation area • Scheduled monument • Registered Park and Garden • Registered Battlefield • Listed building • Known archaeology • Locally listed building 	<p>Limited or no impact or no requirement for mitigation</p>	<p>No heritage assets are within or adjacent to the site.</p>

Community facilities and services

Question	Assessment guidelines	Observations and comments
<p>Is the site, in general terms, close/accessible to local amenities such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre/local centre/shop • Employment location • Public transport • School(s) • Open space/recreation/ leisure facilities • Health facilities • Cycle route(s) <p>Where a site is poorly located if > 800m, Moderately located if 400m to 800m, and favourable located if < 400m from services.</p>	<p>Moderately located</p>	<p>The site is moderately located with respect to the local centre of Botesdale, but is within close proximity to a couple of services including bus stops.</p>

Other key considerations

<p>Are there any Tree Preservation Orders on the site?</p>	<p>None</p>	
<p>What impact would development have on the site’s habitats and biodiversity?</p>	<p>Unknown</p>	<p>Site contains open green space. Impact can be identified through a Habitat 1 Survey, and potential impacts mitigated.</p>
<p>Public Right of Way</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>A public right of way runs along the southern boundary and a bridleway runs along the northern boundary.</p>

Existing social or community value (provide details)	No		
<i>Is the site likely to be affected by any of the following?</i>	Yes	No	Comments
Ground Contamination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Significant infrastructure crossing the site i.e. power lines/ pipe lines, or in close proximity to hazardous installations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Characteristics

Characteristics which may affect development on the site:	Comments
Topography: Flat/ plateau/ steep gradient	Flat
Coalescence: Development would result in neighbouring towns merging into one another.	No
Scale and nature of development would be large enough to significantly change size and character of settlement	No

3.0. Availability

Assessing the suitability of the site will give an indication of whether the site has any constraints to development. It should consider aspects such as infrastructure, planning policy, local services, heritage and other considerations.

Availability

	Yes	No	Comments
Is the site available for sale or development (if known)? Please provide supporting evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The site was promoted in the Council's SHELAA Call for Sites so is assumed to be available.
Are there any known legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies, or operational requirements of landowners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a known time frame for availability? 0-5 /6-10 / 11-15 years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unknown
Any other comments?	The site is within the Key Service Centre of Botesdale/Rickingham (Policy CS1) within the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy DPD (2008).		

4.0. Summary

Assessing the suitability of the site will give an indication of whether the site has any constraints to development. It should consider aspects such as infrastructure, planning policy, local services, heritage and other considerations.

Conclusions	
The site is appropriate for allocation	<input type="checkbox"/>
This site has minor constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
The site has significant constraints	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The site is unsuitable for allocation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potential housing development capacity:	5 (based on 30 dwellings per hectare)
Key evidence (3-4 bullet points) for decision to accept or discount site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site has potential for allocation but a significant constraint. • The site is within the existing settlement boundary of Botesdale/Rickingham. • It is a brownfield site with no environmental or heritage constraints and existing access. • However access is a tight lane which would need upgrading to accommodate more than a couple of new dwellings.

Site Assessment Proforma

General information

Site Reference / name	5
Site Address (or brief description of broad location)	Adjacent to Green Acres
Current use	Fallow Agriculture Land
Proposed use	Residential
Gross area (Ha) Total area of the site in hectares	6.4
SHLAA site reference (if applicable)	N/A
Method of site identification (e.g. proposed by landowner etc)	NP Call for Sites



Context

Is the site: Greenfield: land (farmland, or open space, that has not previously been developed) Brownfield: Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated infrastructure.	Greenfield	Brownfield	Mixture	Unknown
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site planning history Have there been any previous applications for development on this land? What was the outcome?	None			

Suitability

Suitability

Is the current access adequate for the proposed development? If not, is there potential for access to be provided?	A technical analysis of the highway has shown that the junction between Garden House Lane and The Street has capacity to accommodate a substantial amount of
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	additional traffic, as it is currently operating at only around a quarter of its designated capacity. However Gardenhouse Lane, which provides the only access point for the site (through the loss of hedgerows), is a single laneway which would only be able to accommodate a small number of new dwellings.
Is the site accessible? Provide details of site's connectivity	Site is 308m from the A143.

Environmental Considerations

Questions	Assessment guidelines	Observations and comments
<p>Is the site within or adjacent to the following policy or environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt • Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) • National Park • European nature site • SSSI Impact Risk Zone • Site of Importance for Nature Conservation • Site of Geological Importance • Flood Zones 2 or 3 	None	<p>The site is not within Flood Zone 2 or 3 but testing on site shows it is possible to drain surface water directly into the ground through infiltration. Development could reduce instances of flooding water running down Garden House Lane towards the Street.</p>
<p>Ecological value? Could the site be home to protected species such as bats, great crested newts, badgers etc.?</p>	Little value	<p>An ecological survey has confirmed that the site has little value as a wildlife habitat. There is some potential for ecological value within the hedgerows.</p>
<p>Landscape</p> <p>Is the site low, medium or high sensitivity in terms of landscape?</p> <p>Low sensitivity: site not visible or less visible, existing landscape is poor quality, existing features could be retained</p> <p>Medium sensitivity: Site has only moderate impact on landscape character (e.g. in built up area);</p> <p>High sensitivity: Development would significantly detract from the landscape and important features unlikely to be retained- mitigation not possible</p>	Low sensitivity to development	<p>The site is located within Area 19 (Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze) of the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance (2015), which concludes that it is “a narrow band of valleys with good tree coverage and poor dry grassland. The villages are fairly tightly clustered with the river terraces supporting the larger settlements such as Botesdale. The main landscape strategy for the area is to retain, enhance and restore. Important consideration of new development on the visual impacts on Conservation Areas must be taken into account.”</p>

		There are some views into the existing village from the site. These would need limited mitigation for a small number of new dwellings.
Agricultural Land Loss of high quality agricultural land (Grades 1,2 or 3a)	Loss of Grade 3 agricultural land	Contains Grade 3 Good to Moderate Agricultural Land.

Heritage considerations

Question	Assessment guidelines	Comments
<p>Is the site within or adjacent to one or more of the following heritage designations or assets?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation area • Scheduled monument • Registered Park and Garden • Registered Battlefield • Listed building • Known archaeology • Locally listed building 	<p>Limited or no impact or no requirement for mitigation</p>	<p>No heritage assets are within or adjacent to the site.</p>

Community facilities and services

Question	Assessment guidelines	Observations and comments
<p>Is the site, in general terms, close/accessible to local amenities such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre/local centre/shop • Employment location • Public transport • School(s) • Open space/recreation/ leisure facilities • Health facilities • Cycle route(s) <p>Where a site is poorly located if > 800m, Moderately located if 400m to 800m, and favourable located if < 400m from services.</p>	<p>Moderately located</p>	<p>The site is moderately located with respect to the local centre of Botesdale and Rickinghall.</p>

Other key considerations

Are there any Tree Preservation Orders on the site?	None	
What impact would development have on the site's habitats and biodiversity?	Limited	Site is an open field with hedgerows. Impact is thought to be limited if existing hedgerows are protected, according to the ecological survey.
Public Right of Way	Yes	Public right of ways run along three of the boundaries.
Existing social or community value (provide details)	No	

<i>Is the site likely to be affected by any of the following?</i>	Yes	No	Comments
Ground Contamination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Significant infrastructure crossing the site i.e. power lines/ pipe lines, or in close proximity to hazardous installations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Characteristics

Characteristics which may affect development on the site:	Comments
Topography: Flat/ plateau/ steep gradient	Flat
Coalescence: Development would result in neighbouring towns merging into one another.	No
Scale and nature of development would be large enough to significantly change size and character of settlement	Size of the site is large enough to significantly change the size and character of settlement if it is fully built out.

3.0. Availability

Assessing the suitability of the site will give an indication of whether the site has any constraints to development. It should consider aspects such as infrastructure, planning policy, local services, heritage and other considerations.

Availability

	Yes	No	Comments
Is the site available for sale or development (if known)? Please provide supporting evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The site was promoted in the NP Call for Sites so is assumed to be available.
Are there any known legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies, or operational requirements of landowners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a known time frame for availability? 0-5 /6-10 / 11-15 years.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0-5 years
Any other comments?			

4.0. Summary

Assessing the suitability of the site will give an indication of whether the site has any constraints to development. It should consider aspects such as infrastructure, planning policy, local services, heritage and other considerations.

Conclusions	
The site is appropriate for allocation	<input type="checkbox"/>
This site has minor constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
The site has significant constraints	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The site is unsuitable for allocation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potential housing development capacity:	192 (based on 30 dwellings per hectare)
Key evidence (3-4 bullet points) for decision to accept or discount site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is considered potentially suitable for development but has some significant constraints. • The only potential access for the site is on Gardenhouse Lane. This is a single narrow laneway which would only be able to accommodate a small number of new dwellings. Unless this is improved, the potential capacity of 192 would need to be reduced a significant amount. • There are no environmental or heritage designations within or adjacent to the site. • The more appropriate direction for growth within the site would be to the north, i.e. the area of land nearest to the existing built up area.

Site Assessment Proforma

General information

Site Reference / name	6
Site Address (or brief description of broad location)	Lane Field
Current use	Agriculture
Proposed use	Residential
Gross area (Ha) Total area of the site in hectares	12
SHLAA site reference (if applicable)	N/A
Method of site identification (e.g. proposed by landowner etc)	NP Call for Sites



Context

Is the site: Greenfield: land (farmland, or open space, that has not previously been developed) Brownfield: Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated infrastructure.	Greenfield	Brownfield	Mixture	Unknown
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site planning history Have there been any previous applications for development on this land? What was the outcome?	None			

Suitability

Suitability

Is the current access adequate for the proposed development? If not, is there potential for access to be provided?	The western boundary of the site is open to the road, i.e. no hedgerows or fences. This would suggest that there is currently good access to the site. However this road, Mill Lane, is a single narrow laneway. As a result, it would not
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	be able to accommodate a large amount of new development.
Is the site accessible? Provide details of site's connectivity	Site is 790m from the B113 and bus stops to Diss and Bury St Edmunds.

Environmental Considerations

Questions	Assessment guidelines	Observations and comments
<p>Is the site within or adjacent to the following policy or environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt • Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) • National Park • European nature site • SSSI Impact Risk Zone • Site of Importance for Nature Conservation • Site of Geological Importance • Flood Zones 2 or 3 	No	There are no policy or environmental designations within or adjacent to the site.
<p>Ecological value? Could the site be home to protected species such as bats, great crested newts, badgers etc.?</p>	No value	Unlikely as site is an open field with limited hedgerows.
<p>Landscape</p> <p>Is the site low, medium or high sensitivity in terms of landscape?</p> <p>Low sensitivity: site not visible or less visible, existing landscape is poor quality, existing features could be retained</p> <p>Medium sensitivity: Site has only moderate impact on landscape character (e.g. in built up area);</p> <p>High sensitivity: Development would significantly detract from the landscape and important features unlikely to be retained- mitigation not possible</p>	Medium sensitivity to development	<p>The site is located within Area 19 (Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze) of the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance (2015), which concludes that it is “a narrow band of valleys with good tree coverage and poor dry grassland. The villages are fairly tightly clustered with the river terraces supporting the larger settlements such as Botesdale. The main landscape strategy for the area is to retain, enhance and restore. Important consideration of new development on the visual impacts on Conservation Areas must be taken into account.”</p> <p>There are prominent views out and into the site from the surrounding countryside and adjacent fields. These would need mitigation. The site is also physically separated from Botesdale/Rickinghall.</p>

Agricultural Land Loss of high quality agricultural land (Grades 1,2 or 3a)	Loss of Grade 3 agricultural land	Contains Grade 3 Good to Moderate Agricultural Land.
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Heritage considerations

Question	Assessment guidelines	Comments
Is the site within or adjacent to one or more of the following heritage designations or assets? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation area • Scheduled monument • Registered Park and Garden • Registered Battlefield • Listed building • Known archaeology • Locally listed building 	<p style="text-align: center;">Limited or no impact or no requirement for mitigation</p>	No heritage assets are within or adjacent to the site.

Community facilities and services

Is the site, in general terms, close/accessible to local amenities such as (but not limited to):		Observations and comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre/local centre/shop • Employment location • Public transport • School(s) • Open space/recreation/ leisure facilities • Health facilities • Cycle route(s) <p>Where a site is poorly located if > 800m, Moderately located if 400m to 800m, and favourable located if < 400m from services.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Moderately located</p>	The site is moderately located with respect to the local centre of Rickingham.

Other key considerations

Are there any Tree Preservation Orders on the site?	None		
What impact would development have on the site's habitats and biodiversity?	Limited	Site is an open field with few hedgerows. Development therefore would have limited impact on biodiversity.	
Public Right of Way	Yes	A public right of way runs along the northern boundary.	
Existing social or community value (provide details)	No		
<i>Is the site likely to be affected by any of the following?</i>	Yes	No	Comments
Ground Contamination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Significant infrastructure crossing the site i.e. power lines/ pipe lines, or in close proximity to hazardous installations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
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Characteristics

Characteristics which may affect development on the site:	Comments
Topography: Flat/ plateau/ steep gradient	Moderate to considerable slope from north to south.
Coalescence: Development would result in neighbouring towns merging into one another.	No
Scale and nature of development would be large enough to significantly change size and character of settlement	Size of the site is large enough to significantly change the size and character of settlement if it is fully built out.

3.0. Availability

Assessing the suitability of the site will give an indication of whether the site has any constraints to development. It should consider aspects such as infrastructure, planning policy, local services, heritage and other considerations.

Availability

	Yes	No	Comments
Is the site available for sale or development (if known)? Please provide supporting evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The site was promoted in the NP Call for Sites so is assumed to be available.
Are there any known legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies, or operational requirements of landowners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a known time frame for availability? 0-5 /6-10 / 11-15 years.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	11-15 years
Any other comments?			

4.0. Summary

Assessing the suitability of the site will give an indication of whether the site has any constraints to development. It should consider aspects such as infrastructure, planning policy, local services, heritage and other considerations.

Conclusions

The site is appropriate for allocation	<input type="checkbox"/>
This site has minor constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>

The site has significant constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
The site is unsuitable for allocation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Potential housing development capacity:	0
Key evidence (3-4 bullet points) for decision to accept or discount site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is not considered suitable for allocation. • The site has poor access to it (narrow single laneway) and is physically separated from the main built up area. • The site's topography is sloping towards the village which makes views onto it from the village very prominent. This would be difficult to mitigate.

