

# Land Availability Assessment 2022 Methodology



**Epsom and Ewell**  
**Local Plan** 2022-2040



**Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology  
June 2022**

**1 Contents Page**

1	Contents Page .....	1
2	Introduction .....	2
2.1	Purpose .....	2
2.2	What is a Land Availability Assessment (LAA)? .....	2
2.3	Consultation .....	2
2.4	Methodology.....	3
2.5	Stage 1 - Site Identification.....	4
2.6	Determine Assessment Area.....	4
2.7	Site selection threshold.....	4
2.8	Review of Existing Information .....	4
2.9	Call for sites.....	5
2.10	Site Survey .....	6
2.11	Stage 2- Site assessment.....	7
2.12	Suitability Assessment.....	7
2.13	Availability Assessment .....	8
2.14	Achievability Assessment .....	9
2.15	Deliverability Assessment.....	9
2.16	Deliverable Sites .....	10
2.17	Developable sites.....	10
2.18	Site Capacity Assessment.....	11
2.19	Developable Areas.....	11
2.20	Stage 3 – Windfall Assessment.....	12
2.21	Historic Windfall Delivery .....	12
2.22	Stage 4: Assessment Review.....	13
2.23	Stage 5: Final Evidence Base .....	13
3	Monitoring .....	13
4	Appendix 1 – Call for sites form .....	15

# Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Purpose

2.1.1 This document sets out the Council's proposed methodology for assessing land availability throughout the Local Plan process in the context of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) and [Planning Practice Guidance](#) (PPG).

### 2.2 What is a Land Availability Assessment (LAA)?

2.2.1 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is preparing a Land Availability Assessment (LAA) for the Borough as part of the preparation of its new Local Plan. The LAA will form part of the evidence base for the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan 2022-2040.

2.2.2 The purpose of the LAA is to:

- 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 (their availability and achievability).

### 2.3 Consultation

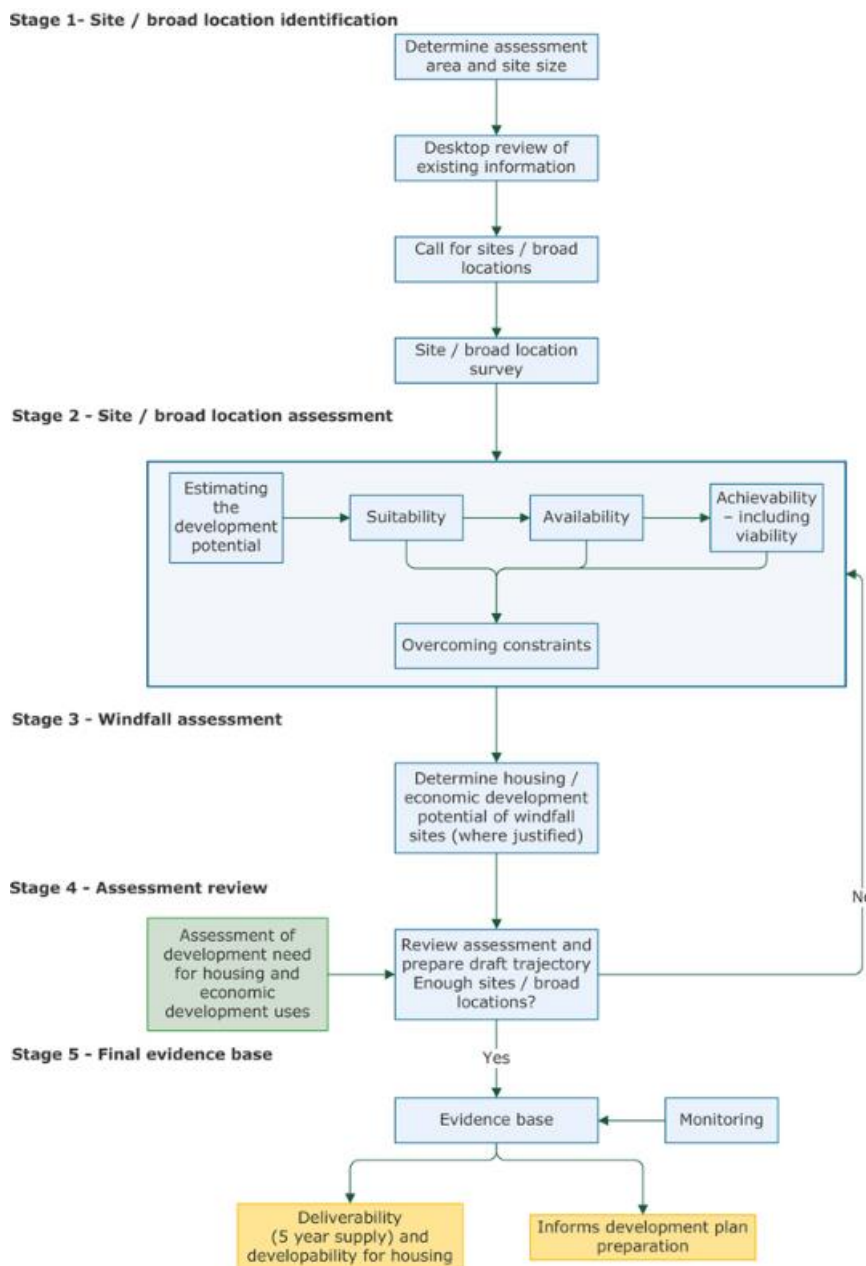
2.3.1 A draft methodology was circulated in June 2022 to key stakeholders including Surrey authorities, Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England and the Greater London Authority (GLA) for comment. As part of the Duty to Co-operate so that any issues or concerns could be raised before we prepared the LAA document.

2.3.2 The council received a total of three responses which emphasised the importance of environmental and historic constraints in undertaking assessments. No significant changes were made to the methodology as a result.

# Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022

## 2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 The LAA methodology is set out in Planning Practice Guidance. This five-stage process is set out in the flow chart below:



2.4.2 The guidance sets out what inputs and processes will lead to a robust assessment of land availability. The Council will follow this staged approach.

## **Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022**

### **2.5 Stage 1 - Site Identification**

#### **2.6 Determine Assessment Area**

2.6.1 The geographical area to be covered by the LAA will be all the land within Epsom and Ewell borough boundary.

#### **2.7 Site selection threshold**

2.7.1 The planning practice guidance suggests that it may be appropriate to consider all sites and broad locations capable of:

- delivering 5 or more dwellings,
- economic development on sites of 0.25 hectares (or 500 sqm of floor space)

2.7.2 The Council has adopted this approach.

#### **2.8 Review of Existing Information**

2.8.1 The council will use a comprehensive range of sources in order to ensure the best available information to identify and assess potential development sites as shown by Table 1. The desktop review will provide a baseline position and the starting point for sites to be considered as part of the LAA.

<b>Table 1 – sources of potential development sites</b>	
<b>Type of site</b>	<b>Data source(s)</b>
Existing site allocations that do not benefit from planning permission	Adopted Development Plan Documents
Sites submitted through the call for sites process	Call for sites 2022  Sites that have been promoted through previous call for sites exercises but not submitted through the most recent call for sites. In such instances, the council has contacted the landowner(s) using land registry data to determine whether the land is available.
Development sites that are under construction	Development commencement and completion records
Unimplemented planning permissions	Planning application records
Planning applications that have been refused or withdrawn	Planning application records

## Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022

Land in the ownership of the local authority	Local authority records
Sites subject to pre-application enquiries	Pre application records
Vacant and derelict land and buildings	Local authority empty property register
Sites where more productive use of land could be achieved. Examples include but are not limited to redevelopment of garage blocks or the subdivision	Analysis of digital mapping records including ordnance survey maps and aerial photography
Surplus and likely-to-become-surplus public sector land. Such bodies will include, but not be limited to Surrey County Council.	Duty to Co-operate discussions National Register of Public Sector Land

### 2.9 Call for sites

2.9.1 A 'Call for Sites' exercise was recently undertaken and advertised on the Council's website with notifications issued to those who have previously expressed in an interest planning policy and social media posts, in order to establish initial land availability for all types of development, including housing, employment and retail.

2.9.2 The formal call for sites was advertised for a six-week period which ended on 27 March 2022. However, the Council had kept the call for sites open following the end of the six-week consultation period to enable additional sites to be put forward by completing the E-Form on our website (see Appendix 1). This sought the following information:

- Site location plan
- Current and suggested use
- The potential scale/capacity of the development
- Known constraints to development
- Anticipated time-frame for development

2.9.3 A cut-off date for the purpose of information contained in this study was the beginning of September.

## **Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022**

### **2.10 Site Survey**

2.10.1 The sites will be mapped, and the initial site surveys will incorporate information and constraint data from the Council's Geographic Information System (GIS), information provided on the call for sites submission form, information available from previous planning applications (where applicable), and information gathered through other desk-based research. The surveys will set out the key issues and potential constraints for each site and what further consideration may be required.

2.10.2 Where appropriate, sites will be visited by planning officers in order to verify the assessment of the site.

2.10.3 The following information will be recorded at this initial assessment stage:

- Site size, boundaries, and location;
- Current use(s) and character;
- Character of surrounding area and the surrounding land use(s);
- Physical constraints e.g. access, steep slopes, natural features of significance, flood risk and location of pylons;
- Potential environment constraints;
- An assessment of planning history;
- Proximity to services and other infrastructure;
- Where relevant, development progress (e.g. commencement or completion).

## **Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022**

### **2.11 Stage 2- Site assessment**

2.11.1 This stage comprises of the detailed assessment section, including estimating the development potential and assessment of suitability, availability, achievability including whether the site is viable.

### **2.12 Suitability Assessment**

2.12.1 A site can be considered suitable if it would provide an appropriate location for development when considered against relevant constraints and their potential to be mitigated. The following factors will be considered to assess a site's suitability for development:

- National policy constraints including land designations that would deem sites unsuitable for development or which may affect the scale and type of development;
- appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed;
- contribution to regeneration priority areas
- Potential impacts including the effect upon the environment including landscape features, nature biodiversity and heritage conservation.

2.12.2 In order to make an accurate assessment, both environmental and physical constraints will be considered in addition to relevant policy considerations.

2.12.3 Some sites may be found unsuitable due to issues such as flooding, unsuitable access or location, and policy designations. However, if the Council considers that these constraints could reasonably be overcome, the site may be considered suitable for development. This assessment will be outlined in the site proforma where appropriate.

2.12.4 The areas of Epsom and Ewell borough are considered not suitable for development:

- Development is not suitable on Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These national nature designations are protected by law.
- Other than water compatible uses, and in some case essential infrastructure, development is not suitable on undeveloped or previously developed land with no building footprint, in the functional flood plain (Flood Zone 3b) due to high flood risk.

Sites wholly within these areas will be discounted from further consideration.

2.12.5 The Council will consider constraints and whether they are mitigatable as part of the assessment process and whether sites continue to be viable where mitigation is required. This will also be assessed as part of the achievability assessment detailed below.



## **Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022**

2.12.6 Sites that have planning permission or that are identified in the current Development Plan (Core Strategy, Development Management Policies Document, Plan E AAP) will be considered suitable unless circumstances have changed which would alter their suitability.

### **2.13 Availability Assessment**

2.13.1 The assessment of availability helps to establish whether a site should be considered a valid option for development, relating to the landowner's willingness to see the site developed and the current use of the site. Given the role of the LAA in enabling the Council to establish a robust land supply for future development, if there is no reasonable prospect that the site will become available over the lifetime of the plan, then it will not be included as a realistic option for development.

2.13.2 In submitting sites to the Council through the call for sites process, site promoters were asked to complete the submission form (attached as Appendix 1), which requests a range of information, including:

- Details of land ownership/land interests,
- What the current and proposed land uses are for the site,
- The reason that the site promoter is proposing the site for development,
- Details of when the site is expected to become available for development, and
- Whether there are any known constraints that could restrict the development of the land.

2.13.3 A judgement will be made based on the information submitted by the applicant as to whether the site was available, and when it is likely to deliver the proposed development. Further communication with the site promoter and other stakeholders will supplement the information provided on the submission form where appropriate.

2.13.4 Where necessary, the Council will contact the registered landowners asking them if they intend to develop the land and if they do when they expect the site to be available for development.

2.13.5 The following information will also be used to make a judgment on whether a site is considered available

- There was a valid live planning application;
- A recent planning application has been made within the last 12 months;
- A recent pre-application enquiry relating to the site and proposed development had made within the last 12 months;
- Whether the site is free of ownership and tenancy issues.

## Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022

### 2.14 Achievability Assessment

- 2.14.1 A site will be considered '*achievable for development*' where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site at a particular point in time<sup>1</sup>. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site and development option and, where appropriate, the capacity of the developer to complete and sell the development over a certain period.
- 2.14.2 The Council is currently preparing a Local Plan Viability Assessment . This study will assesses the policy requirements of the emerging Local Plan and consider the broad viability of development 'typologies'. This will provide further detailed information on viability.
- 2.14.3 In the context of this LAA and high land values across the Borough the following factors will be considered when assessing the achievability of a site:
- Whether there is active developer interest in the site?
  - Whether there is known demand for the form of provision approved / proposed?
  - Whether similar sites have been successfully developed in the preceding years?
  - Whether there are any known abnormal development costs?
- 2.14.4 The consideration of this information will enable realistic and informed views to be made as to when development is likely to commence and how long it would take to build out.

### 2.15 Deliverability Assessment

- 2.15.1 Information gathered in the assessments of site suitability, availability and achievability will be applied to inform judgements about the likely time-frame for development to be delivered on-site. The advice of developers, local agents and other site promoters will supplement this evidence where appropriate to inform judgements about lead-in times and annualised build-out rates, particularly for larger sites.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 3-020-20190722

## **2.16 Deliverable Sites**

2.16.1 The NPPF states *‘that to be considered deliverable, sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. In particular:*

- *Sites that are not major development, and sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (e.g. they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans).*
- *Sites with outline planning permission, permission in principle, allocated in the development plan or identified on a brownfield register should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years<sup>2</sup>.*

2.16.2 Sites will be considered to be deliverable if they are found to be suitable, achievable and available in accordance with the tests above, and if there is evidence that demonstrates that the proposed development could be delivered within the first five years of the plan period.

- Sites that have an outstanding Outline planning permission will be considered to be deliverable where there is clear evidence to demonstrate that homes will be delivered on site within the first five years of the plan period.
- Sites that have outstanding detailed planning permission will be assessed to determine whether there is evidence to suggest that the permission will not be delivered within the first five years.

2.16.3 To account for planning permissions that do not get implemented (built-out) the Council will apply a lapse-rate to the total number of existing permissions that have not yet commenced. The lapse rate will be based on past trends.

## **2.17 Developable sites**

2.17.1 The NPPF requires that local authorities identify a supply of “specific developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan”.

2.17.2 The NPPF states that *‘to be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged<sup>3</sup>.*

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<sup>2</sup> NPPG Annex 2 - Glossary

<sup>3</sup> NPPG Annex 2 - Glossary

## **Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022**

- 2.17.3 Sites will be considered to be developable if they are found to be suitable, achievable, and if the site promoter or other evidence indicated that the site could reasonably come forward for development during years 6 – 10 or 11 – 15 of the Plan period.

### **2.18 Site Capacity Assessment**

- 2.18.1 The development potential of each site will be estimated. The council will provide an estimate for the site, based on a range of factors, including:
- The nature of the area;
  - A consideration of historic development yields achieved on comparable schemes within the locality;
  - Site assessment/initial master planning undertaken by site promoters;
  - National Planning Policy on achieving appropriate densities, the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Guide;
  - Consideration of the site by planning officers.

### **2.19 Developable Areas**

- 2.19.1 The developable area of a site will not necessarily represent the gross area of the site as identified by the site boundary. Differences could be caused by issues such as, but not limited to, constraints that cannot be overcome, including the presence of ancient woodland or flooding, the requirement for new infrastructure on the site, the topography or potential contamination of the land. The site assessment proforma will identify where there are constraints that might impact upon the developable area.

## **Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022**

### **2.20 Stage 3 – Windfall Assessment**

- 2.20.1 Windfall sites are “Sites not specifically identified in the development plan” as defined in the NPPF. Such sites are often first encountered upon submission of a planning application or during pre-application discussions. Whilst windfall sites are generally small or involve the conversion of existing buildings, they can also be large sites.
- 2.20.2 Paragraph 71 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities may make an allowance for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply if they have compelling evidence that such sites that they will provide a reliable source of supply. Any allowance should be realistic having regard to the historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends.
- 2.20.3 The Council has previously included a windfall allowance in its supply calculation. The delivery of small sites in the borough has been and is likely to continue to be an integral source of housing supply. It is therefore considered reasonable to include an allowance in the LAA.
- 2.20.4 In accordance with PPG advice, the LAA will apply a site size threshold of five or more homes (gross). Therefore, the LAA does not identify suitable, available and achievable development sites capable of delivering homes below this threshold. Development on these sites has historically been integral to housing delivery in the borough and will continue to be throughout the plan period. To avoid potential double counting the LAA includes an allowance for windfall sites accommodating fewer than 5 dwellings (gross) only.

### **2.21 Historic Windfall Delivery**

- 2.21.1 In calculating an estimated windfall figure, the average net completions for residential developments on sites of fewer than 5 dwellings (gross) will be determined between the 2011/12 and 2021/22 monitoring periods.
- 2.21.2 A windfall allowance will be included within the trajectory, however to avoid double-counting with permissions, no windfall allowance will be included in the first three years, as in order to be delivered within this period they are likely to already have outstanding planning permission
- 2.21.3 The NPPF is clear that, where estimating an appropriate windfall allowance, consideration should be given to future trends as well as long-term historic rates. Changes introduced to the planning system in recent years, such as the expansion of permitted development rights, which allow commercial, business and service uses to be converted to residential use without the need for planning permission, have and will continue to stimulate increased delivery on small windfall sites.

## **Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022**

2.21.4 Additional permitted development to stimulate housing development from smaller sites, are likely to lead to additional homes being delivered in the borough through permitted development which will not be identified in the LAA.

### **2.22 Stage 4: Assessment Review**

2.22.1 Once the sites and broad locations have been assessed, the development potential of all sites will be collected to produce an indicative trajectory. This will set out how much housing and the amount of economic development that can be provided, and at what point in the future.

2.22.2 If insufficient sites are identified to meet objectively assessed needs to be determined by the Councils emerging Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), then the Council will need to revisit the assessment. This could potentially include a further call for sites, reviewing assumptions including density assumptions.

2.22.3 If insufficient sites remain, the Council will need to consider whether it will be appropriate to meet any forthcoming shortfall through other means, in consultation with surrounding authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

### **2.23 Stage 5: Final Evidence Base**

2.23.1 The following core outputs will be produced as part of the assessment and presented in the main report:

- A list of sites and cross referenced map of their location
- An assessment of each site, covering its suitability for development, availability and achievability.
- Whether a site is realistically expected to be developed and the timeframe for any such development,
- Reasons why sites has been discounted for future development.
- The potential type and quantity of development which could be delivered on each site. This will include an estimate of build out rates as well as any barriers to delivery which may be needed to be overcome; and
- An indicative trajectory of the estimated delivery of the potential development.

## **3 Monitoring**

## **Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology June 2022**

- 3.1.1 Once the site assessments have been collated into a portfolio this will be used to continuously monitor sites. As part of the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) the Council will publish the Housing Trajectory and 5-year Housing Land Supply.

**4 Appendix 1 – Call for sites form**



**Land Availability Assessment Site Submission Form**

Please complete a separate form for each site you wish to promote and ensure you have the following information ready to submit with the form:

- An OS map/site plan at an appropriate scale showing the precise boundaries of the site, two named roads and a north point.
- Information confirming ownership of land (e.g. from the Land Registry).
- If you are an agent submitting a site on behalf of a landowner, please attach a letter from the landowner confirming that they agree to the site being promoted.

Site Details	
Address of site	
Site Area (ha)	
Landowner name	
Landowner Contact	

Your Details	
Name	
Company	
Representing	
Contact address	
Contact Telephone No.	
E-mail	

Current land use
Condition of site in current use
Relevant planning history (including planning application numbers if available)

Proposed use			
Housing <input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile homes <input type="checkbox"/>	Older persons accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Traveller accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>
Custom build <input type="checkbox"/>	Light industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	General industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Storage and distribution <input type="checkbox"/>
Retail <input type="checkbox"/>	Leisure <input type="checkbox"/>	Cultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Local Greenspace <input type="checkbox"/>
Health <input type="checkbox"/>	Education <input type="checkbox"/>		

Other \_\_\_\_\_



**Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology  
June 2022**

**Capacity (E.g. in hectares, sqm, plots, pitches, etc.)**

**Reason for proposed development**

**Anticipated availability time-frame for development**

1-5 Yrs       6-10 Yrs       11-15 Yrs       Longer than 15 Years

**Anticipated delivery time-frame. Indicate anticipated phases if appropriate**

**Known site constraints (select multiple as required)**

- |                            |                          |                         |                          |                                  |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Access                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tree cover              | <input type="checkbox"/> | Important open space             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Scheduled ancient monument | <input type="checkbox"/> | Local character         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Legal issues                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Environmental designations | <input type="checkbox"/> | Flood risk              | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lack of infrastructure/utilities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Listed building/s          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Contamination/pollution | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cables/pipelines/pylons          | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Further details of constraints including how they can be overcome**

Are you able to allow a Council officer access to assess the site? **Yes**  **No**   
(if not please provide details of the appropriate person to contact in "Any further information" below):

**Any further information**

I accept that this information will be used for purposes related to this call for sites and Local Plan preparation, and the information will be available to the public. The Council will not

**Epsom and Ewell Draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology  
June 2022**

publish personal information such as telephone numbers, emails, or private contact addresses.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_