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Ribble Valley Borough Council

**Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability
Assessment (SHELAA) Methodology (Stages 1 and 2)**

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1.Introduction

What is a strategic housing and economic land availability assessment (SHELAA)?

An assessment of land availability identifies a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period. The assessment is an important source of evidence to inform plan making and decision taking, and the identification of a 5-year supply of housing land.

This assessment does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development or whether planning permission will be approved. The role of the assessment is to provide information on the range of sites within the Borough that are available to meet the requirements of Ribble Valley. It is the role of the local plan to determine which of those sites are the most suitable to meet requirements.

Government Guidance set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) enables Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) to simultaneously carry out assessment of housing and economic land availability at the same time.

An assessment should:

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

The assessment needs to identify all sites and broad locations (regardless of the amount of development needed) to provide a complete audit of available land. The process of the assessment will provide the information to enable an identification of sites and locations that are most suitable for the level of development required.

Purpose of this report

This report sets out the methodology for the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) for Ribble Valley Borough Council. The SHELAA will form an important part of the evidence base for the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

Outputs of the study

- Identify land within the Ribble Valley that could be used to develop housing or employment or other land uses.
- Categorise sites taking account of Local context
- Assessment of the suitability, availability and achievability of sites

- A detailed list of sites that may be ‘suitable’ subject to a further assessment of the amount and type of land needed to meet the local plan strategy. This will be progressed through the local plan making process.

2. Policy context

National policy

At the time of drafting the SHLAA Methodology the relevant national planning policy is:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF – December 2024)
- National Planning Practice Guidance – (NPPG – last updated 26th March 2026)

At the time of drafting this methodology a consultation of a revised NPPF closed on 10th March 2026. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) are currently analysing feedback.

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

‘To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. The overall aim should be to meet an area’s identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community’. (NPPF Para 61)

Identifying land for homes

‘Strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, considering their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of

- a) specific, deliverable sites for 5 years following the intended date of adoption; and
- b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for the subsequent years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the remaining plan periods.’ (NPPF Para 72)

Housing and economic land availability assessment (HELAA)

On 27th November 2025 a written ministerial statement was made about reforming local plan making. On 4th March 2026, a package of regulations to implement the new system was

published are now in force from 25 March 2026. The new regulations included amendments to the HELAA process for site assessment applicable to local planning authorities who are developing local plans through the new plan making process.

Local planning policy

The Local Development Framework (LDF) for Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC) is made up of:

- Core Strategy 2008-2028 - (adopted 2014)
- Ribble Valley Proposals Map
- Housing and Economic Development (adopted 2019)
- Longridge Neighbourhood Plan (Made 2019)

3. Background

Ribble Valley local plan review

The Council resolved to prepare a new Local Plan in November 2019. Preparation commenced with the commissioning of key evidence base documents; site identification work including a Call for Sites exercise (2021); and a strategic matters consultation (Regulation 18) in May 2022. A prolonged period of significant under-staffing in combination with the scale and nature of the policy changes introduced in the revised NPPF (December 2024) rendered the original timetable unachievable and significantly limited the currency of the Regulation 18 Consultation exercise and the supporting evidence base.

A revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) was published in March 2025 and subsequently revised (November 2025) to account for slippage in the timetable. Delays were due largely to capacity and capability limitations and the scale of updates required to the evidence base.

Following a review of the early stages of the LDS programme it was concluded that the early stages of the programme could not be met. As a result of this and the new plan making system, (which will result in changes to national policy and therefore local policy) set out in the written ministerial statement (27th November 2025) about reforming the local plan making system a report was submitted to the Councils Planning and Development Committee on 12th March 2026.

The report considered the implications of the local plan making reforms and how they would impact on the preparation of the new Ribble Valley Local Plan. The Committee agreed that work on the Local Plan will be progressed under the new plan making system.

As a result of this decision, a suite of appropriate evidence has already or will be commissioned alongside other inhouse projects that are underway including this SHLAA Methodology and subsequent site assessments.

The Ribble Valley Local Plan is now being prepared under the new plan making framework. A requirement of the new framework is that a Local Plan timetable replaces the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The first timetable was published on 14th May 2026 alongside a Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan Preparation. The timetable should be reviewed monthly and updated as required. The latest timetable can be viewed here: [Timetable](#). It is intended that the submission of the Local Plan at Gateway 3 will be achieved to align with the Lancashire Local Government Review¹ vesting day.

4. Role of the SHELAA

The role of the SHELAA is to provide an assessment report of land availability to identify a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over a local plan period. The assessment is an important source of evidence to inform plan-making and decision-taking, and the identification of a 5 -year housing land supply. ***The SHELAA does not allocate land or give an indication of future planning permission.***

SHELAA Methodology

This 2026 SHELAA methodology report accords with that set out in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), last revised by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 26 March 2026². Sites already assessed through former guidance have been reassessed to comply with the latest 2026 assessment criteria.

The NPPG (March 2026) advises *‘The sites process allows you to identify and assess land that could be used for housing or employment, as well as other land uses, and select which sites to put forward in your draft plan.*

It is an essential part of preparing your local plan and delivering a spatial strategy. Comprehensive site selection helps you deliver on your plan-making needs and objectives. This guidance is designed to help you meet the expectations of national planning policy’.

The NPPG sets out a four-stage process for site assessments:

Stage 1: Identifying sites

Stage 1 requires the Council to undertake a thorough audit of available land within the Borough, as the plan making area, and that this audit should be unconstrained by the level of need for development. The objective of Stage 1 is, therefore, to:

¹ [About Local Government Reorganisation – Lancashire Local Government Reorganisation](#)

² [Housing and economic land availability assessment - GOV.UK](#)

“...identify a sufficient range and quantity of potential sites (in the Borough) to be assessed later in the process.”

The Guidance makes it clear that:

“Demonstrating you have carried out a thorough site identification process is an important part of your sites’ evidence base.”

Stage 1 is therefore a critical and fundamental initial stage of the overall SHELAA process.

The following table provides a summary of Call for Sites and Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments undertaken by the Council. Potential sites have been sourced from the methods below alongside other sources identified at Table 2.

Table 1: Ribble Valley ‘Call for Sites’ SHELAA’s timeline

Timeframe	Project	Comment
2013	SHLAA	This SHLAA was an update of the 2009 SHLAA. The main (but not exclusive) source of sites being the 2013 Call for Sites
August and September 2021	Call for sites	A Call for Sites was undertaken during August and September 2021 in preparation for the Local Plan Regulation 18 Stage
2024	Interim SHELAA	Draft report prepared by consultants, (not published) outcome will feed into the 2027 SHELAA
2025 -early 2026	Call for Sites Update	The Call for Sites took place during October and November 2025, but remained open for new and updated submissions until 23 March 2026
July -August 2026	Call for Sites Update	To coincide with the Local Plan Scoping consultation a further call for sites will be undertaken where interested parties will be given the opportunity to submit new sites, review their previous submissions and if appropriate submit new/additional information for previously submitted sites.

Size/capacity threshold and types

At Stage 1, the Guidance suggests that a Local Planning Authority may wish to apply a minimum size site threshold but is clear that a range of different size sites should be identified including small-scale sites through to those with opportunities for larger-scale development, and broad locations for development where appropriate. Accordingly, the Council has applied a minimum size threshold of 0.25 ha along with a minimum dwelling capacity for residential sites of 5 units; or capable of accommodating a minimum of 500sqm employment floorspace

This threshold applies unless a brownfield site below 0.25ha has been identified as having the capacity to deliver 5 or more dwellings or a minimum of 500sqm of economic use. In this instance the site has been included in the assessment.

The 2013 SHLAA assessment had a size threshold of 0.20ha, to ensure that the same methodology has been applied to all sites, previously excluded brownfield sites between 0.20 and 0.25 have been reassessed and where applicable inclusion of those that have the capacity to deliver 5 or more dwellings.

The primary reason for these thresholds is to avoid double counting when the windfall element of housing supply is forecast. The threshold will however be kept under review as the site assessment progresses. If applicable the threshold may be lowered or removed to allow for the reconsideration of previously discounted sites to meet any identified shortfall later in the assessment process.

5. SHLAA, SHELAA and Call for Sites Timeline

Strategic housing land availability assessment update November 2013

All the sites that were promoted in the 2013 Call for Sites (which was an update of the 2009 SHLAA) have been included within the 2026 GIS Mapping layer which provides a full list of sites and some attribute data.

Note the following typologies will be excluded from further assessment. (They should however be included on the GIS digital layer as submissions, unless the sites have been removed previously)

- Greenfield sites which fall below the size and/or dwelling capacity threshold.
- Brownfield sites which fall below the size and dwelling capacity threshold
- Sites identified as 'built out'

The assessment will include a review of previously excluded sites for possible re-inclusion and further consideration within the SHELAA process. The review of sites will include an assessment of the status of development where a previous planning permission had been approved, in case the development didn't come forward.

As a result of reviewing previously excluded, 129 sites that originated in the 2009 and 2013 Update Call for Sites, and were previously excluded, have now been reinstated for assessment. The number of sites which remain excluded amount to 113. Of these, 2 were outside the Borough, 1 was under construction, 1 was to remain open land within an extant planning permission and the remainder fall below the threshold.

Call for sites 2021

A further Call for Sites was made in 2021. In addition, a small number of sites were submitted for consideration following the Regulation 18 Strategic Matters consultation that was held during May 2022. Both sources formed the basis for the Interim SHELAA of December 2024 commissioned by the Council and undertaken by Land Use Consultants (LUC). Note the Interim SHELAA report was not published, however outputs will be referred to in the 2027 SHELAA.

The total number of sites that were submitted in 2021 was 193. However, a small number of these were duplicates (i.e. the site boundaries were identical in more than 1 submission). Duplicate sites will be deleted from the GIS layer moving forward.

Call for sites update 2025/26

A further Call for Sites was made which initially ran between 24 October 2025 and 24 November 2025 but remained open until 23rd March 2026 for new site submissions and additional information. This Call for sites exercise yielded a total of 94 additional sites for assessment.

Sites can be submitted by completing a site submission form –see Appendix 1 or by completing an on-line submission which includes drawing the site area on the SHELAA GIS layer and submitting the site electronically.

Site referencing system

As a result of numerous 'call for sites' and various methods of referencing, a 2026 system has been devised to identify the method and year of submission. The referencing system is as follows:

Source/reference format

2013/001 (2013 SHLAA –sites included and excluded from further assessment)

2021/001 (2021 Call for Sites)

2021/001* (any amended sites from 2021)

2025/001 (2025 Call for Sites)

MON/001 (Sites identified through annual monitoring)

RM/001 (Property/land website)

OI/001 (Officer identified sites)

For any sites where there is more than one parcel it is indicated through adding a/b/c at the end Example - 21/019a and 21/019b

Recording of sites

Site submission information including a site reference and method of submission is recorded in a excel spreadsheet and recorded in the attribute table for the GIS layer.

Attribute data included with the GIS layer for public viewing at Stage 1

Site reference (including year and source of site submission)

Site address including parish and settlement

Proposed development use

Site area (H/a) Floorspace (Sqm)

Additional sources of site identification

In addition to the extensive Calls for Sites held between 2009 and 2026, the Council has sought to identify further sites for consideration. As advised by latest the Guidance, these sources include:

Table 2: Additional Sources of Site Identification

Type of Site	Data Sources
Existing housing and economic development allocations not yet with planning permission	Planning Application Records Monitoring Records
Pending planning applications	Development Management (DM)
Planning applications expired, refused, unimplemented or withdrawn (last 3 years) subject to a review of each case	Planning Application Records
Pre-Apps	DM Records
Council owned land available for release	Council Records Discussion with Property Team
Other site suggestions from DM and other internal officers and commercially advertised sites	
Surplus and likely to become surplus public sector land	National register of public sector land Engagement with other public sector bodies including LCC, NHS, police, fire services, utilities services, statutory undertakers

Vacant/derelict land and buildings	Brownfield land register National Land Use Database Valuation Office database
Sites/land for sale	Rightmove property website
Sites with planning in principle (PIP) Identified brownfield land	Brownfield land register National Land Use Database Valuation Office database

In addition, Officers have through desktop survey and where necessary site visits applied their planning judgement to determine, for example, whether there are opportunities to intensify existing uses or redevelop land, and also whether opportunities arise through the extension of existing settlements on sites that have not already been submitted for consideration. The extension of existing settlements on sites that have not already been submitted for consideration.

This exercise has resulted in the identification of a total of 156 sites identified through additional sources (109 – 2013 plus 47 post 2013). These sites are also included in the GIS mapping layer, where they meet the threshold criteria. The data source for each site is included against each record.

Site grouping

The sites are also grouped by their location. This is the named town or village in the submission. Where this location is, in practice, remote, then the physically nearest settlement is listed. For clarification where a site is located outside of a settlement boundary additional information is provided to identify where the site is in proximity to the nearest settlement. (Adjacent to settlement boundary, separated from the settlement boundary, remote from the nearest settlement.)

The groups of settlements are also listed in terms of their place in the settlement hierarchy, as set out in adopted Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 This is for convenience and does not imply that the settlement hierarchy will remain unaltered in the new Local Plan
In practice, this means that the sites are listed in the following order:

Table 3: Settlements

Principal Settlements	Tier 1 Village	Tier 2 Village	
Clitheroe	Barrow	Bolton-by-Bowland	Pendleton
Longridge	Billington	Brockhall Village	Ribchester
Whalley	Chatburn	Calderstones	Rimington
	Gisburn	Chipping	Sabden
	Langho	Copster Green	Sawley
	Mellor	Downham	Slaidburn
	Mellor Brook	Dunsop Bridge	Tosside

	Read & Simonstone	Grindleton	Waddington
	Wilpshire & Ramsgreave	Holden	West Bradford
		Hurst Green	Wiswell
		Newton	Worston
		Osbaldeston	

Output of stage 1- Identifying Sites

All sites identified through each Call for Sites exercise that meet the size/capacity threshold of this draft methodology are digitally mapped and included in the Stage 1 output, which forms the basis for the full list of sites, with exception of any additional sites submitted through the latest 'Call for Sites' to be held between 3rd July and 14th August 2026. This includes the Stage 1 information requirements as set out in the Guidance.

Where sites have been identified through alternative sources the recorded information is similar other than the identified source is recorded instead of respondent details which will not be available at this stage.

Note -Sites identified have been published on a GIS Mapping layer (July 2026) this allows interested parties the opportunity to ensure that their previously submitted site has been received and to submit new information if necessary. At this stage there is no opportunity to comment on sites. Comments should relate only to this Draft SHLAA Methodology.

6. Stage 2: Assessing sites

An initial sift will be carried out to remove duplicate sites, sites built out, those below the threshold and duplicate sites. The GIS layer will be updated to reflect those sites that are not being carried forward. The GIS layer and supporting attribute data will also be updated to reflect additional information for existing submissions and new sites submitted through the 3rd of July to 14th August 2026 call for sites.

Note – if required sites may be re-introduced later in the assessment process

After the Stage 1 identification of a sufficient range of potential sites, the guidance at stage 2 requires that all carried forward sites should be categorised into different groups. Once categorised an initial assessment of development potential is undertaken.

Site categorisation

The guidance states that categorisation of sites is up to planning judgement, taking account of the local context and the types of sites which have come forward through stage 1. Categorisation will help to:

- give an early indication of the type and amount of different development opportunities available in your area
- signpost early in the process where you may need evidence to support certain types of development opportunities
- help inform your emerging spatial strategy
- allow you to assess similar types of sites consistently
- inform decisions on the type of sites you want to take forward as draft allocations in stage 3

The use of a spreadsheet and GIS layer as the primary site record is continued at Stage 2. The initial categorisation takes consideration of whether a developable area meets the minimum threshold. For example:

A Greenfield site is 1hectare – 0.50 hectares is within flood zone 3, 0.50 hectares is within flood zone 1- it may therefore be possible to develop part of the site which is greater than the minimum threshold of 0.25 hectares. Subject to other considerations the site should not be excluded at this stage of assessment.

The Guidance states: *'You should determine what to take into consideration based on the characteristics of your local area and the extent to which they would make a site unsuitable for development. Make sure you clearly record and justify your choices and reasoning'* Categorisation as follows:

Table 4: Site categorisation

Categorisation	Type	Explanation
Excluded from further assessment	Significant constraint that cannot be mitigated	A significant constraint that cannot be mitigated covers most or all the sites. (0.24ha or less falls outside of the significant constraint)
Settlement Hierarchy	Principal settlement, Tier 1, Tier 2, open countryside	Categories are identified in the 2008-2028 Adopted Core Strategy, where a site is located outside of a settlement boundary a sub-category should be included: (Adjacent to settlement boundary, separated from the settlement boundary, remote from the nearest settlement.)
Proposed Use(s)	Housing, economic use, gypsy and traveller site, other use -specify	Where a site has been submitted for more than one use, list in order of preference
Site Size	Hectares or Sqm	The site size should be provided as gross and where possible net

		developable area. For economic use Sqm of floorspace.
Greenfield, Brownfield or mixed	Greenfield or Brownfield (previously developed land) – apply definitions as NPPF Glossary	Brownfield sites are included below 0.25ha threshold where there is capacity for 5 or more dwellings or 500sqm of floorspace
Scale of Development	Number of dwellings or floorspace of economic use (capacity)	Include where information has been provided at submission stage. Otherwise include information base on density for residential and area or an assumption that 40% of the total site area will be developable. A more detailed analysis will be provided if the site is deemed as 'suitable' once the site has been further assessed. Where necessary applicant/agent will be contacted
Likely Lead in Time	Delivery 0-5years, 6-10years, 11-15years	Include information that has been provided with the submission where applicable. Information should include developer interest/house-builder details. Where necessary applicant/agent will be contacted
Policy Designation /Constraint -not identified in other categories	SSSI SSSI Impact Zone Special Area of Conservation (SAC) AONB Special Protection Area (SPA) Irreplaceable Habitat/LNRS/LNR Registered Park or Garden Open Space PROW Green Belt Local Geodiversity Sites TPO Agricultural land classification	Include detail of the policy designation(s) and how much of the submitted site area is covered by the policy(s). At this stage of assessment, a designation should be highlighted but may not necessarily rule the site out from further assessment. If the designation covers the whole site, then it should be excluded from further assessment dependent on designation (Planning judgement will be required) If a site is otherwise viewed as suitable it may be possible to mitigate against some constraints, or it may be that a site could be suitable subject to policy change in the new local. For example, green belt may be deemed as grey belt in the finding of the greenbelt study which may be deemed as suitable for development subject to other assessment.

Types of built development in the surrounding area	Residential, retail, leisure employment, (light, warehouse, industrial), mixed use)	Provides an understanding of the existing character of an area and guides what type of development may be appropriate
Access to services and facilities	Access to services and facilities – key services (Settlement Study Level One Services should be considered separately) also consider Levels One to Four combined	Access to services and facilities - the outcomes identified in the Draft 2026 Stage Two Settlement Study are reviewed as part of the assessment. Each settlement has been scored using the scoring method identified in the settlement study. (See Appendix 1 for scoring). Note the Settlement Study will be published alongside this draft methodology and may change subject to comments received.
Access to public transport and cycle routes	Access to bus, trains and cycle routes	Proximity to public transport (Rail and bus) – the outcomes identified in the 2026 Draft Stage Two Settlement Study are reviewed as part of the assessment. Each settlement has been scored using the scoring method identified in the settlement study. (See Appendix 2 for scoring)
Heritage Assets	Buildings and Structures: Listed buildings, historic houses, and non-designated buildings of local importance Archaeological Sites: Scheduled monuments, historic wrecks, and excavation sites Designed Landscapes: Historic gardens, parks, and conservation areas	Heritage Assets are in the first instance identified through an assessment of GIS mapping layers Details of the heritage assets should be included in the site assessment – technical consultation feedback may be required from a heritage officer
Environmental Constraints	High Pressure Pipeline Consultation Zone Contaminated Land Coal Area Groundwater Source Protection Zone Mineral Safeguarding Area	Environmental constraints are in the first instance identified through an assessment of GIS mapping layers Details of the environmental constraints should be included in the site assessment – technical consultation feedback may be required

	Air Quality/Smoke Control	from the relevant technical officer/body
Highway Constraints and access		Highway constraints and access issues and mitigation measures will be identified through consultation with the county council highways officer, and/or through the transport study/modelling
Flood risk, clean and wastewater utilities	Identify FZ 1, 2, 3 (a and b)	Flood zones are in the first instance identified through an assessment of GIS mapping layers Technical comments will be required through consultation with United Utilities to understand waste and clean water constraints and mitigation measures. Technical comments will be required through consultation with the Local Flood Risk Authority to understand flood risk and mitigation measures.

Site categorisation for proposed housing - led development

As set out previously it is not the role of the SHELAA to allocate sites or make changes to settlement boundaries or the settlement hierarchy. It is however important to understand what land is available and where, to inform the direction of the local plan spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy. It is important to understand availability of land that may be suitable for housing. SHELAA housing led sites are categorised in accordance with the adopted settlement hierarchy.

Table 5: Site categorisation for proposed housing - led development

Categorisation	Explanation
Broad Location	A broad location is an area that could potentially support the direction of longer-term growth. Due to the geographical makeup of the Ribble Valley, including that 70% is designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), identifying broad locations for development growth it is not considered relevant to this Ribble Valley SHELAA assessment.
New settlements	The development would result in a new settlement being created – a new settlement boundary would need to be drawn

Urban extensions	The development would result in an extension to an existing urban settlement (Clitheroe, Whalley, Longridge) - the settlement boundary would need to be redrawn
Principal Settlement Development	For Ribble Valley principal settlement development refers to development located within the settlement boundaries of Clitheroe, Whalley or Longridge.
Estate regeneration	Refers to the demolition of existing dwellings and development of replacement in a housing estate location – This may result in a gain or loss of housing numbers dependent on capacity.
Village extension (Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements)	The development would result in an extension to a Tier 1 or Tier 2 settlement - the settlement boundary would need to be redrawn
Small, medium or large scale previously developed land	Small scale – 1-4 dwellings, (below SHLAA threshold) medium scale 5-9 dwellings, large scale 10+ dwellings, the site is located on previously developed land within an existing settlement (All tiers – this will be a sub-category)
Settlement infill (Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements)	Settlement infill - refers to development within the built-up area of Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements

Site categorisation for employment - led development

As set out previously it is not the role of the SHLAA to allocate sites or make changes to settlement boundaries or the settlement hierarchy. It is however important to understand what land is available and where, this will help inform the direction of the local plan spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy. It is necessary to understand availability of land that may be suitable for employment uses.

SHLAA employment led sites are categorised by likely future use. All categories are included as suggested in the guidance, however it is unlikely that due to the character and logistics of Ribble Valley that some economic uses would be relevant in this location.

Categorisation for proposed future employment led development are:

- offices, leisure and retail
- research, development, and knowledge (including studios and university development)
- industrial
- logistics
- data centres
- employment-led mixed use

Where sites are included in more than one category, this is highlighted to avoid double counting of potential floorspace or hectares of land.

Other categories of proposed uses have not been categorised in the same detail as housing and employment/economic use, due to the variation of proposed uses and limited submissions.

Re-categorising of sites

As the sites assessment process progresses and where additional information becomes available sites can be re-categorised where applicable. Re-categorised sites include an explanation of reasoning.

Recording of site information

Site information recorded for each site (as advised in this methodology) is recorded in the excel spreadsheet as a Stage 2 site, every site is categorised as per tables 4 and 5. At this stage the initial assessment process can begin. **Note: *Subject to feedback at this consultation stage of the Draft SHELAA Methodology and new information categorisation of sites may be revised.***

Assessing sites and their development potential

The assessment of sites through the SHELAA process is a policy off exercise as such some constraints and policies identified in the adopted LDF (2008-2028) should at this stage only be identified and highlighted, sites should not be excluded at this stage unless significant constraints are present.

The aims of stage 2 of the SHELAA are:

- filter out and flag any sites obviously unsuitable for development
- assess each site for their suitability, availability and achievability for development using the methodology
- estimate the development potential of sites
- score each site based on criteria and local context
- determine the deliverability or developability of sites proposed for housing use

Filter out any sites obviously unsuitable for development -Significant Constraint Categorisation

The Guidance states:

'Sites should only be ruled out at Stage 2 where confident that the presence of significant constraints would mean development of the site would be wholly inappropriate'.

Example constraints highlighted in the guidance that may mean a site is considered unsuitable for development could include:

- Detailed Emergency Planning Zones
- Flood Zones 3a and 3b

- Health & Safety Executive Consultation Zones
- Public Safety Zones (such as airports)

Of the four example constraints only Flood zones 3a and 3b is applicable to Ribble Valley. **Sites within Flood zones 3a and 3b submitted for the purpose of housing or economic use will be excluded at stage 2, unless 0.25 hectares or more of developable land is outside of this constraint and other relevant factors that would exclude development do not apply.**

Some 70% of the Ribble Valley district lies within the Forest of Bowland which is identified as a Natural Landscape. Ribble Valley Borough Council are members of both the Joint Advisory Committee and the Technical Officers' Group for the natural Landscape the council is one of six District Councils that, along with Lancashire County Council, work together to ensure that the natural beauty of the Forest of Bowland natural landscape is conserved, enhanced and protected for the benefit of all.

It is therefore concluded that development proposals for housing and/or economic use cannot be mitigated due to the requirement to conserve, enhance and protect the area for the benefit of all, as such any sites located within the Forest of Bowland Natural Landscape assessed through the SHELAA process will be excluded from further assessment at Stage 2 of the process.

The above categories are given a Red RAG Rating and will not be further assessed.

Assess each site for their suitability, availability and achievability for development

The guidance suggests that suitability, availability and achievability can be assessed through one process. For the Ribble Valley SHELAA the assessment of suitability will be assessed prior to availability and achievability for the following reasons:

- **Availability** -Due to the various sources and timeline of site identification checks need to be undertaken to identify land ownership and where relevant willingness of landowners to develop.
- **Achievability** In assessing achievability an assessment of site viability needs to be undertaken, which will be commissioned following the suitability assessment.

Suitability assessment

The guidance states: *'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*
- *opportunities the development of the site could present*

Do not rule out sites because a constraint or designation exists. Assess the implications of the constraint or designation and what impacts it may have on the potential for development of the site.'

Scoring sites

The guidance suggests that in making an initial assessment of a site's suitability a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating should be given for each site. The initial assessment will apply only for site suitability

Suitability scoring

Green means the site offers a suitable location for the land use, and any known constraints can be feasibly overcome with mitigation. In terms of suitable location, the adopted settlement hierarchy has been applied, as at this stage of plan making it is too early to understand if the settlement hierarchy may be revised.

RAG Rating Green Example:

Settlement	Hierarchy Level	Site Description	Relevant constraints and their potential to be mitigated	Opportunities the development of the site could present
Clitheroe (within settlement boundary)	Principal settlement	1 hectare, brownfield site located within the built-up residential area of the settlement	No known constraints	Development of the site could be residential to include % of affordable homes

Amber means the site offers a potentially suitable location for the land use, but has constraints which may impact development potential, the site needs further assessment before it can be deemed suitable

RAG Rating Amber Example:

Settlement	Hierarchy Level	Site Description	Relevant constraints and their potential to be mitigated	Opportunities the development of the site could present
Barrow – adjoins settlement boundary	Tier 1	1-hectare, greenfield site located within adjacent to built-up residential area of the settlement	Possible access constraints and outside settlement boundary. Access can be mitigated through junction improvement. The	Development of the site could be residential to include % of affordable homes

			settlement boundary will be reviewed through the local plan process	
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Red means the site does not offer a suitable development location for the land use or there are known constraints which significantly impact development potential and cannot feasibly be overcome with mitigation.

RAG Rating Red Example:

Settlement	Hierarchy Level	Site Description	Relevant constraints and their potential to be mitigated	Opportunities the development of the site could present
Open Countryside in an isolated location	Outside	5-hectare, greenfield site in an isolated location	The site is an isolated location, without suitable access to services and public transport	The site does not present opportunity for development

Appropriate location for development

Sites have been categorised under the following location types:

- Settlement location within the Ribble Valley
- Settlement tier identified in the 2008-2028 Adopted Core Strategy, (Principal Settlement, Tier 1, Tier 2.) Where a site is located outside of a settlement boundary a sub-category is included: (Adjacent to settlement boundary, separated from the settlement boundary, remote from the nearest settlement)

At this stage of the assessment, the following location types are not appropriate locations for the development of housing or employment use. This will be kept under review as the Strategy and settlement hierarchy are developed through the new local plan. (The following categories have been scored as Red)

- Open countryside – separated from any settlement – isolated location

- Development that would result in an unacceptable increase of homes or employment/economic use in a Tier 1 or 2 (Village or Rural location)

Physical constraints

- Physical constraints will be identified for each site using GIS layers, desk top survey and where necessary site visits will be undertaken. At this stage only the following physical constraints will determine if sites are unsuitable and should be excluded from further assessment
 - Sites within Flood zones 3a and 3b submitted for the purpose of housing or economic use (unless 0.25 hectares (residential) 500sqm (economic use) or more of developable land is outside of this constraint and other relevant factors that would exclude development do not apply)
 - Sites located within a National Landscape submitted for the purpose of housing or economic use (unless 0.25 hectares (residential) 500sqm (economic use) or more of developable land is outside of this constraint and other relevant factors that would exclude development do not apply- of particular significance would be landscape impact)

Sites with constraints described as **significant** have been given a red RAG rating as set out earlier in this document. Sites in an inappropriate location set out above have also been given a Red RAG rating.

All other Stage 2 sites constraints have been assessed and identified alongside an assessment of the site location. Where the site location is RAG rated as green and no physical constraints are identified the site is given a green RAG rating and will move forward to the assessment of achievability and availability.

Where physical constraints are identified in locations scored as Green or Amber a planning judgement will be made to assess whether the physical constraint(s) will need to be consulted on through technical consultation, or whether the constraint(s) are deemed as minor and can either be suitably mitigated against or will not significantly impact on development. Where physical constraints are minor the RAG rating will remain as that identified through the site location identity and sites will then be progressed and assessed for availability and achievability.

Technical consultee consultation

Where a planning judgement is made that a physical constraint requires input from a technical officer the RAG rating will be Amber at this stage until responses are provided setting out if the physical constraint can be mitigated. Technical responses will be requested for the following physical constraints that are identified as more than minor.

- Heritage Asset located within or adjacent to the site
- Access or highway constraint

- Sites at risk of flooding (not excluded previously as a significant constraint) to understand if mitigation is an option
- Environmental constraint
- Sites covered by or in proximity to nature designations If the designation covers the whole site, then it should be excluded from further assessment dependent on designation.

Outcome of assessment of suitability

- All Stage 2 sites will be RAG rated against the following criteria:
 - Location
 - Physical constraints
 - Significant constraint that cannot be mitigated
- Three lists of sites dependent on RAG rating and identification of physical constraint(s)
 - **Sites RAG rated red** – no further assessment will be undertaken at this stage however the site(s) may be reviewed at a later stage if stage 2 exclusion is because of the direction of the local plan strategy that is later reviewed (for example remote location)
 - **Sites RAG rated Green or Amber** that do not require a technical response at this stage – assess achievability and availability
 - **Sites RAG rated Amber** that require a technical response at this stage – Where physical constraints can be mitigated –assess achievability and availability, where physical constraints cannot be mitigated – give a Red RAG rating and exclude from further assessment

Availability and Achievability

In terms of availability and achievability the aims of this stage of the SHELAA are:

- assess each site for their availability and achievability for development
- estimate development potential of sites
- RAG rate each site based on criteria and local context
- determine the deliverability or developability of sites proposed for housing use

Availability

In understanding the availability of the sites that remain at the stage two availability assessment the following will be undertaken:

- A review of sites will be completed to assess if the land has extant planning permission or is under construction – where substantive work is underway sites are deemed as not available and excluded from further assessment and given a Red RAG rating. Where work has not commenced or been abandoned the site is considered available.

- Review applicant and landownership information for submitted sites-where ownership information is not available or is out of date (pre 2021 submissions), a land registry check will be completed. If the owner has changed, they will be contacted to see if the land remains available for development. Where sites have been included in the SHELAA through other sources a land registry check will be undertaken and the landowner will be contacted to see if the land is available for development. Where landowners are contacted information will be requested to enable a full SHELAA assessment. Where it is concluded that sites are not available a red RAG rating will be given and the site excluded from further assessment.
- Where evidence is available an assessment will be made of sites in multiple ownerships without agreements in place, unresolved ransom strips, tenancies and covenants. This process will assess if these issues would mean the site is not available. If it is concluded that the site is not available a red RAG rating will be given and the site will be removed from further assessment.
- An assessment of delivery will be undertaken using the following methods:
 - For housing development an assessment will be undertaken of whether sites have relevant planning history, developer or house builder interest, lead in times and past delivery rates.
 - Landowner indication of the site's deliverability within 0-5years, developability within 6-10years, 11-15 years. (Submission form or contact with landowner)
 - Known significant constraint(s) identified through consultation with utility and infrastructure providers. Where consultation concludes that there is insufficient or no planned infrastructure which makes development undeliverable and cannot be resolved within the plan period the site will be given a Red RAG rating and removed from further assessment.

Availability RAG rating

Green means: there is a reasonable prospect the site will be available for development within the time envisioned and there are no known legal or ownership issues.

Amber means: the site has legal or ownership issues that are considered capable of being resolved and the site could be available for development within the time envisioned the site needs further assessment before it can be deemed available

Red means: there is no reasonable prospect that the site could be available for development within the time envisioned.

Sites with Green RAG and Amber RAG rating following the assessment of availability will then be assessed for achievability. Sites that have been given a red RAG rating for availability will be excluded from further assessment.

Achievability

All sites that have proceeded with a green or amber availability RAG rating will be assessed for achievability.

Achievability is assessed on whether there is a reasonable prospect, based on the information available that a site is capable of being developed at a particular point in time, including if the site is likely to be viable.

The following methods will be undertaken to assess likely achievability:

- The Council will commission viability consultants to undertake an initial high-level review of the viability of sites. The assessment will use a sample of sites developed in the Ribble Valley alongside the following typologies:
- likely market attractiveness
- development on previously developed / not-previously developed sites
- rural / urban development
- different sizes and density of development
- more marginally viable schemes

The assessment will identify site typologies that are deemed to be unviable. The guidance recommends that unviable sites are removed from further assessment. A sift will be undertaken of site typologies deemed as unviable, these sites will then be given a red RAG rating and removed from further assessment. This rating will remain unless clear evidence is provided from the landowner that the site is viable and that other constraints that would Red RAG the site is not applicable)

Note: A whole plan and site-specific policies will be commissioned as the local plan progresses to provide a more detailed assessment of viability.

Estimating development potential

Development potential (or site capacity) essentially means how much development a site could deliver. The development potential of a site is a significant factor that affects the economic viability of a site and its suitability for a particular use. The guidance advises 'Estimating development potential is therefore usually best undertaken alongside assessing the suitability, availability, and achievability of a site'.

The following methods will be undertaken to estimate development potential:

- An assessment of the outcomes of the high-level viability assessment will be undertaken to assess the potential achievability of SHELAA sites with an estimated capacity to deliver 10+ dwellings
- A review of information submitted through the call for sites process, where the applicant/agent has submitted site capacity. This information will then be reviewed between Policy and DM officers.

- Where appropriate, applicants/agents will be contacted and requested to submit site capacity information for their site(s)

Housing sites - achievability

For housing sites development potential will depend on assumptions on how densely developments will be built and other factors like information provided through call for sites, size constraints and other constraints on land and development. Guidance advises *‘proposals should make the most efficient use of the land’*.

The following methods will be used to apply density and capacity:

- Where a site capacity has been included with the submission, the detail will be applied to the site to assess one source of achievability
- Where site capacity is not available, a general assessment will be made by reviewing past delivery of similar site types in the Ribble Valley to agree an average density or urban and rural areas of the borough. (Where available support will be requested from Development Management Colleagues)

Employment Sites - achievability

For employment sites, the land use is a significant factor in determining development potential. The guidance advises *‘It’s likely that many employment sites will be able to support multiple employment uses relevant to the site’s context. You should assess all relevant site uses for site capacity’*.

The following employment categories will be assessed:

- offices, leisure and retail
- research, development, and knowledge (including studios and university development)
- industrial
- logistics
- data centres
- employment-led mixed use

An analysis will be taken to understand gross to net developable areas. (A review of the Employment Land Study (2026) will be used to identify borough examples)

Sites in multiple categories

Where a site has been submitted for mixed use an assessment of achievability will be undertaken utilising the methods for both housing and employment ensuring that the site area has not been double counted.

Achievability RAG Rating

Green means there is a reasonable prospect that the site is capable of being developed for the land use within the time envisioned (the plan period).

Amber means:

- the site's capability to deliver in the time envisioned is limited and the resolution or the timing of the resolution is unknown, or
- the site needs further assessments of some aspects of its achievability

Red means there is no reasonable prospect that the site could be capable of being developed for the land use within the time envisioned.

Achievability is the final assessment of the stage 2 site assessment. For all sites that have not been excluded at the earlier stages and assessed through to the achievability stage, a RAG rating will be provided for each of the stage two assessment. At this stage a full RAG assessment will be provided for each site that remains suitable at this stage.

Where sites are excluded at earlier stages of the stage two assessment the sites and reasons will be included on the Councils website which will be available to view on the SHELAA [GIS Layer](#) with reasoning to explain their exclusion. A SHELAA report will also be published in pdf format that will include site plans and an assessment of each site and where applicable reasons for exclusion.

Should additional evidence become available that questions the site assessment, if appropriate, the site may be reassessed through the local plan consultation process.

Example

Site	Suitability	Availability	Achievability	Outcome -next steps
0001/26	Amber - potentially suitable location for the land use, but has constraints which may impact development potential, the site needs further assessment before it can be deemed suitable	Green – The site is available and development can come forward in 6-10 years	Amber – the site needs further assessment of some aspects of its achievability	The site is potentially suitable subject to a further assessment of suitability and achievability

All sites that have been assessed through to the achievability stage and are not RAG rated red at this stage will be further assessed as follows:

- Three green ratings – Where each stage has been assessed as green the site will progress to stage three for further assessment.

- Where sites are rated amber for any of the RAG assessments with the amber reason(s) deemed as minor the site will progress through to stage three for further assessment.
- Sites with Red RAG ratings will not be assessed further at this stage.

This SHELAA Methodology has set out the assessment process for stages one and two:

- Identification of sites and broad locations
- Site/broad location assessment

7. Next Steps

Stage 3 – Windfall assessments were justified

The Council currently a small site windfall allowance, this process will be reviewed as the local plan progresses.

Stage 4 – Assessment review

Following completion of the stages 1, 2 and 3 assessments, should it become evident that not enough 'suitable' sites/land has been identified to deliver the housing, economic and other land allocations, then sites previously excluded may be reassessed.

As part of the assessment review a draft trajectory will be produced to identify the number of dwellings and timeline for sites coming forward.

If it becomes apparent that there is not sufficient land to meet the strategic policies, it will be important to understand how needs will be met which may include a further call for sites, and the possibility of needs being met from a neighbouring authority

Stage 5 – Final Evidence Base –outputs

The following outputs will be expected by the end of each stage of the assessment process:

- a list of all sites or broad locations considered, cross-referenced to their locations on maps;
- an assessment of each site or broad location, including:
- where these have been discounted, evidence justifying reasons given;
- where these are considered suitable, available and achievable, the potential type and quantity of development, including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how any barriers to delivery could be overcome and when;
- an indicative trajectory of anticipated development based on the evidence available.

The assessment will be made publicly available in an accessible form.

8. Appendix

Appendix One – Access to Public Services Scoring Table

Table: Accessibility Railway, Bus and Access to Cycle Network (2026 Settlement Study)

Provision	Access	Score
Railway Station	Facility within the settlement boundary	2
	Facility within a 10-minute walk of the settlement boundary	1
	No facility within the settlement boundary or within a 10-minute walk	0
Access to cycle network	Access to cycle network from the centre point of the settlement boundary	2
	Access to cycle network from the settlement boundary	1
	No access to cycle network from the settlement boundary	0
Bus service frequency	Peak service every 20-minutes or better	3
	Peak service frequency every 20 to 40 minutes	2
	Peak service frequency up to every hour	1
	No service or peak service interval frequency interval above 1 hour	0

Appendix Two – Access to Services Scoring

Located Within Settlement Boundary	Located Outside of the Settlement Boundary -Within Accessible Distance	Located Outside of the District Boundary -Within Accessible Distance
3 points for each type of service/facility located within the settlement boundary	2 points for each type of service/facility located outside of the settlement boundary - within accessible distance	1 point for each type of service/facility located outside of the district boundary -within accessible distance

Access to the 5 Level One Services/facilities identified in the 2026 Settlement Study (**Primary School, Convenience Store, Post Office, Public House, Community/Village Hall**) - considered essential and of frequent benefit for the needs of the local community to be located within the settlement boundary.

3 rd July to 14 th August 2026	SHELAA Methodology and mapped sites	This SHELAA Methodology is published alongside the scoping consultation. Responses are requested where it is deemed necessary to revise the methodology. A mapping layer of all sites is also published for review.
Post 14 th August 2026	Methodology review	Comments received in respect of this methodology will be reviewed following the close of consultation (14-08-2026) the Methodology will be amended as necessary
August 2026 to December 2026	Site assessments	Once the Methodology has been finalised sites will be assessed for suitability, availability and achievability, which will include internal and external consultation, land ownership checks and viability checks

January to February 2027	Publish SHELAA	It is intended that a SHELAA and potential allocations will be published alongside the Proposed Local Plan Content and Evidence consultation
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